

MINUTES

PUBLIC HEARING ON

RETROFIT OF 500 SERIES BUSES WITH WHEELCHAIR LIFTS

Tuesday, December 8, 1981
McNutt Room, Eugene City Hall
10:00 a.m.

Pursuant to notice given to the Eugene Register-Guard for publication on November 15, 1981, a public hearing on retrofitting the District's 500 series buses with wheelchair lifts was held on Tuesday, December 8, 1981, at Eugene City Hall, at 10:00 a.m. This hearing is in addition to a public hearing duly advertised and scheduled for the regular meeting of the Board of Directors on December 15, 1981.

Present: Leon Skiles, Service Analyst
Jo Sullivan, Recording Secretary

Leon Skiles began the meeting by summarizing the background information leading up to the proposed application for a Section 5 grant to fund 80% of the costs involved in retrofitting twenty 500 series buses with wheelchair lifts. He explained the delay caused by changing Department of Transportation regulations under the Reagan administration, and said that money is available and that there is a disposition in the Urban Mass Transit Association (UMTA) that the grant will be approved.

Mr. Skiles also reviewed the costs and service impacts involved in operating several alternatives, including the present level of fixed-route accessibility and the proposed retrofit of the 500 series coaches.

Mr. Skiles then opened the public hearing for comments and questions.

David L. Kleger, a wheelchair user himself, stated that he was representing Vocational Rehabilitation at the request of Don Ware, the Regional Manager, who was out of town. Mr. Kleger reiterated the agency's support for fixed-route accessibility for the following reasons: (1) it means better transportation for the handicapped community; (2) use of accessible buses is high in the Eugene-Springfield area; (3) it should meet the area's need with lower costs over time; (4) it permits service during hours when the demand/responsive system (Dial-A-Bus) is not available because of costs; (5) it offers a wider range of locations than previously, without adding any drivers; and (6) it improves travel scheduling for Vocational Rehabilitation clients. He also said that fixed-route accessibility makes it easier for mobility-impaired persons to find employment.

Mr. Kleger was pleased to note that fixed-route accessibility has already reduced Vocational Rehabilitation's operating costs, with an identified savings of close to \$30,000 due to clients being able to ride the bus instead of using limited resources for vans, and due also to the purchase of fast passes rather than providing gas money for clients driving specially-equipped vehicles.

For those reasons, Mr. Kléger said, Vocational Rehabilitation is strongly in favor of the District's application for funding to retrofit the 500 series buses.

Richard E. Trefren, Supervisor of Nutrition and Transportation Services for Lane County Senior Services, and Chair of the Lane Council of Governments Special Transportation Committee, spoke next. He read a letter from the L-COG Special Transportation Committee which supports the District's application for funds to retrofit the 500 series buses and commends the District for its efforts and intent to develop fixed-route accessibility whether or not mandated by federal regulations. The letter is addressed to the Board of Directors of Lane Transit District and will be included in the agenda packet for the regular Board meeting on December 15, 1981.

Mike Goldhamer, a wheelchair user, spoke as a Board member of Independent Environments and as a private citizen. Independent Environments, he said, is building a residence for disabled persons, called McNair House, on Coburg Road, beyond the point where accessible buses now travel. The staff and Board of Independent Environments are worried about residents of McNair House being cut off from the rest of the community, but retrofitting 20 more buses would make that part of Coburg Road accessible. As a private resident of Eugene, he said he lives at 1205 Taylor and presently has to travel 12 blocks in order to ride an accessible bus, and would appreciate being able to use the system if more buses were accessible.

Mr. Goldhamer further stated that transportation is the key to services and opportunities for disabled persons in the community and allows them to go from a dependent to an independent state and to be less of a draw on community services.

Yitzhak Hankin stated that as Program Manager of Independent Living Programs, Inc., he has an opportunity to speak frequently with people who use the District's accessible system, and wanted to mention the intangibles regarding accessible service. He said that fixed-route accessibility increases the sense and reality of personal freedom for disabled persons, opens up opportunities for training, and opens up opportunities for volunteers in his organization. Mr. Hankin stated that their office site, 132 East Broadway, was chosen because of its proximity to the main drop-off point for accessible buses. He closed by saying that there is an element of dignity in the whole community as well as for each disabled individual in being able to use an integrated system rather than being separated out from the system. For those reasons, he supported the grant application for funding to retrofit the 500 series buses.

Collin Gray is a wheelchair user who described himself as a regular bus rider since the new system began, and said that retrofitting the 500's will allow a more continuous flow for transfers without a long wait or having to go somewhere under his own power. He thought that having 20 more buses retrofitted with lifts would be helpful to a lot of disabled people in the community.

Sherry Henry, another wheelchair user, said that she presently does not use the buses but could see that there may be times when she would want to. She appreciated what LTD has already done to make the system accessible for people

with physical disabilities, and would like to see the District continue in this direction.

Mr. Goldhamer stated the opinion that the cost-effectiveness of retrofitting the 500 series buses would make it so that there was parity in transportation services with the least amount of cost. He thought that any other step toward providing transportation service to the disabled would be cost-prohibitive.

Mr. Hankin said that the work already done by the District toward providing accessible transportation has been greatly appreciated in the community and that he would like to encourage the positive efforts that LTD is making.

Mr. Kleger said that members of the Eugene-Springfield handicapped community feel they are fortunate to have LTD here.

With no further comments or questions, Mr. Skiles closed the public hearing at 10:55 a.m.


Recording Secretary