

MINUTES OF DIRECTORS MEETING

LANE TRANSIT DISTRICT
SPECIAL MEETING

JOINT MEETING WITH
LANE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Tuesday, September 9, 1997

Pursuant to notice given to *The Register-Guard* for publication on September 8, 1997, and distributed to persons on the mailing list of the District, a special joint meeting of the Lane Transit District Board of Directors and the Lane County Board of Commissioners was held on Tuesday, September 9, 1997, at 5:30 p.m., in the LTD Board Room at 3500 East 17th Avenue, Eugene.

Present:	<u>LTD Board</u>	<u>County Commissioners</u>
	Rob Bennett	Steve Cornacchia
	Patricia Hocken	Vice Chair, presiding
	President, presiding	Elli Dumdi
	Dave Kleger	Bobby Green
	Mary Murphy	Peter Sorenson
	Roger Saydack	
	Hillary Wylie	
	Phyllis Loobey, General Manager	
	Susan Hekimoglu, Recording Secretary	
Absent:	Kirk Bailey	Cindy Weeldreyer

CALL TO ORDER: Following dinner, which began at 5:30 p.m., Ms. Hocken and Commissioner Cornacchia called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. Ms. Hocken welcomed the County Commissioners and Lane County Roads Advisory Committee and staff to the meeting and thanked them for coming. Prior to discussing the agenda items for this meeting, Ms. Hocken informed the Commissioners, committee members, and staff that tours of the new Eugene Station were held on the first Tuesday of each month at 12:00 p.m., or tours could be arranged on other days by calling the LTD reception desk.

CURRENT LTD SERVICE IN URBAN AND RURAL LANE COUNTY: Ms. Hocken provided a background of current service. She briefly discussed the University of North Carolina (UNCC) study, in which LTD had participated during the last eight years. She stated that the 1995 performance of LTD, as in previous years, was ranked very well compared with other systems around the country. The statistics for LTD made it appear that LTD was doing a good job, but the Board asked for the Commissioners' thoughts on how LTD was doing its job. Ms. Hocken stated that the Board also wanted to discuss rural

LTD service, which she referred to as non-metropolitan area service. By that, she was referring to the routes to McKenzie Bridge, Lowell, Veneta, Junction City, Coburg, and a new route to Cottage Grove. She pointed out statistics on those services that were included on page five of the meeting packet. In addition, she discussed how rural service routes were developed.

Commissioner Cornacchia asked if the payroll tax extended to all businesses in the county. Ms. Hocken replied that it did not. The payroll tax was levied on businesses and self-employed people within a defined service area, which included McKenzie Bridge and other rural areas served by LTD. Lane County Administrator Bill VanVactor asked if Creswell was included in the Cottage Grove service. Ms. Hocken explained that the Cottage Grove route included a stop at a Park & Ride site near the I-5 freeway exit in Creswell. This one-year pilot project, funded by a property tax, would begin later in September. There would be six trips per weekday and two trips on Saturdays. If the citizens of Cottage Grove voted to join the District following the pilot project, then the payroll tax would be levied on those businesses within the extended service boundary. The City Council of Creswell contributed money from its general funds for the pilot project Park & Ride site.

Commissioner Dumdi asked if there were any projections of possible service to Florence. Ms. Hocken replied that LTD had no plans to provide service to Florence at this time, and Ms. Loobey stated that LTD had not received any requests for service to Florence in a number of years. Commissioner Dumdi stated that it was becoming more and more of a concern as the population of Florence continued to grow.

Commissioner Green stated that he would be leaving the meeting early, and he asked if the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) discussion could be moved forward on the agenda.

BUS RAPID TRANSIT: Mr. Bennett stated that LTD had been working on a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) concept for some time, and that the purpose of BRT was to allow LTD to better compete within the community to effect a balance of transportation. Within the scope of LTD's current operation, LTD was achieving good results: It was carrying a large number of school children; many people with disabilities used the bus; group pass participant numbers were increasing; and ridership was growing as the population grew. He thought that the independent studies of LTD's operation, while LTD rated well comparably, indicated that LTD could make some improvements.

