

MINUTES OF DIRECTORS MEETING

LANE TRANSIT DISTRICT

SPECIAL BOARD MEETING

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2004

Pursuant to notice given to *The Register-Guard* for publication on February 24, 2004, and distributed to persons on the mailing list of the District, the Board of Directors of the Lane Transit District held a special meeting on Wednesday, February 26, 2004, beginning at 6 p.m., in the Lane Transit District Board Room, 3500 East 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Eugene.

Present: Hillary Wylie, President, presiding  
Susan Ban  
David Gant  
Gerry Gaydos, Vice President  
Pat Hocken, Secretary  
Dave Kleger  
Virginia Lauritsen, Treasurer  
Ken Hamm, General Manager  
Jo Sullivan, Clerk of the Board  
Kimberly Young, Minutes Recorder

**Call to Order** - Ms. Wylie called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m. Mr. Gaydos and Ms. Lauritsen were not yet present.

**Roll Call** – Mr. Hamm called the roll.

**Preliminary Remarks by Board President** - Ms. Wylie called Board members' attention to the norms adopted by a past Board, which she believed represented existing Board norms. She asked Board members to review the norms and offer suggestions for additional norms, and proposed that the Board discuss them at the next meeting or at the Board retreat. Board members agreed.

Ms. Lauritsen arrived.

**Announcements and Additions to Agenda** – Ms. Hocken reported that the District would be going out to bid for an internal auditor soon. She asked for a volunteer from the Board to participate in the interview process. Ms. Lauritsen agreed to participate.

Ms. Wylie indicated that the Board would take action on Mr. Gaydos' Budget Committee recommendation at the next meeting; the Board could not take action at the meeting that evening under its bylaws.

**Debrief Joint Meeting with Eugene City Council** – The Board briefly discussed the February 23 joint meeting with the Eugene City Council. Members concurred that the meeting had been informative, and agreed with a suggestion from Ms. Ban that the meeting highlighted the need for

more regular joint and one-on-one meetings between Board members and Councilors to ensure that the Council was receiving accurate and current information.

Ms. Wylie noted that discussion of an appointed versus elected Board arose again during the meeting. She said that in other parts of the country, transit Boards frequently were made up of local elected officials, which provided more of a "buy-in" for projects. She said the Board was faced with the question of how to get that "buy-in" in the existing situation. She expressed concern that the Councilors did not appear to have the same "buy-in," although it was also their transit system.

Mr. Gaydos arrived at 6:20 p.m.

Ms. Lauritsen endorsed Ms. Ban's suggestion for more communication between the Council and Board.

Ms. Hocken was pleased that the Council accepted the changes that had to be made to the bus rapid transit (BRT) schedule. Ms. Wylie concurred.

Ms. Lauritsen asked how some local residents got the idea that Lane Transit District planned to route buses across the Autzen bicycle bridge, suggesting that also pointed out the need for improved communications. She expressed concern that the Board had become the target of citizens' ire. Mr. Hamm said the idea was an old one raised during discussion of the BRT corridor running north from Eugene to the Chad Drive/Crescent area. An engineering firm studied the possibility and concluded that the bridge could be modified to accommodate buses. Ms. Ban added that recently the Coburg stakeholder group had pushed LTD staff to explore several alternatives to Coburg Road, one of which was the bicycle bridge.

Mr. Viggiano explained that staff eventually had persuaded the stakeholders group that the option was not a real alternative to Coburg Road, given its distance from the corridor. The stakeholder group had agreed that it would not discuss the issue in the context of the corridor, but asked the staff to communicate to the Board that it considered the connection viable for the future. Staff agreed to do so, and had shared that information with the Board about one year ago. The Board did not provide any additional direction to staff to continue this examination. David Sonnichsen of the Whilamut Natural Area Citizen Involvement Planning Committee attended some of the stakeholder group meetings and was aware that the issue had been raised. Mr. Sonnichsen recently had contacted Mr. Viggiano to check on the status of the issue. Mr. Viggiano had informed Mr. Sonnichsen of what had taken place. Ms. Lauritsen asked if staff planned to prepare a response. Mr. Hamm said he thought he had: he had informed those who appeared before the Board to testify on this issue that LTD was not contemplating the crossing for the BRT corridor. Ms. Lauritsen questioned whether more needed to be done. The Board discussed possible options for responding to public concerns, including a letter from Mr. Hamm or a resolution.

Mr. Hamm questioned whether the Board wanted to preempt the potential of using the bridge corridor at some future time. Mr. Viggiano concurred with Mr. Hamm. He said the idea had been around for a long time and had been raised by several parties, including the City of Eugene, and it kept coming up because it could be useful. He believed that the route could be designed in such a way to avoid any impact on East Alton Baker Park, the primary area of

concern to those testifying before the Board. He emphasized that there were good transit reasons for such a connector.

