

MINUTES OF DIRECTORS MEETING

LANE TRANSIT DISTRICT

JOINT MEETING WITH
EUGENE CITY COUNCIL

Monday, October 13, 1997

Pursuant to notice given to *The Register-Guard* for publication on October 9, 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 Eugene City Council was held on Monday, October 13, 1997, at 5:30 p.m., in the LTD Board Room at 3500 East 17th Avenue, Eugene.

Present:	<u>LTD Board</u>	<u>Eugene City Council</u>
	Rob Bennett	Pat Farr
	Patricia Hocken President, presiding	Bobby Lee
	Dave Kleger	Scott Meisner
	Mary Murphy	Nancy Nathanson
	Roger Saydack	Laurie Swanson Gribskov
	Hillary Wylie	Betty Taylor
	Phyllis Loobey, General Manager	Ken Tollenaar
	Susan Hekimoglu, Recording Secretary	Mayor Jim Torrey, presiding Vicki Elmer, City Manager
Absent:		Tim Laue

CALL TO ORDER: Mayor Torrey and Ms. Hocken called the meeting to order at 5:45 p.m. Ms. Hocken welcomed the City Council and staff to the meeting and thanked them for coming. She stated that she hoped they had enjoyed the tour of the new Eugene Station that had occurred just prior to the start of the meeting.

Ms. Hocken mentioned the background information that had been mailed with the agenda packet to the Board and City Council prior to the meeting. The agenda included information on LTD services, the group pass program, national studies that LTD participated in, the Eugene Station, and LTD's Park & Ride program. There was a revised insert to the information packet that Ms. Hocken distributed regarding the excerpts from the 1995 Market Area Survey. She explained that the survey was conducted with people from both the metropolitan area and just outside the metropolitan area, and she stated that the responses were surprisingly uniform given the different types of attitudes and demographics. She stated that there was no time for a detailed discussion of this material and asked if anyone had any questions about it.

Councilor Nathanson asked about the market area survey. She noticed that air quality was way down in the list of community goals. She thought that was interesting, because air quality was a key factor in many city and LTD decisions in transportation demand management and other things. In addition, it was a key factor in the Lane Regional Air Pollution Authority's analysis of intersections, streets, and corridors. She stated her surprise that perhaps citizens were not more aware of or concerned about air quality.

Ms. Hocken responded by saying that in the survey, respondents were asked to rate their transportation priorities, and she did not think that they were given multiple choices, but were asked to list their own priorities.

BUS RAPID TRANSIT: Ms. Hocken introduced the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) video that had been created to share LTD's vision of what BRT could be. Following the video, Ms. Hocken stated that the video was meant for basic public education about BRT, and also to highlight where LTD was in the BRT process. She stated that a lot of planning had been done, but could not go much further with the project without some supporting language in the TransPlan about what the project would entail.

Ms. Hocken added that last spring, draft TransPlan language supporting the creation of a BRT project was circulated among the jurisdictions, and at that time, LTD and the City of the Eugene supported the BRT language, while Lane County and the City of Springfield were not willing to support it. Both the City of Springfield and Lane County had suggested an alternative statement that called for an enhanced transit system. Ms. Hocken introduced Board member Rob Bennett, who would elaborate on the BRT project and talk about where LTD was in respect to the City of Springfield and Lane County.

Mr. Bennett stated that LTD was very excited about BRT. It was very different than what LTD had ever done before. He stated that LTD was doing many good things. It was carrying more students, the group pass program was growing, and LTD was carrying more passengers than the population increase would expect, based on the percentage of cars. Whenever LTD was viewed from the outside, it received good ratings. LTD was very proud of its record in the community and the progress it was making.

However, Mr. Bennett continued, it was clear that LTD could not get to the next step in becoming a more important part of the transportation system without being able to compete on a different basis. In order to do that, LTD would need a way to compete that was very different from the way the buses were operating today.