Mr. Bennett said that LTD certainly could continue doing what it was doing pretty well now, and try to fit in on a regular basis, similar to what had been done in the past. In that context, LTD could continue to make some marginal improvements. What LTD could not do was raise itself to the next competitive level, because buses still needed to weave in and out of traffic and make a lot of stops on most routes. He thought that there was a lot of resentment in the community from people who got tired of seeing buses pull out in front of them and from seeing the big 40-foot bus trying to get on and off the street from the stops. The reality was that unless LTD could do something significant in terms of improving its competitive capability, then the community would end up with the same problems that other communities faced when they did not do any planning. When the metropolitan areas of those communities grew, people suddenly realized that they did not like the congestion,

gridlock, cost of parking, and other environmental issues. Then the cost of light rail or other rail systems was exorbitant. Mr. Bennett further stated that even those communities that successfully implemented light rail systems had not done so in a geographical way that gained the impact that they could have gained if they had started much earlier.

Mr. Bennett continued to say that what the BRT plan suggested was that a community could start now and implement a highly competitive program over a long planning period of 25 to 30 years. Essentially, BRT would be planned route by route in certain highly traveled arterial sections of the community. The BRT plan would include a different kind of vehicle and a different kind of fare system, and be complemented with a Park & Ride program. The vehicle would have the benefit of exclusive rights of way. BRT would utilize a rubber-tired vehicle that would arrive every eight or ten minutes, it would be predictable, it could go as fast as a car with a limited number of stops, and it could get riders to most highly-congested areas of the community, particularly during peak times. Those amenities would allow LTD to better compete with the automobile. The exclusive right-of-way concept might involve trying to acquire some private property and/or some adjustment of the existing roadway.

Mr. Bennett stated that it would not be easy, even if begun today. But, if it were begun today, before the problem was so evident that congestion and land values, etc., made it prohibitive, there actually was a chance to make it work.

Mr. Bennett stated that he and the rest of the Board members were proposing BRT as part of the updated TransPlan, to see whether it could generate community support. He stated that he realized that the Commissioners had previously heard about BRT, but the LTD Board wanted to present BRT in a formal way in order to generate some discussion around it, and to be able to hear the Commissioner's comments and answer any questions they might have. The LTD Board was seeking support of the BRT concept from the Board of Commissioners.

Mr. Bennett further stated that the Board had appeared before several other elected officials and appointed bodies. There was some significant support for BRT in Eugene. The Board had met with the Springfield City Council twice and received limited support.

Following the viewing of the BRT video, Ms. Hocken stated that the current draft TransPlan contained two options for transit services, one of which was the BRT concept, and the other called for some improvements to the current system. The preliminary discussions among the governing bodies on this issue indicated that LTD and the City of Eugene supported the BRT concept, while the Board of Commissioners and the City of Springfield were reluctant to endorse the BRT concept. She asked for the Commissioners' thoughts on BRT.

Commissioner Sorenson asked for more information about the financing of BRT. Ms. Hocken replied that at this point, there was not a definite answer. LTD had applied for FTA demonstration funds, and the FTA indicated that it very interested in the project. Representative DeFazio was very supportive; however, he thought that LTD should shift its emphasis more to the planning approach. She stated that there was no guaranteed funding at this point.

Commissioner Sorenson then asked if local jurisdictions were being asked to contribute portions of their transportation or gas tax money at this time, or whether the LTD Board just wanted verbal support. Ms. Hocken replied that LTD was not asking for financial assistance at this time. Ms. Loobey added that the LTD Board and staff viewed BRT as a relationship effort among the local units of government and LTD. There was no projection that LTD would see road fund money go into the components of BRT, except where there were projects, such as the Thurston Park & Ride, where the County did expend funds. These were seen as cooperative efforts between LTD and other local units of government through the TransPlan and other efforts. Some of the parts of BRT, such as the signal priority system, required active cooperation from the local units of government.

Commissioner Sorenson then asked under whose authority would the exclusive bus lanes fall. LTD Planning and Development Manager Stefano Viggiano replied that exclusive bus lanes would fall under the authority of whichever unit of government owned or maintained the particular street.

