

MINUTES OF DIRECTORS MEETING

LANE COUNTY MASS TRANSIT DISTRICT

ADJOURNED MEETING

February 26, 1979

Pursuant to notice given to the Register Guard and the Springfield News on February 20, 1979, an adjourned meeting of the board of directors of Lane County Mass Transit District was held at the City Hall, Eugene, Oregon, on February 26, 1979 at 12:00 noon.

Present:

Richard A. Booth, Secretary  
Daniel M. Herbert, Vice President  
Ted J. Langton, Treasurer  
Kenneth H. Kohnen, President, presiding  
Carolyn Roemer  
Fred C. Dyer, General Manager  
Mavis Skipworth, Recording Secretary  
  
News media representative:  
Marvin Tims, Register Guard

Absent:

Jack J. Craig  
Glenn E. Randall

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS BY PRESIDENT: Speaking to approximately 50 persons in attendance, Mr. Kohnen advised that the purpose of this adjourned board meeting was to receive public input on the Transit Development Program (TDP) update. He explained the purpose of the planning document and its effective period.

The chairman then opened the meeting to public testimony.

PUBLIC HEARING: Vades Henderson of 1830 Pierce Street said the president of the United States has encouraged everyone to conserve gasoline by using public transportation whenever possible. She said it was her understanding that proposals are being considered for service revisions, elimination of some routes, less frequency on others, and a raise of fares. She said this would make it difficult for many people in the lower income brackets who rely on the buses and cannot afford to pay more.

Ralph Burns of Horse Creek Road, said he lives in the McKenzie Bridge area, 53 miles from the metropolitan area and that he and his wife ride the bus into town. He asked that the service to his area not be deleted and expressed agreement with Mrs. Henderson that people should use their automobiles less, as the president has requested.

John Craig of 2042 Washington said he believed many seniors would be quite willing to pay additional fares and there are many who depend upon the service. He suggested that while the district should have the option to charge one-half of the regular fare, implementation should be given careful thought. He said he was afraid that if fares were increased, a number of seniors who cannot afford the increase would be penalized. He suggested development of a plan for an identification card for those seniors to be given relief from an increase.

Leonard Howell, 5335 Main Street, expressed agreement with Mr. Craig, commenting that some seniors can afford an increased fare and some cannot. He said he would be willing to pay a little more rather than risk losing the bus service.

Mrs. Pauline Treadaway, 440 W. Quinalt, said the buses are her only means of transportation and expressed her appreciation for the service. She further said that all of the seniors with whom she has discussed the proposed increase are not opposed to a raise in fares; that she believed the free rides should be eliminated, and that the hourly runs on Saturday morning would be a good way to reduce expenses.

Sallie E. McAnulty, 462 W. Quinalt, agreed with Mrs. Treadaway that seniors should pay fares on holidays, Saturdays and Sundays, that many seniors have no other transportation and they all appreciate the bus service.

Mr. Kohnen explained the Oregon statutes setting the senior fares and explained that revision of the statute would have to go through legislative process.

Beatrice Weldon, 1058 Diamond, requested bus service on Aspen Street as there is no service nearby. She said many people in the area work and they currently drive their cars.

Vera Hansen of 626 28th Street, Springfield, told of her reliance on the bus service. She spoke of the tremendous growth in population anticipated by the year 2000, of the pollution that would come from automobiles serving that population, and of the need to free the streets of unnecessary auto traffic for delivery trucks and people that have to use their cars. She described how many seniors rely on bus service to obtain their groceries and other necessities. She said as traffic increases and the price of gasoline goes up, it is necessary to have a good public transportation system, and there should be bus service for people who work different hours. She commented that the business community says the buses are nearly empty, but they do not ride the buses. She said they asked for a special service at Christmas that was expensive and pointless. She asked that bus service not be cut back in any way.

Daro Quiring said he was representing the views of two groups, the Citizens Advisory Committee on Aging of the Lane Council of Governments and the Emerald Empire Council on Aging-Specialists. He said both groups support the following comments: 1) If the choice is to (a) reduce service and maintain present fare structure of seniors, or (b) maintain service and set senior fares at one-half the base fare, it is preferable to support the latter. However, he said, this would be a choice between "two evils," not support for increased fares per se; 2) Local transportation agencies should be allowed to set fare structures, not to be imposed upon by state law; 3) Vans rather than buses should be considered whenever appropriate in order to reduce costs. He added that subsequent to the two groups preparing these comments, he had learned that vans are rarely cost effective, and if the problem is essentially a lack of understanding on the part of the general public as to the reasons why buses are nearly empty at times, then the objective should be to expand community education efforts; 4) In terms of both short and long range functional considerations, the district should assist in the creation of a coalition of groups to pursue the establishment of a larger and more fair tax base for the functions of the district; 5) In order to facilitate senior involvement in the public hearing process of the TDP,

it is desirable to hold a hearing during the day. He said both groups were grateful to the district for responding so positively and quickly to this concern by setting up a second hearing for this day.