When thinking about Bus Rapid Transit, Mr. Bennett stated that people needed to be thinking about exclusive lanes. In the long run, BRT would not work with something other than exclusive lanes. BRT would utilize a new type of vehicle and a pre-paid fare system to ease loading. Mr. Bennett stated that if he could, he would call it something other than a bus. The word "bus" brought a certain image to mind, and BRT would not resemble that image. The bus was and is a useful tool, but it was not what was envisioned in the new competitive approach to public transit.

Mr. Bennett emphasized that there was a choice. The community could wait until there was considerably more congestion, assuming that the Eugene/Springfield area would continue to grow to some degree. If there was a belief in trying to hang on to the urban services boundary, and at the same time there was a belief that there would be success in having infill projects and an increase in density with some success of nodal development, then the community would have denser development and more expensive property. If LTD were to implement a rapid transit system 10 years from now, Mr. Bennett stated, it probably would be too late. He further stated that the community could implement a light-rail system someday, when there was a substantially larger population, but even then the cost would be in the billions of dollars. With those thoughts in mind, consideration should be given to a way to start today with a plan that would evolve over the next 25 to 30 years. LTD's identification of the first route was the first step in that process.

Mr. Bennett said that when he was calling on people in the community to discuss BRT, he found that there was a lot of excitement about the concept because it was a very different competitive position for transit than what anyone had envisioned before. He thought that the political difficulty came from trying to acquire exclusive right-of-way. LTD could acquire some public space, but most likely it would need to try to acquire some private property as well, in order to operate exclusive bus lanes on the major arterial streets. Therefore, he stated, the Board was meeting with the Council to seek its support as strongly as it could. The revised proposed BRT language for TransPlan essentially was a compromise for LTD. Mr. Bennett stated that LTD believed that if the BRT concept was not supported in TransPlan this time, then it would not have the same level of interest and priority. He said that LTD appreciated the Council's time to view the video and to discuss BRT with the Board.

Councilor Gribskov Swanson asked the Board to discuss the downside of Bus Rapid Transit and to share why Lane County and the City of Springfield were against the initial proposed language.

Mr. Bennett stated that he thought that the exclusive right-of-way was a difficult issue. The Board held two meetings with the City of Springfield, and Mr. Bennett said that he was encouraged after the second meeting by the Council's willingness to seriously consider BRT. After that second meeting, the Springfield Council's message was that it would like LTD to expand on its existing operation to find out whether system improvements within the context of the current operation might first have some additional benefit. With respect to Lane County, Mr. Bennett said the Commissioners wanted more information. Mr. Bennett said that he thought there was considerable support at the County level, more so than at the Springfield City Council level. The County recommended a BRT steering committee that would involve some elected officials from different jurisdictions to gather different information as to routing and potential trips that BRT could handle and what might be the net effect on the road system.

Mr. Bennett further stated that he had lived in this community for a long time. He had lived in different areas of the community and had seen the community grow and evolve.

Furthermore, in the nearly 50 years that he had resided in the area, he stated that he had never seen a bigger increase in traffic congestion than he had seen in the last three or four years. His sense of the traffic congestion was that it was going to continue to get worse, and the community might not be able to build its way out of the problem. This area could end up like many small cities that were not yet big enough to have a light-rail system, and where people's perception was that the community was too small to have something other than the normal bus service, so community members continued to fight the congestion battle every day.

Councilor Nathanson stated that it seemed that the Eugene City Council was in an interesting position, having already endorsed the concept, and now hearing another plea to either reaffirm it or endorse it again, or at least to endorse something that was modified. Assuming that the Council still supported the concept, and if the City of Springfield continued to not accept the concept, Councilor Nathanson asked if BRT would be viable if it were moved ahead on the Eugene side only. In other words, with all the planning and placement that would take place, would it be a viable system if it were implemented partially, such as with a north-south corridor for example from Coburg Road to the West 11th area.

LTD Planning and Development Manager Stefano Viggiano replied that the system eventually was intended to encompass five different corridors that covered the entire metropolitan area. He did think that one option would be to look at one corridor, such as Coburg to Willamette, all within the City of Eugene. If that pilot corridor were successful, it would be hoped that Springfield would then adopt the BRT concept. Mr. Viggiano stated that he did not think it would make sense to go forward with the east-west pilot corridor without Springfield's participation, because the corridor would be cut in half. One of the principles behind Bus Rapid Transit was that it was through routing all the way through downtown areas. It was not meant to end in the center of town. He thought that while it could move forward, it would clearly be better if all jurisdictions supported it.