Mr. Gant suggested the problem was that people kept talking about the idea, and that made people nervous. He suggested that "we stop that." Mr. Viggiano said it was the stakeholder group that raised the issue most recently. Mr. Gant said that did not mean the Board had to talk about it. Ms. Hocken pointed out the Board could not stop others from talking about the idea. She suggested the Board consider communicating directly by letter with those who testified rather than highlight the issue further in an op-ed piece.

Mr. Vobora reminded the Board that it would review a new public relations plan in April, and suggested that the Board give staff some time to discuss the issue prior to that time. He suggested that the issue could be addressed as part of that integrated plan. Board members agreed to the suggestion.

**Bus Rapid Transit Budget Scenarios** – Mr. Hamm reminded the Board that at its February 18, 2004, meeting, it directed staff to prepare three budget scenarios. He noted that each scenario pushed the third BRT, or EmX, corridor off the eight-year financial plan. Ms. Hellekson reviewed the three scenarios, each of which was based on different assumptions: (1) Projections for Long-Range Financial Plan, Schedule of Combined Eight-Year Projections, Includes EmX Pioneer Parkway Corridor Only; (2) Projections for Long-Range Financial Plan, Schedule of Combined Eight-Year Projections, Includes EmX Pioneer Parkway Corridor at \$19 million; and (3) Projections for Long-Range Financial Plan, Schedule of Combined Eight-Year Projections, No Pioneer Parkway EmX Corridor and No Reduction in Service. Staff recommended that the Board adopt Scenario 1.

Ms. Wylie called for Board discussion.

Ms. Hocken noted the many assumptions on which the scenarios were based but believed that the projections were conservative. However, she acknowledged that the future could be different. Ms. Hocken indicated support for Scenario 1.

Mr. Gant determined from Mr. Hamm that the recommendation before the Board represented consensus of LTD's Leadership Council, which included the five department directors, the general manager, the assistant general manager, the government relations manager, and the administrative services manager. Mr. Hamm stated that the recommendation reflected an internal dialogue about BRT and its impacts that had been going on for years. He said that some staff members were unsure about BRT and what it added in terms of service enhancement, and others were concerned about the impact of BRT on LTD's ability to sustain other areas in the operating budget. Others felt strongly that BRT was the right thing to do and would not have such impacts. Mr. Gant questioned whether it was fair to represent the recommendation as a staff recommendation when it appeared there was not consensus among staff.

In response to Mr. Gant, Ms. Wylie pointed out the recommendation also represented the Board's position regarding BRT as a top priority over the past ten years. It did not come out of thin air. Mr. Gant asked if the staff recommendation was in response to that priority, or if it was a result of analysis.

Ms. Hocken recalled that the Board had first discussed the BRT concept at a Board retreat about ten years ago. The Board had been very excited about the idea but had to convince staff of the

benefits of the approach. She agreed with Ms. Wylie that the Board had given staff consistent direction about BRT as a priority, and noted that the direction also was reflected in the community's adopted TransPlan.

Speaking to the issue of the origin of the staff recommendation, Ms. Hocken said that it touched on the issue of chain of command. The Board hired Mr. Hamm and expected him to provide professional recommendations. Mr. Hamm was the boss and could fire and hire other staff. Even if Mr. Hamm was alone in thinking the recommendation was the right answer, that would be legally and structurally acceptable. While she did not think that was going on, she wanted to emphasize how the organization worked. She thought it appropriate for the Board to consider such recommendations, pointing out that the Board did not have to accept them. However, Ms. Hocken indicated acceptance of the analysis done by staff regarding the recommendation before the Board.

Mr. Hamm said the strength of the Leadership Council (LC) was in its members' ability to debate and disagree. At some point in the debate, the LC arrives on a position. He did not always personally agree, but relied on the wisdom of staff. In this case, the staff believed BRT was a solution for the future. As congestion grew in major corridors, it might be the only affordable solution available. Staff believed that the eight-year projections were achievable, and recommended that LTD move forward with the two corridors.

Ms. Ban believed that if LTD were to compete successfully with the private automobile, its vehicles could not be stuck in traffic. That required an investment in the future. She said an effective transit system was dependent on an infrastructure that worked and on ridership. Ms. Ban believed the recommendation was about LTD's ability to provide an effective mass transit system to the community in the future. The question then became how to balance that future need with current needs. She said that the materials provided by staff helped her think more clearly about that question. Ms. Ban briefly contrasted the three scenarios and suggested that Scenario 1 best helped LTD achieve that balance and move into the future.