Mr. Quiring then asked for the opportunity to make personal comments as a citizen, residing at 3657 West 18th Avenue. He agreed with the Chamber's presentation of February 20th in two respects: 1) that a plan is needed for a sudden use of mass transit, and 2) that a new form of funding with a broader base of participation is needed. He said it is imperative, however, to disagree with the Chamber's desires to: reduce the purchase of new coaches, ignore handicap accessibility, reduce passenger shelters from 100 to 50, delete passenger loading area improvements, delete priority treatment for transit vehicles, delete contra-flow lanes and signal preemption, and delete public hearings. He added that the Chamber's position is understandable as they are concerned about the district's finances, but its position is not acceptable because its energies are focused solely upon a negative viewpoint which is narrow and detrimental to the needs of many groups, particularly the senior population. He suggested the Chamber play a strong role in the pursuit with other groups of a more fair and large tax base.

Mr. Quiring then pointed to the district's apparent lackluster efforts in making the public aware of the hearings, saying that as a bus rider he did not see any notices inside the buses and several of the district's employees did not know of the hearings. He said the public has a right to know about the hearings by means of a variety of media. He concluded that it is his concern that by increasing fares and reducing services, ridership would be decreased, leading to further serious problems. He said he believed that public transportation should be considered a public responsibility such as fire, police and public works services.

Wickes Beal, 712 East 16th, spoke on behalf of the Eugene Area Agency on Aging. She asked if any legislation had been drafted to transfer the authority to set fares to the local agencies and Mr. Dyer responded that Oregon Transit Association is sponsoring such legislation. Ms. Beals asked that information be sent to Ruth Shepherd, Executive Officer of the Governor's Commission on Aging, advising that there apparently will not be any organized opposition to changing the statutes to allow fare increases for seniors.

Lela Humiston of 211 River Loop #1, spoke as director of Lane County Gray Panthers. She said she has discussed the bus service with two of the three local groups and they expressed considerable appreciation for the system as it is now; that the bus system is vital to many of them, and they appreciate the kindness of the drivers. She said the possibility of restricting or cutting out their link to the rest of the world really upsets them and they believe the system must be maintained at the current level. She stated that although many cannot expand their incomes, they are willing to have the fares increased, possibly having to cut down on the number of bus trips they can take. Ms. Humiston expressed concern of a bill to restrict operation to within the boundaries of the metropolitan district. Donna Neal of the Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce, advised that the bill would apply only to the Portland area.

Frances Heath of McKenzie Village, 480 W. Quinalt, said the bus system is a godsend to the seniors in her area as many are past the driving stage. She suggested that the free fares should be eliminated.

Sam Fried, of 1266 Olympic Street, said the proposed changes reminded him of the former privately owned bus system when they proposed to stop all buses that did not pay and to stop all buses at 7:00 p.m. He said at that time he wrote the company that if he had to buy an automobile to have transportation when the bus did not run, he would drive it all the time. He said the metropolitan area needs a bus system and if the Saturday schedule is reduced to hourly, people who work and depend on bus transportation will have to spend an extra hour riding the bus, and will probably decide they do not care about the energy crisis or the transit district and will drive their cars all the time.

Mr. Kohnen noted that many of the proposals had been covered in the testimony, but others had not been brought up, such as eliminating the Marcola, Big M, and LCC/Goshen routes, expanding the employee training programs, reforming the citizen input process, adding two new crosstown routes, providing express service between Eugene and Riviera during peak hours, and providing express service in the Eugene-Springfield and West Eugene Corridors. Ellen Bevington gave a detailed explanation of the proposed express services.

Ms. Heath expressed further concern about any change in the service because of the seniors reliance upon it.

Ms. Beal voiced objection to deletion of the Marcola bus, pointing out that many people live in the area with a large number of seniors.

Jean Downing, 606 W. Quinalt requested a bus stop sign placement at the corner of Quinalt and McPherson to clarify where patrons should board, as a truck has been parked for two weeks where the buses usually stop.

Leonard Howland of 5335 Main Street asked that a bus stop sign be placed at 53rd and Main to end the controversy between drivers and passengers of the proper place for boarding and disembarking. Mr. Kohnen advised that additional signs are provided for in the TDP and the staff will advise him of the plans for that particular location.

John Craig asked about the present function of the Citizens Advisory Committee and the nature of the proposed public hearing process. Mr. Kohnen spoke of the difficulty experienced in keeping up the membership of the Citizens Advisory Committee and said it is the goal of the board to devise good methods of receiving input from the public. Mr. Quiring asked that public hearings be held in the daytime; that evening meetings recommended by the businessmen would be difficult for some people to attend.

Sam Fried commended the bus drivers for being so courteous and said it is remarkable how well the buses run on time.

An unidentified woman said the drivers are very nice and courteous and she has seen them give help to the patrons. A second unidentified woman asked for an explanation of the revision proposed on the LCC/Goshen route. Ms. Bevington said the proposal would eliminate only the section that serves Goshen and Seavy Loop because of its low ridership.

John Replinger of 41 W. 35th Avenue, said he shared Mr. Quiring's concern that bus riders were not informed of the current public hearings and apparently do not realize the importance of the TDP. He said he has a few minor concerns

about the TDP but other riders would be more greatly affected by the proposed revisions and should be advised of the meetings.

Dick Hansen, president of the Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce, distributed copies of a letter to board members which he said expressed the Chamber's feelings about recent comments from the board.

There being no further comments, Mr. Kohnen thanked everyone for coming.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned to February 27, 1978 at 7:30 p.m. in Eugene City Hall.

  
Secretary