

MINUTES OF DIRECTORS MEETING  
LANE TRANSIT DISTRICT  
SPECIAL BOARD MEETING/WORK SESSION

Monday, September 12, 2005

Pursuant to notice given to *The Register-Guard* for publication on September 8, 2005, 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 Monday, September 12, 2005, beginning at 5:30 p.m., in the LTD Board Room at 3500 East 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Eugene.

Present: Gerry Gaydos, President, presiding  
Susan Ban, Vice President  
Mike Eyster  
David Gant, Secretary  
Dave Kleger, Treasurer  
Ken Hamm, General Manager  
Jo Sullivan, Clerk of the Board  
Lynn Taylor, Minutes Recorder

Absent: Debbie Davis  
Dean Kortge

**CALL TO ORDER** – Mr. Gaydos called the meeting to order.

**ROLL CALL** – General Manager Ken Hamm called the roll.

**PRELIMINARY REMARKS BY BOARD PRESIDENT** – Mr. Gaydos thanked everyone for attending. He said that following the labor strike, LTD's reality had changed and there was much work to be done from a public opinion perspective. He said that the presentation of community research results would help the Board better understand what the people of Lane Transit District wanted.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS AND ADDITIONS TO AGENDA** – There were no announcements or additions.

**WORK SESSION**

**Community Research** – Director of Marketing and Communications Andy Vobora introduced Bob Moore of Moore Information. He said that Mr. Moore had conducted the community research project, as well as an LTD market area study in 2003. He said this was the first time LTD had conducted a targeted community research study and there was little historic data available for direct comparison purposes but, where appropriate, information would be compared with the results of the 2003 market area study and the 2004 rider survey.

Mr. Moore referred to the *LTD Business and Opinion Leader Survey Results* document provided in the agenda packet. He used a slide presentation to summarize the methodology used to

survey payroll taxpayers, community opinion leaders, and elected officials in the Lane Transit District and review the results of that survey in a variety of categories.

Ms. Ban asked if community leaders also were payroll taxpayers. Mr. Moore replied there was little duplication between the two comments. He also acknowledged her observation that the pool of elected officials was small, at only 20 people.

Mr. Moore reviewed the overall perceptions of LTD's performance, with 65 percent of elected officials, 53 percent of community leaders, and 41 percent of payroll taxpayers giving an excellent/good rating.

In comparison, Mr. Vobora said that in the market area study of potential riders, 78 percent gave an excellent/good rating and the rider survey resulted in an 80 percent rating of excellent/good. He said the results were somewhat intuitive, with those most familiar with LTD's services giving the highest percent of positive ratings.

In response to a question from Mr. Gant, Mr. Moore said that excellent and good were individual ratings, as were fair and poor, but for reporting purposes were combined into two categories representing positive and non-positive ratings. He said the specific breakdown of percentages in each rating category by category of those surveyed was available.

Continuing, Mr. Moore said that in open-ended questions concerning LTD's strengths, all three groups listed the two top items as good coverage/accessibility/routes/service, and provides choice of transportation. He said that there was no real consensus among the groups about suggestions for improvement.

Mr. Vobora said that suggestions from the market area study were: increase security, eliminate loiterers, use smaller buses and more frequent service, and route coverage; riders suggested later evening services, more frequent weekend service, and more direct service.

Mr. Moore reviewed the results of the evaluations of LTD's service factors and management factors. He noted that lack of high ratings for some service factors generally resulted from respondents' lack of knowledge of performance in those areas rather than a poor opinion. He said that generally elected officials were more positive regarding LTD management. He said that opinions generally were formed through either direct knowledge or word-of-mouth information and there was a consensus that LTD was a good place to work because of pay and benefits. He indicated that a majority of all three groups was more likely to agree with management than the union on strike-related issues and a majority in each group agreed that LTD capital improvements were important to the community.

In summary, Mr. Moore said that respondents in each group believed that LTD was important to the community, was a good place to work, and had major strengths in coverage, accessibility, and routes offered. Additionally, those with an opinion rated LTD highly in the six service factors and were more likely to agree with management than the union. He identified opportunities for improvement in the following areas:

- Payroll taxpayers were not as impressed with LTD as were community leaders and elected officials
- Ratings were lower on management-related factors than on service factors

Mr. Eyster asked how other public organizations such as the school district or county might fare in a similar survey. Mr. Moore replied that there would be a similar higher rating for the services provided than for management, which was typical for those types of surveys.