Councilor Meisner stated that he had participated on a light-rail feasibility committee, and, therefore, he fully understood that this community could not support that concept. He stated his continued support for BRT. He asked how the present density with the BRT system as presented related in terms of feasibility and cost effectiveness, and was BRT presently possible.

Mr. Bennett replied that it was feasible now. He stated that LTD currently was not prepared to present all the final details of BRT, but what became clear was that BRT would cost 5 to 10 percent of what a light-rail system would cost, and what was amazing was that a BRT system could easily evolve into a light-rail system, because the right-of-way already would have been established.

Councilor Tollenaar stated that this was the first time he had heard anyone explicitly state that an exclusive bus lane was needed to make BRT work. He was glad to have that

clarification. He asked where the funding would come from for the acquisition of the additional right-of way and whether it was available to LTD from federal grants.

Ms. Loobey replied that ideally the funding would come from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) where there were two available sources: Section 3 discretionary funds that the District could apply for and Section 9 formula funds that were appropriated to transit districts on an annual basis for capital or operating expenses. In addition, the District had been in discussions with the Oregon Department of Transportation, which oversaw State Highway 126. There were unused rights-of-way along those corridors that could be leased to LTD, and/or there was a possibility that gas tax money could be used to help fund the Park & Ride lots that would be associated with the BRT project. Ms. Hocken added that the money was not guaranteed to LTD at this time. Mr. Bennett stated that there was, however, a lot of excitement at the federal level for this project. LTD was very encouraged by the fact that FTA staff had visited the District to learn more about the project.

Mr. Kleger stated that one of the reasons LTD had received encouragement at the federal level was that LTD already was running 10-minute service along more than one-half of the pilot corridor, and during peak periods, that service was not enough. There was a need for a higher level of service than what LTD would be able to do, and LTD would not be able to do better than that unless there was a way to move the buses more quickly through that corridor. The demand already existed on that route.

Mayor Torrey asked about the time line to develop and implement a Coburg – Willamette route, given the fact that there were only four lanes of traffic over the Ferry Street Bridge, and how LTD would handle the dedicated lane issue. He did not see a way to take one of those four lanes to dedicate it to BRT. Mr. Viggiano replied that the nice thing about BRT was that a route could be implemented incrementally, and the system could be built over time. The Coburg - Willamette street route could be implemented where it operated in mixed traffic over the bridge until, at some point, the funds and political will were present to build a new bridge. That was the difference between BRT and light rail. With light rail, a train could not be operated until every section of track was connected. With any corridor, the BRT amenities could be implemented over time, and the vehicles could operate in and out of mixed traffic where needed.

Mayor Torrey then asked whether or not Portland was looking at the BRT concept, since it no longer had the financing to go forward with its light-rail system. Mr. Bennett replied that Portland was not considering BRT because the cost was too high just to get the right-of-way.

Councilor Farr asked for further clarification on the partial integration of BRT. Mr. Viggiano replied that by partially implementing BRT in one jurisdiction, a whole section of the corridor would be without any improvements. By partial implementation, he was referring to the features along the corridor, some of which might be exclusive right-of-way and some of which might be signal priority. If the only issue that the City of Springfield was concerned about was the exclusive right-of-way and other features could be used, such as

queue jumpers and signal priority, BRT still had a chance to be successful in the east/west corridor.

Mr. Farr further stated that it appeared that the City of Eugene would not change its stance in support of BRT. It also seemed that the City of Springfield, at least in the near future, would not change its stance. He asked if it would be better to have at least part of the system rather than nothing at this time. Ms. Hocken responded that the LTD Board was not ready to state that Springfield was not going to support the compromised language that was drafted at the meeting with Lane County. She asked the participants to review the revised draft BRT language, which read:

Establish a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system, composed of frequent, fast transit service along major corridors and neighborhood service that connects with the corridor service and with nearby activity centers, if the system is shown to materially reduce traffic congestion, local governments demonstrate support, and financing for the system is feasible.