Commissioner Cornacchia stated that he was both interested and intrigued by the BRT concept. He stated his concern that while the concept existed, the planning and impact documents and analysis were still out there to be worked on. He appreciated the Congressman DeFazio's approach, which was trying to take a private-sector approach to BRT, where more planning and impact analysis was applied to the vision. He made the assessment that LTD needed to go beyond the concept. There were basic questions about how BRT would impact not only road funds by the creation of the system, but also the impacts that resulted from the system. He stated that it would be difficult for him to buy into the idea that LTD would be more competitive by taking a lane of travel on a roadway that had a service delivery of, for example, A or B. When that lane was taken away, the resulting congestion on the remaining lanes would cause the service delivery of that roadway to drop to a C or D level, resulting in the County staff recommending that it not be done. It could create liability problems for the jurisdiction that had authority for that roadway.

Commissioner Sorenson then asked about the impact on service delivery levels of instituting only the concepts of signal prioritization and queue jumping. He thought that if those two concepts lowered the service delivery levels enough that it became apparent that the road needed to be widened, the transition could occur at a time when the public might be more accepting. He emphasized that this type of planning and analysis needed to be done first. He stated that the draft TransPlan language addressing a planning and analysis stage of BRT would be much more acceptable than language that said that LTD would immediately embark upon implementation. He thought it should be made clear what BRT would mean to the community, and with the scoping and planning process, the community would have a better picture of what BRT would mean. He was not sure what LTD was asking of the Commissioners.

Mr. Bennett stated that LTD was asking for support not only for the concept, but also for the implementation approach that suggested the use of an exclusive right-of-way. LTD could make some limited headway with queue jumping and signal priority, and even some

headway with transportation demand management education, but without exclusive right-of-way, he said that he did not think BRT would work. Mr. Bennett further stated that in order to implement the pilot route, a large amount of engineering and planning would be done. Private property would be affected; some common-area property, such as a median strip, might be taken; property would need to be bought; and if the level of service on remaining lanes was not too adversely affected, existing lanes could be used. He stated that if the language in TransPlan was not fairly strong in terms of the communities' commitment, then it would delay the process another ten years, causing the cost of implementation to go up significantly. He said that there always was the choice not to do anything now, and do what every other community of this size had done, which was to let the problem get worse before seeking solutions.

Mr. Bennett further stated that he had lived in the Eugene area for nearly 50 years, and in the last three to four years, he had observed more changes in terms of transportation congestion than he had seen in the previous fifteen years. He said that now was the time to consider solutions.

Commissioner Green stated that he liked the BRT concept, particularly with the dedicated lanes. He was very familiar with the concept of dedicated lanes from his time spent in Minneapolis; not only for the buses, but also for the taxicabs in the downtown area, which helped traffic flow. He stated that he agreed with the concerns that had been previously stated by Commissioners Cornacchia and Sorenson, and he was relieved to know that LTD was not asking for money. He stated that the issue of the politics surrounding purchasing rights-of-way and private property concerned him. He asked how the pilot route had been determined. In addition, he was concerned that it would be a disservice to the whole BRT concept to begin the implementation process without the benefit of a thorough public participation process. There were a number of considerations that still needed to be worked out, but he again stated that he liked the concept.

In looking over the documentation, Commissioner Green asked if in addition to policy-level support, LTD was asking for a Commissioner to participate in a steering committee. Ms. Hocken replied that there already was a committee at the staff level, which had been working on the planning that had gone forward to date. At this point, LTD was not at a stage in the planning process to form a policy-level steering committee. In response to the public process, Ms. Hocken stated that LTD had not implemented a process for this particular project; however, the concept had been presented in several forums as part of the TransPlan public participation process. In response to the choosing of the pilot corridor, Ms. Hocken stated that the staff could forward copies of the technical reports and other background information to the Commissioners. Ms. Hocken further stated that the Board was very aware of the implementation difficulties of acquiring right-of-way, and of getting community support for BRT.

Mr. Kleger stated that the specific route selections were driven by the way existing corridors were configured. There were not too many options for changing that. The pilot corridor was selected where traffic currently was the heaviest, and where there was land in public ownership that was not in active transportation use. In addition, there was private

land available that was in low-level utilization. The combination of those things influenced the choice of the West 11th / Main Street Corridor. Commissioner Green asked if LTD had condemnation authority. Ms. Loobey replied that LTD did have that authority. Ms. Hocken added that even though LTD had the legal authority, it still was not easy to implement. Mr. Kleger stated that LTD was not looking to take any more land than was absolutely necessary.