Mr. Vobora commented that the strike had an impact on responses and, while it was easy to conclude that LTD was doing an acceptable job, there were issues that should be addressed. He said that another survey in a year could provide a comparison. He listed strategies for changing public perception:

- Marketing – paid advertising and sponsorships to highlight services, community partnerships, and value to the community
- Public relations – one-on-one meetings conducted by Board members, the general manager and staff, and partnering Board members with elected officials

Mr. Kleger observed that the small bus issues arose periodically and suggested that staff could develop a life-cycle cost comparison of comparable seat levels between the small buses and large buses, taking into account the shorter lifespan of the smaller buses and operational costs per seat mile comparison, taking into consideration the extra personnel cost involved and more frequent mechanical service needs. He suggested that setting that information out as a chart might help people, particularly the business community, understand why smaller buses actually were more expensive. Mr. Vobora agreed that once people were provided that type of information they understood why large buses were more efficient.

Mr. Gant indicated that he often heard the issue raised and the explanation always settled the argument. He suggested that perhaps a direct approach using advertisements that explained the matter might resolve the issue. Mr. Vobora said that the information could be targeted to those groups or individuals that seemed to have concerns, using the LTD Web site, newsletter, and mailings.

Mr. Gaydos thanked Mr. Moore for his research and thanked LTD for having the courage to ask questions of the community and be evaluated. He encouraged staff to look at use of media and publications in new ways to provide short messages that changed norms and attitudes. He thought the recent *Register-Guard* editorial regarding the hybrid electric AVS buses was good, but LTD needed to offer the public positive messages about its willingness to take risks and move forward. He encouraged a strong media and public relations campaign to get out many messages and asked staff to consider what resources that might require in next year's budget. He expressed a sense of urgency about some of those messages, such as bus rapid transit (BRT), rising fuel costs, and the need for greater efficiencies, and said that the Board should be used more aggressively to disseminate information now. He noted that bus drivers were LTD's ambassadors as well and should be supported in that role.

Mr. Gant agreed with Mr. Gaydos' remarks. He said that changing public perception required that the message be shouted and that would cost money, although marketing efforts could be scaled back once the goal was accomplished. He felt it was smart to spend funds quickly to get out messages that would shift perceptions. Mr. Vobora said that staff would be requesting funds in the new budget.

Ms. Ban urged staff to use the Board for outreach whenever possible and be strategic in marketing efforts.

Mr. Hamm said that in two years LTD would again be involved in labor negotiations. He suggested that a follow-up survey should be conducted either six months in advance of that or at least a year following, to avoid having labor issues skew the survey results.

Mr. Vobora said that staff planned to host a series of breakfast meetings with different groups of taxpayers to help educate them on LTD issues and activities, and Board members would be asked to participate. He indicated that there also were plans to increase presentations to community organizations as well as submitting opinion/editorial pieces. He asked Board members to let staff know of any other opportunities.

Ms. Ban suggested a presentation to the City Club.

Mr. Gant said he was beginning to hear many questions from the community about the funds being spent on BRT. Mr. Hamm said he was frequently asked to respond to questions about BRT and it was important to help the community understand how the system would be built a section at a time and how the importance of the infrastructure would grow in the future as congestion increased.

**Federal Funding for Capital Projects** – Government Relations Manager Linda Lynch described changes in the approach to funding capital projects. She said that the new strategy was for smaller projects to be funded with multi-year grant agreements instead of a series of annual earmarks. She explained that the rail category of capital investment grants was now divided into two categories: projects requiring more or less than \$75 million in federal assistance. She said the “Small Starts” program was the result and would be beneficial to Oregon, which lacked fiscal clout in Congress. She listed the funding secured by LTD in the 2005 transportation bill:

- Pioneer Parkway EmX alternatives analysis - \$1 million
- New bus purchases - \$2,985,714
- Progressive corridor enhancement - \$2,477,586

Ms. Lynch stated that the bill also authorized LTD to dispose of the hybrid-electric AVS buses without having to pay any un-amortized portion of the federal interest.

Director of Development Services Stefano Viggiano used a flow chart to summarize the New Starts program process. He noted that it required a very high level of Federal Transit Administration (FTA) involvement, including project management oversight, which was time-consuming and expensive. He said that LTD had lobbied hard for a simplified category of funding for smaller projects like Pioneer Parkway and that program was included in the federal transportation bill as “Small Starts.” He said one aspect of the program was the opportunity to develop multi-year funding agreements, called construction grant agreements. He listed requirements for eligible projects:

- Small Starts projects must be based on the results of planning and alternatives analysis
- Ratings are to be based on:
  - Transportation System User Benefit (TSUB) cost effectiveness measure

- Transportation-supportive land use policies
- Effect on local economic development

Mr. Viggiano stated that the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) had a sophisticated transportation model that would be used to generate the TSUB measure.

Mr. Gaydos asked if the MPO's modeling services could be used as part of the local match requirement. Mr. Viggiano said that it was possible some portion of the model work might be used.