Mr. Kleger noted increased bus travel times and suggested that those would result in reduced ridership. There was nothing LTD could do now to speed its vehicles—they already were traveling as fast as possible. He said that LTD needed to get its buses out of traffic and the longer the Board waited, the more politically difficult and expensive it would be to secure the needed right-of-way. Mr. Kleger said that even those upset by the service changes agreed that something needed to be done, even if they did not want LTD to spend money on BRT. He said that LTD needed to move forward as quickly as possible to address transportation problems and congestion. Mr. Kleger indicated that he preferred Scenario 1 but would support Scenario 2 if the Board rejected Scenario 1, but he did not want to back away from what the Board already had committed to. He said the Board must focus on the future and on the near-term, or the organization would not succeed.

Mr. Gant discussed his concerns about the staff recommendation, saying his first concern was financial. He believed that the budgeting process lacked safeguards to protect against unintentional and adverse impacts on core services. He said that BRT was not a core service; fixed-route service and special transportation were core services. Mr. Gant also was concerned about the rising costs of BRT. He wanted LTD to establish an unchanging budget for BRT and keep to it, but that was not happening.

Mr. Gant expressed concern about LTD's strategic approach to BRT, as he did not think LTD had adequate partnerships with the cities of Eugene and Springfield when it came to the issue of the local match. He thought it reasonable to state to the cities that if the community wanted BRT, the two cities must take responsibility for the dollars involved for what he termed an aggressive capital program. Mr. Gant believed it also legitimate that the two cities take the lead in providing right-of-way for the project. He did not think that should be LTD's responsibility. He said the Councils should "step up" and work with LTD when it came to access issues.

Mr. Gant discussed his objections to the segmented build-out planned for BRT. He thought the approach was more appropriate for light rail. In the case of BRT, he suggested that LTD be more opportunistic in its approach and incorporate project elements in projects such as the Pioneer Parkway, and get better buy-in from the cities that way. He was not convinced that LTD knew enough about BRT to be as aggressive as it was being in implementation. He called on the Board to stop the project and reassess BRT and its build-out. Mr. Gant said that LTD should finish the Franklin corridor and assess the experience. He said it was important that BRT be a success and not a "boondoggle."

Mr. Kleger acknowledged Mr. Gant's concerns. However, he perceived BRT as fixed-route service made more effective. That was his motivation in supporting the system. He did not object to finishing and assessing the Franklin corridor, but believed that LTD needed to take advantage of the opportunity presented by the Pioneer Parkway.

Mr. Gant asserted that the Springfield staff would recommend to the council not to allow BRT to have access down the median. He said that LTD did not even know if PeaceHealth would relocate to the RiverBend campus. There were many unknowns regarding that corridor, and it was his contention that the Board and Springfield Council had not discussed the Council's commitment to the concept and the need for Springfield to be a full partner. He wanted that discussion to happen with both Councils.

Ms. Lauritsen asked Mr. Gant what the Board would do with the Springfield Council's answer, saying she thought she knew what it would be. Mr. Gant said he thought the Springfield Council less interested in the project than the Eugene Council. Mr. Lauritsen asked if the Eugene Council would direct money toward the project. Mr. Gant thought the Council would be supportive, and pointed out that LTD had not made the effort to secure such funds. He said that the Councils needed to work much more closely with the Board to understand the details of how to make BRT happen.

Ms. Wylie observed that the Springfield City Council had encouraged LTD to select the Martin Luther King, Jr., Parkway as a corridor rather than out to Thurston as originally planned. Mr. Gant reiterated that LTD needed more than encouragement from Springfield; it had to partner with LTD, which involved more than approval of a route. He called on the Board to "be firm" with the City Councils. If the Councils were not supportive, he suggested, the community had rejected BRT.

Ms. Hocken provided some historical perspective on the subject, recalling that when the Board first sought acceptance of the concept from the two cities, the two cities had made it clear they had no money to assist with the project. LTD had made it clear then that it was not asking for money, so she did not think it politically feasible to ask now. She believed that pulling out of the Parkway project would be a politically damaging thing to do. Ms. Wylie agreed. Mr. Gant did not

think the Springfield Council would support the BRT route anyway. Ms. Hocken said that the Parkway segment of the corridor was important and LTD should fight hard to get what it needed. She did not think the staff recommendation represented Springfield's repudiation of the project. There were other pieces of the corridor where Springfield was being very cooperative in what LTD planned to do. Mr. Gant said the Parkway segment was the bottleneck and could affect the entire corridor.

Mr. Hamm recalled that LTD's planning initially had been more focused on growth areas to the north, before PeaceHealth purchased the RiverBend property and announced its plans to build a new hospital. Whether PeaceHealth built the hospital or not, the Gateway area generated considerable ridership and LTD needed to create connections between Gateway, downtown, and other areas. The Parkway corridor was an opportunity that presented itself to LTD. The eventual outcome of the issue depended on whether PeaceHealth constructed the hospital.