Ms. Hocken stated that the second part of the statement was new and had preliminary support of the Lane County Commissioners. Lane County wanted LTD to do some more extensive planning and modeling. The Commissioners wanted to know that LTD received approval for the federal grant, and where exactly within the city LTD expected to have exclusive bus lanes. In other words, Lane County wanted more detailed preliminary information prior to its approval of the implementation. It was hoped that the City of Springfield would approve this new language at its meeting later in October.

Councilor Farr asked if LTD had considered a menu approach for Springfield showing the elements of BRT to determine which of those elements Springfield would support. Ms. Hocken responded that since there was a Metropolitan Transportation Plan, more general language needed to be in it. Anything that was implemented would need to be done as a cooperative effort with the other jurisdictions. This draft language was LTD's way of stating that there was much planning to be done prior to implementation of BRT.

Ms. Murphy stated that she represented part of the City of Springfield, and she explained that Springfield was taking a cautious approach, and it wanted LTD to prove the need for BRT and to show how it could better meet the needs than did the current bus system.

Mr. Bennett stated that some combination of features of BRT might work in the short term, and when he talked about BRT without exclusive right-of-way, anyone would be excited about it. However, the exclusive right-of-way issue made BRT more complicated. It was the only way BRT would work and allow LTD to truly compete.

Councilor Swanson Gribkov stated that there appeared to be no difference of opinion from the Council since its previous endorsement of the concept. She further stated

that it was true that the only way to get people out of their cars was for them to be stuck in traffic and see a bus go by. It would take that sort of demonstration to make a difference. She asked how the City of Eugene could be helpful in a collegial way to LTD to get Springfield on board. She also asked if private condemnation was an issue. Mr. Bennett replied that the City of Springfield was very cautious, as it should be, in its assessment.

Ms. Murphy replied that in Springfield, nearly 37 percent of its population used LTD. She stated her thought that this was a community-wide issue, and those people who used LTD should be encouraged to express their support to their civic leaders.

Councilor Taylor asked for clarification regarding the taking of lanes on Coburg Road. She asked if two lanes would be taken for buses, or if two additional lanes would be built. Ms. Hocken replied that most likely BRT would not work without an additional river crossing. In fact, that was one of the reasons that the east – west corridor as a pilot corridor was appealing. Councilor Taylor asked if in spite of the need for an additional river crossing, LTD was thinking of expanding Coburg Road by two additional lanes. Ms. Hocken replied that level of detail was not yet determined. It was a four-lane road at this time, and LTD had focused its efforts on the east – west corridor. Mr. Viggiano further stated that with any corridor, there were three options. One was to acquire right-of-way and add lanes, another was to take existing lanes, and the third was to take some parking space and convert it into a bus lane. In addition, there may be excess right-of-way within that corridor that could be used for an exclusive bus lane. LTD would not know the answers to that question until fairly detailed and expensive engineering was done along the entire corridor. That was why the draft policy language suggested that the decision be based on obtaining political support and funding after having gone through that analysis.

Mr. Saydack stated that the LTD Board was very sensitive to the condemnation issue, and there had to be a very strong demonstration of public need before ever exercising condemnation powers. That was part of what the planning process was all about. LTD wanted to be sure that BRT would work before ever implementing any of it.

Councilor Tollenaar stated that it appeared that what LTD was asking for was a placeholder in TransPlan. Mr. Bennett responded that it did not help LTD to have the language in TransPlan that earlier was suggested by the City of Springfield and Lane County, which was that LTD expand and enhance its current service. The LTD Board had since met with the Lane County Commissioners, and they had unofficially approved the new BRT statement, as was read earlier (page 10 of the minutes) by Ms. Hocken, as it addressed their concerns.

Mr. Kleger stated that this additional language did not put LTD in a bind because it presumed that LTD would do what it normally did, but it also opened the door for LTD to get the expenditures to do the planning for BRT.