Commissioner Dumdi stated that she thought the concept was a very good one. In her previous experience living in metropolitan areas where public transportation was very available, it was very valuable to the community. With growth came the possibility of greater congestion for vehicles other than buses, and she stated that the BRT concept would support the reduction of car travel considerably, at least within the city areas and populated areas immediately surrounding the city. How much of a reduction was questionable – it could be sizeable, it could be negligible – however, the concept was very good, and she said that she thought it should move forward now before the problem became too enormous to fix at a prohibitive cost.

Mr. Bennett asked what the language said in terms of conceptual support. Part of the issue was that if it did not appear that even the concept had genuine elected official support, it would be hard to obtain the resources to do the planning that Commissioner Cornacchia correctly indicated. He stated that the Board was fearful that the language in TransPlan would be too weak, suggesting that there was no conceptual support.

Mr. Cornacchia agreed. He stated that he continued to hear LTD's urgency for an immediate implementation or a commitment to implementation. He did not think that government needed ten to fifteen years to analyze and plan what LTD was talking about. He stated that he could back up his comments with dollars. He could commit to and could advocate and argue to his Board to use Lane County Road funds on a planning and analysis exercise on BRT. However, he could not make that commitment, contemporary or prospective, based on language and the cost to implement the concept. It was not so much his issue, but how much it was going to cost later when readjustments were made to travel lanes and everything else, which would create more requirements on the County and the two Cities to come up with more travel lanes for automobiles. Until the need was established, he was not willing to make a commitment.

Mr. Bennett responded by stating that what Commissioner Cornacchia considered offering was enough. Mr. Bennett wanted the language in the TransPlan to somehow indicate that interest, without suggesting that the other jurisdictions were approving any implementation.

Mr. Saydack asked staff if the TransPlan language was available. Mr. Viggiano provided copies of the specific language in question to all present. Mr. Saydack stated that it sounded as though the Commissioners were intrigued with the concept, they recognized the problem, and they saw possibility; however, they needed more information about feasibility and political support for the long-term concept before they could endorse it. Mr. Saydack stated that the Board understood that, and part of the planning process that it had

embarked upon was designed to give information about feasibility. He understood the Commissioners' reluctance to commit to a statement in TransPlan that put the "cart before the horse," which was not what the Board was asking for. TransPlan was a document where the possibility for the BRT concept had to be manifested and clear, and this was the one TransPlan that would be in effect for fifteen years. If there were not a strong statement in TransPlan to give LTD the opportunity to work on the BRT concept, then a process would need to be started to get that language added in the future. He stated that the Board was willing to work on the language to make it more acceptable to the other jurisdictions.

Commissioner Cornacchia stated that the Lane County Public Works staff was very concerned about the conditions of the Lane County Road Fund and where it was headed.

Commissioner Sorenson stated that the idea of gaining the support of the local jurisdictions, particularly Springfield, Eugene, and Lane County, via the commitment of staff time out of their resources to work toward the three component parts of BRT would be a good way for those jurisdictions to show interest and support for it. One reason that he was in favor of BRT and wanting to work toward it was that he thought it had a lot to do with the responsibilities that Eugene, Springfield, and Lane County had in the land use arena. In addition to the obligations for road and transportation functions, there also was a regulator function to implement the state's land use laws. The BRT concept did involve livability and land use considerations. In the video, there was a diagram that showed the cost of light rail, the cost of roads, and the cost of BRT. Commissioner Sorenson noted that the cost of BRT was relatively low, and he asked how LTD had arrived at those cost comparisons.

Commissioner Dumdi asked how much Lane County could legally devote to a study of BRT. Commissioner Cornacchia replied that road funds could be extended toward the study of the impact of BRT on the road system; but planning money would be limited.

Ms. Hocken stated that now that the jurisdictions had the actual language in front of them, she realized what the problem was, but she was encouraged by the discussions that had taken place. She stated that the language problems could be worked out.

Mr. Kleger agreed with Ms. Hocken. He suggested that the objectives and performance measures might be the place to note what criteria had to be met before LTD could move on to the next step in the BRT process. In addition, he said that it would be appropriate to include the requirement that LTD gain agreement from the jurisdictions prior to moving forward on the major steps of the BRT process.