Mr. Gaydos acknowledged that economic circumstances had changed from the time the project was initiated. He thought it valuable to consider the changed context but also thought the Board needed to keep in mind that BRT was not a separate project. It was part of the core system. He believed that much of what Mr. Gant was suggesting had occurred. For example, he believed that BRT was an opportunistic project, as demonstrated by Mr. Hamm's remarks regarding the parkway corridor. Springfield wanted BRT because it would serve a fast-growing area. Some type of service would be needed by the area. Mr. Gaydos also believed the partnerships that Mr. Gant sought existed throughout the history of BRT. He pointed out that currently the United Front was representing LTD's funding requests in Washington, D.C. In addition, the Board met frequently with the two city councils to discuss the issues involved with BRT.

Mr. Gaydos agreed that it was important to balance future and existing needs. He said that difficult decisions must be made. He thought the Board and staff had acted and continued to act in a responsible way. The Board continually reviewed its plans and could make adjustments as it learned more about the future. He suggested that the Board consider what it meant when it talked about the core system. He said that the Board could determine that base level of services so it could show people service additions and reductions.

Mr. Gaydos pointed out that without federal funds, the Parkway segment would not happen. He said the Board's approach to BRT had been the approach approved by the community through TransPlan, various planning documents, and the United Front effort. The District's partners were supportive of the concept and the district continually worked on those partnerships.

Mr. Gaydos expressed the hope that the Board could discuss issues such as how it wished to be organized, how it wished to receive information, the nature of the staff's recommendations, and the Board's expectations of staff in terms of that issue. He thought it would be worthwhile to discuss those issues and get them out on the table. Mr. Gaydos expressed support for scenarios 1 or 2 as he believed they represented the best planning LTD could do at this time.

Ms. Lauritsen acknowledged that she was "lukewarm" about BRT, having not been on the Board when it was first discussed. She was concerned that LTD was "getting away from its roots," which was the fixed-route system. She did not think the Board was listening to concerns such as that expressed by a Eugene Councilor about the money being spent on the special transportation facility, which employed matches that could be used for services. She questioned the cost of the first phase of BRT, and agreed with Mr. Gant that the Board had no control over future costs.

Ms. Lauritsen said she was not hearing support for BRT in the community. She did not want to "force BRT" down the community's throats. She acknowledged that the Board needed to plan ahead, but thought the projections were too far into the future.

Ms. Lauritsen thought that work on Phase 1 had progressed too far to be stopped. However, BRT was unproven, and she did not support the proposed service cuts. She expressed support for Scenario 3.

MOTION Mr. Gaydos moved adoption of LTD Resolution No 2004-007: "Resolved, that the LTD Board of Directors approves Scenario 1 for the purpose of budgeting and planning." Ms. Ban provided the second.

Mr. Gant requested a roll call vote.

VOTE The resolution was approved as follows:  
 AYES: Ban, Hocken, Gaydos, Kleger, Wylie (5)  
 NAYS: Gant, Lauritsen  
 ABSTENTIONS: None  
 EXCUSED: None

**MLK Parkway Right-of-Way** – BRT Project Engineer Graham Carey requested Board permission to purchase a section of right-of-way along the Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway alignment. He reviewed three options for the purchase, which were reflected on page 12 of the Board packet. Board members asked questions clarifying the details of each option.

Mr. Carey said that staff recommended the back-to-back queue jump alternative and to keep the power poles in the median. He noted that the Springfield City Council would hold a public hearing on the Parkway alignment on March 15.

Mr. Gaydos recommended support of Option 1, stating that it would be a test of the Springfield Council's support for BRT.

Mr. Viggiano urged the Board to take action that evening. He said that Springfield would like an indication that there was a commitment of funds from LTD if it was to make a decision for a wider right-of-way than would be required for the road. He noted that LTD could not make a decision on the Parkway until it went through the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) process. LTD had permission from the federal government to purchase the right-of-way in question as a "protected buy." In response to a question from Mr. Gant, Mr. Viggiano acknowledged that there was a risk.

MOTION Mr. Gaydos moved adoption of LTD Resolution No 2004-008: "Resolved, that the LTD Board of Directors approves authority to purchase right-of-way at a cost of \$330,000, keeping power poles in the median of the Pioneer Parkway, with back-to-back queue jumpers (as reflected on page 12 of the meeting packet)." Ms. Hocken provided the second.

Mr. Gant requested a roll call vote.

VOTE      The resolution was approved as follows:  
            AYES: Ban, Hocken, Gaydos, Kleger, Wylie (5)  
            NAYS: Gant, Lauritsen (2)  
            ABSTENTIONS: None  
            EXCUSED: None

**Franklin Corridor EmX Update** – Ms. Wiley postponed this item to a future meeting.

**ADJOURNMENT** – The meeting adjourned at 8 p.m.

  
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Board Secretary

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