Councilor Swanson Gribkov asked City Manager Vicki Elmer if the Council was at this meeting to make a motion in support of proposed alternative language. Mayor Torrey

asked if the City should wait until the other two jurisdictions took action. He asked if there were any Councilors present who wanted to back away from supporting this language. There being no reply, Mayor Torrey suggested that LTD bring a recommendation back to the City of Eugene following the decisions by the County and the City of Springfield.

Ms. Hocken stated that there had been a discussion at MPC about the revised statement, and Lane County Commissioner Steve Cornacchia had asked LTD to bring back the feedback from the Eugene City Council to MPC. She did not think there was anything else that needed to be done at this time. Ms. Elmer stated that maybe LTD needed a broad statement of support from the City. Ms. Hocken replied that the City was on record as supporting the stronger original language.

Councilor Swanson Gribkov stated that she continued to support the BRT concept. Mayor Torrey stated that once the final language that was supported by the other jurisdictions was agreed upon, LTD should bring that back to the City Council for formal approval.

SECURITY AT THE NEW EUGENE STATION: Ms. Hocken stated that many of the Councilors had toured the new station earlier in the evening before the meeting. One of the big issues surrounding the opening of that station was security. She and Mr. Kleger had met with LTD staff and Mayor Torrey, City Manager Elmer, and Chief of Police Leonard Cook to discuss how the two jurisdictions could partner to provide a more secure environment for LTD's customers. One of the biggest concerns among LTD's customers was the perception that the Eugene Station was not safe for children, people with disabilities, or the elderly to make bus transfers. One of the issues discussed at the staff meeting was the availability of space in the building on the southwest corner that could be used to house a police substation. Ms. Hocken asked Mayor Torrey and Ms. Elmer to discuss their thoughts on the concept of the substation. Mayor Torrey stated that in the near future, staff wanted to bring a proposal for a substation to the Council for approval. He would ask Ms. Elmer to address the staffing elements. The City was asking LTD to staff the person in the facility, and Chief Cook was looking at the possibility of placing two sworn officers there who would not necessarily be assigned to the LTD station, but since they needed to be in an office somewhere, it made sense that they would be in plain view and available as sworn officers to deal with emergency situations in that area.

Mayor Torrey stated that he had talked with Ms. Loobey about how LTD would handle the Eugene Station itself in terms of what would and would not be acceptable. In addition, there was concern that the young people who currently were between Charnelton and Willamette on Broadway would relocate to the station, partly due to the fact that the restrooms would be open to the public.

Ms. Elmer stated that the City was delighted to have LTD provide office space for a community service officer for whom the District had offered to pay. City staff had agreed to that, and the Chief thought that was a great location. The Chief was looking at possible configurations for the space. One possibility was that LTD could fund a community service

officer at that location, and there was a provision for two police cars to park there. It could support the community policing efforts, which included a sector commander to be outstationed there. Those things were being reviewed, but currently, from the staff perspective, the prospect was good, and the staffing levels were such that they could be augmented in any case.

Councilor Nathanson stated that she was appreciative of the offer, but she cautioned the City Manager that there were at least two city neighborhood organizations that were aware of a potential offer in the past of a neighborhood safety station, neither of which ever materialized. She thought it might cause a problem to open one in the downtown area before there was a satisfactory explanation and/or perhaps a plan to satisfy the needs of those other neighborhoods.

Ms. Elmer stated that she was glad that Councilor Nathanson had raised that issue, and she thought the Council could talk more about it, because at the bare minimum, the LTD substation would not take any existing City resources, which was an important factor. In addition, Ms. Elmer stated that LTD had volunteered to donate an older bus to the City to be used as a mobile substation. She thought it was a possibility that could be used to satisfy the neighborhood requests.

Mayor Torrey added that the Bethel and West Eugene substations had been discussed with the Chief. The difference was that here was a partner willing to come forward with the staffing cost and the facility. In West Eugene, there was a facility, but not the staffing. The Bethel program needed to be bigger than either of these facilities, at least along the lines of the Whiteaker station. He was not opposed to try to find ways to fund that, but in this case, LTD was stepping forward with an offer that included all the elements – the building and the staffing.