Commissioner Cornacchia stated that it was good when all jurisdictions worked more closely together. He stated his support for these conversations and meetings and he stated that more public involvement and more intergovernmental cooperation was good.

Mr. Saydack had spent a few minutes working on changes to the draft TransPlan language. He stated that he thought that the Board of Commissioners and the Lane Transit District Board had agreed that nobody wanted the BRT system unless it would work, unless it had the right political support, and unless it was financially feasible. He stated that he

wondered if something to the effect of leaving the language as it was about establishing a BRT system, but adding at the end, "if such a system would materially reduce traffic congestion and pollution, it was supported by relevant jurisdictions, and it was financially feasible to construct." He thought that embodied the three concerns that had been discussed. It would materially impact the problem, it would be politically supported, and it would be funded.

Commissioner Cornacchia stated that in the language there should be a requirement for some type of assessment to be done prior to implementation.

Mr. Bennett stated that he thought that was fair and that he had learned from the discussion. He said that he appreciated the Commissioners' consideration. He asked whether the new language was to be submitted in a formal way after it was reviewed, or when the language was to be approved.

Commissioner Cornacchia stated that Mr. Saydack had begun to synthesize the issues for the Boards and to provide direction on what was going to be studied. When the point was reached that the jurisdictions could agree to what was going to be looked at, then it would lead to the next step. It was not much different than the scenario of the Pioneer Parkway plan, where once the service level reached 10,000 cars per day, that road was to be built. There were certain steps that lead to that, including some public process.

Mr. Saydack said that possibly the approach could be to work out the acceptable language, then to present it to the various jurisdictions for endorsement. Commissioner Cornacchia replied that the Metropolitan Policy Committee (MPC) would meet the next Thursday, and he could alert the MPC that new language would be coming from LTD for consideration.

Ms. Hocken asked how that fit in to the TransPlan process. She knew that the intergovernmental team was drafting language for the planning commissions to review, and she was not sure where that process was, but she asked if it was still possible to get some of this language into what was to be presented to the planning commissions.

Mr. Viggiano replied that he thought it could be approved at the October MPC meeting. Mr. Cornacchia asked if there was a certain date that the latest draft TransPlan was to be completed. Mr. Viggiano did not think that there was a specific date established. Commissioner Cornacchia stated that he was hesitant to send language to the planning commissions that had yet to receive endorsement at the jurisdiction level. Ms. Hocken asked Commissioner Cornacchia to talk about this discussion at the MPC meeting on Thursday.

Commissioner Sorenson mentioned that the Lane County Board of Commissioners, the City of Eugene, and the LTD Board had contributed to the United Front visit to Washington, D.C., each year. In planning this year's visit to Washington, D.C., he thought that there should be language presented in the United Front documentation, highlighting the cooperation among the jurisdictions. It would help the senators and representatives in their

advocacy. Part of the difficulty in this whole process was the degree of assistance from the state or federal government. If their assistance was great, this had a better chance of success. BRT should be a regional issue.

Commissioner Cornacchia asked if there were two policies that addressed Bus Rapid Transit. Ms. Loobey replied that there was policy statement 1a, which addressed BRT, and policy statement 1b, which addressed an enhanced transit system. Mr. Viggiano replied that there also was a finance policy statement that addressed BRT.

SIGNAL PRIORITIZATION: Ms. Murphy explained that Opticom, or signal priority, currently allowed emergency vehicles to control an approaching signal to get a green light. LTD would like to participate in using signal preemption, not to conflict with the emergency vehicles, but to cause an early green light or to hold the green light longer to improve bus travel times. The software already had been developed, and this system had been in use successfully since 1992 in Bremerton, Washington. With the new technology, the bus system could be measured and coordinated with the signals. Mr. Viggiano further explained that there was software that allowed the computer to determine if in fact signal priority should be used. It could be based on the number of people on a bus and be tied in to the automatic passenger counter. If there were x number of people on the bus, the bus would get priority, and if there were fewer than that, it would not get priority. It also could be based on whether the bus was ahead of schedule or not; the buses that were further behind schedule would get the priority. There were a lot of ways to configure the system, and it could limit the amount of impact it would have on a signal on an intersection-by-intersection basis. For some intersections, priority signaling might not be allowed because it would have too great an impact on cross traffic. In other situations, it might allow 15 or 20 seconds of hold. It can be a very flexible system.