Mr. Viggiano said the bill required FTA to write the rules for the program within 240 days and LTD would be advocating for several things, including how to determine the baseline service from which project ratings are calculated, local match requirements, before-and-after studies, and elimination of FTA project management oversight provisions.

In response to a question from Mr. Gant, Mr. Viggiano explained that elimination of FTA program manager oversight requirements would not eliminate all project oversight from FTA, only the intensive oversight that was disproportionately time-consuming and costly for smaller projects. Ms. Lynch noted that there would still be check-in points throughout the project that would require review and approval from FTA before moving to the next step.

Mr. Viggiano said that LTD staff would be meeting with an FTA official responsible for rule making on September 15, 2005, and would be working with the American Public Transit Association and other organizations to be involved in the rule-making process and advocate for various issues.

Mr. Viggiano reviewed the environmental impact statement (EIS) schedule that would conclude with issuance of a locally preferred alternative for public review in January 2007. He said the capital plan assumed the system would be operational in 2010.

**Report on 2005 Legislative Session** – Ms. Lynch introduced Doug Barber of the Ulum Group who represented LTD in the 2005 legislative session. She referred to the *End of Session 2005 Legislative Report* provided in the agenda packet and indicated that it had been a successful session for LTD.

Mr. Barber stated that much of LTD's success during the session was related to the ability to position BRT as a model project under ConnectOregon, a \$100 million investment in non-highway transportation projects. He said that non-highway transportation modes included transit, rail, air, and ports, and that \$15 million allocations would be made to each of the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) five regions, with the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) ultimately choosing the projects to be funded. He said that the challenge for LTD and other applicants for the funds would be the need to complete projects in time for ODOT to show results by the 2007 legislative session. He said that LTD's goal would be to apply for funds for the Pioneer Parkway corridor and phase construction so that components could be completed in that time period.

Mr. Barber reported that transit also received an additional \$2 million for bus replacement; the bill to require elected transit boards was defeated; and efforts to rewrite Oregon's condemnation

statutes stalled in the Senate at the end of the session. He said that two initiative petitions related to condemnation had been filed.

In response to a request from Mr. Eyster, Mr. Barber related that Senators Morrisette and Prozanski and Representative Holvey were pushing the elected transit board legislation and it appeared much of the support was strike-driven, with the union testifying in favor. He said a number of business leaders and the Oregon Transit Association testified effectively in opposition.

Ms. Ban asked if having a statewide organization of metropolitan planning organizations to lobby on transportation issues was effective and should Lane County continue to support the organization. Mr. Barber replied that he was not aware of what impact the organization had.

Mr. Gant asked if there was any information about legislation to cap the ability of transit districts to tax. Mr. Barber said he had not seen any evidence or draft legislation of that type.

Mr. Gaydos asked if it would be helpful to have conversations with legislators who were in favor of elected boards. Mr. Barber said it would be helpful and he would work with Ms. Lynch to identify a range of topics to discuss, rather than simply focusing on the issue of an elected board, to help them understand LTD's operations. The Board in its current form would be a byproduct of that discussion, instead of the focus.

Mr. Kleger said he had talked to Senator Morrisette at the Lane County Fair and it was clear he had a particular concern about natural gas fuel and wanted to see LTD use it. He suggested that information be prepared on that subject before meeting with the senator.

Mr. Hamm reminded the Board that Ms. Lynch was preparing to retire, but she would continue to work on federal legislative issues and Mr. Barber would handle state legislative issues.

**Annual Strategic Planning Work Session Agenda Suggestions** – Mr. Hamm said that the Board would be provided a report at its October 2005 meeting about what had been accomplished in the five goal areas in the current strategic plan. He said the Leadership Council would meet in November 2005 to discuss those things that had been accomplished, whether LTD was still heading in the right direction, identify emerging issues and develop a list of priorities to discuss with the Board. He said that discussion would occur at the Board's annual strategic planning work session on December 9-10, 2005, and would lead to the budget process during February through May 2006.

Ms. Ban asked that staff sort issues on the list of priorities into those that were operational and those that were more policy and strategic for the future. She said that recent discussions at Board meetings had identified the human resources plan and improving partnerships with the community as two significant issues.

Mr. Gaydos listed those issues that he wanted addressed:

- Branding program effectiveness, transformation of the shuttle from a unique product and the impact on branding, the need for policy direction, cost/benefit analysis of branding
- Policy direction related to diversity

Mr. Hamm said there would be a presentation from the employee Diversity Council at the October 2005 Board meeting and the report would include options for the Board to embrace diversity as a policy.

**Hybrid Vehicles** – The Board viewed two videos on hybrid bus technology.

**ADJOURNMENT:** The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

  
Board Secretary

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