Councilor Swanson Gribkov stated that she appreciated the difference that LTD was offering to pay for the staff and provide a location, but also she realized that the main police station was literally blocks away. She also was aware that everyone wanted their own public service station, including the downtown merchants. She asked if decentralized policing services was the best way to approach the community policing issue. She was supportive, but wanted to have more dialogue about the bigger issues and look at other ways to address the issue.

Councilor Lee asked how the decision was made to agree to part of LTD's offer. Ms. Elmer stated that the contractual agreement was a staff decision, although the budgetary authority belonged to the Council. She added that this topic would be a good discussion for the Council Committee on Public Safety. Mayor Torrey stated that if the Council opposed the idea, the staff would not go against its wishes. The staff could make recommendations to the Council, but ultimately it was the decision of the Council.

Councilor Farr stated that while he was in favor of, and frequently had argued for, a Bethel station, he did want to state that the substation at the LTD site made sense if LTD

was willing to pay for the offices. It would relieve the strain on the downtown police station. In the Bethel area, it was his belief that the City was willing, and when the time was right, there would be a station there. Mayor Torrey stated that the issue should be brought up later in the week at the meeting on community policing in the Bethel area.

Councilor Nathanson asked if LTD participated in the Downtown Eugene, Incorporated, Mall Guides program, and if so, was it possible that some of the Guides would use that space.

Ms. Loobey replied that LTD currently had a contract with Downtown Eugene, Inc., for the Mall Guides and had set aside space in the facility for the Guides. Ms. Loobey further clarified that, currently, LTD contributed \$25,000 for one-third of a police officer in partnership with the City of Eugene. The discussions with the City staff were about staffing a community service officer. Chief Cook went to look at the site, and thought he could staff more people there. Ms. Loobey clarified that if the City were considering staffing a sector commander at the LTD site, LTD had not agreed to pay for that person. In answer to Councilor Nathanson's question, in addition, there was an operators' lounge in that building, and the operators were very excited about the potential of a substation and had offered to share some of their lounge space by providing a locker and shower, etc., for someone who would be staffed at that location. In addition, Ms. Loobey explained that currently there was no proposal, and most likely an Intergovernmental Agreement between the City and LTD would be drawn after working out the details, such as hours, etc. Ms. Loobey stated that there was an issue where staff were working to coordinate the ordinances that covered the downtown mall with the ordinances that would cover the LTD station. For instance, if an ordinance were being drafted governing behavior on the downtown mall, then LTD's ordinance governing behavior at the station would need to be very similar.

Ms. Hocken added that this issue had a somewhat short time line, since the station would be opening in March, and it was LTD's goal to have the security solutions in place prior to the opening, rather than to try to address issues after the fact.

Councilor Lee stated his concern about people thinking that policing itself was the way to solve the problems facing the downtown area. He suggested that before LTD got into that mode of thinking, it also should work with the Council to look at different ways to approach the issue.

Ms. Elmer endorsed Councilor Lee's statement and added that LTD and the City also had looked at the holistic approach to public safety that Councilor Lee and the Mayor currently were researching in the downtown area.

Mayor Torrey asked for final comments from the Councilors.

Councilor Taylor stated that she had not heard about any ordinances governing the downtown area that the Council was addressing. Mayor Torrey replied that those would be discussed at the subcommittee level first, but had not yet been presented.

Councilor Nathanson thanked LTD for the thoroughness of the background material that had been presented prior to the meeting. Councilor Farr thanked LTD for its service. It was obvious to him as he listened to the members of the Board and staff that the community was in good hands. Councilor Swanson Gribkov stated that she was pleased with the intergovernmental cooperation that had continued to grow between LTD and the City of Eugene both at the elected official and Board level and at the staff level.

ADJOURNMENT: Ms. Hocken thanked the Council for taking time from their busy schedules to meet with LTD. There being no further discussion, Ms. Hocken and Mayor Torrey adjourned the meeting at 6:57 p.m.


Board Secretary