Ms. Murphy said that basically, it was a two-tiered system. It would be owned and operated by the community, but LTD would pay for the upgrades and maintenance. Ms. Hocken mentioned that LTD had received approval for a loan that would enable it to purchase the equipment. Ms. Murphy further stated that it had required a change in some legislation in order to allow this to happen. The legislation had passed, and the Governor had signed it. In addition, local emergency agencies had endorsed the plan.

Commissioner Cornacchia asked if LTD staff could meet with the Roads Advisory Committee to discuss BRT and signal priority prior to the October MPC meeting. He understood that BRT was more a city issue than a county one, but he said that the Roads Advisory Committee would want to have some participation at the policy level. Commissioner Sorenson added that the planning commission should be involved as well. There was interest at the city level on the implications to land-use issues, growth, and vehicle miles traveled (VMTs). Ms. Loobey mentioned that LTD had met with the planning commissions of both the Cities of Springfield and Eugene. Mr. Viggiano added that all four planning commissions had heard presentations on BRT during the TransPlan decision package process.

In closing, Ms. Hocken stated that the LTD Board and staff would be out and about in the community talking about BRT, and she thanked the Board of Commissioners for their time and thoughtfulness on this issue.

THURSTON STATION: Mr. Kleger stated that the Thurston Station at 58th and Main in Springfield was slated to open on September 21. The paving of the parking lot would not be complete at that time, but the bus driveways, the passenger platform, and the sidewalks would be complete. Temporary lighting would be installed until the permanent lighting could be delivered. Landscaping would take place in October and November. The new masts for the traffic signals were due to arrive in October, and temporary signals would be operational in the meantime. He said that the Lane County participation in the project had been extraordinary. Ms. Hocken stated that it had been an exciting project overall.

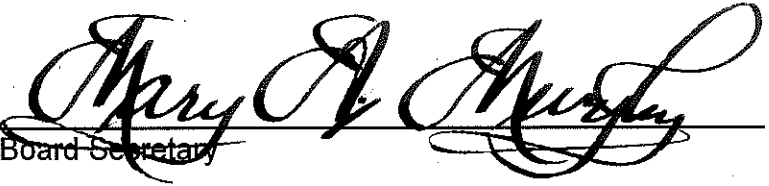
OTHER: Commissioner Dumdi asked about bus availability for people with disabilities and for people who were elderly. She stated that there was a need to look at this service for future planning. She asked about the service to the outlying areas, such as Florence, for these people. Mr. Bennett replied that the communities themselves thought it was too expensive to contract that service with LTD. Ms. Hocken stated that the Governor's Transportation Initiative was meant to provide just that type of service in outlying areas. Commissioner Dumdi noted that Florence did have the "Friends of Florence" van service that operated daily to the hospital. It did not provide service to others at different times of the day. Commissioner Sorenson added that there were elderly people in Eugene who wanted to go to Florence, as well. People who were inquiring about that service could be referred to LTD. Mr. Bennett asked what the Commissioners were thinking about the frequency of such service. Commissioner Dumdi thought that a pilot project could include bus service a couple of times per week. Mr. Bennett stated that LTD would be happy to be part of any planning in that direction. Ms. Loobey stated that the Governor's Transportation legislation, to provide additional funding for services for the elderly and disabled, did not have enough senate votes.

Ms. Wylie stated her concern about service to Oakridge. She thought that with the end of the Greyhound service to that area, the citizens basically would be stranded without any public transportation service to the metropolitan area. Ms. Loobey stated that LTD had researched service to Oakridge, and at one point, a property tax levy was on the ballot to contract for service. That measure failed. There were no further attempts made to gain LTD service to Oakridge. Mr. Kleger added that the Greyhound service would continue for at least the next six months. In addition, Special Transportation Funds (STF) provided financial assistance to the City of Oakridge to operate once-a-week van service to the metropolitan area for those people who were eligible for those services.

Ms. Hocken added that Oakridge was exactly the type of area that the Governor's Transportation Initiative was trying to assist.

ADJOURNMENT: Ms. Hocken thanked the Board of Commissioners for coming. She stated that the two jurisdictions should meet more often, maybe once in six months or

once a year. Commissioner Sorenson thanked the LTD Board for their leadership on the BRT issue. The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.


Board Secretary