

MINUTES OF DIRECTORS MEETING

LANE TRANSIT DISTRICT

SPECIAL BOARD MEETING/WORK SESSION
PUBLIC HEARING ON FARES AND SERVICE

Monday, March 12, 2007

Pursuant to notice given to *The Register-Guard* for publication on March 8, 2007, 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, March 12, 2007, beginning at 5:30 p.m., in the Bascom/Tykeson Room of the Eugene Public Library, 100 West 10th Avenue, Eugene, Oregon.

Present: Gerry Gaydos, President, presiding
Debbie Davis, Treasurer
Michael Dubick
Greg Evans
Mike Eyster
Dean Kortge, Secretary
Stefano Viggiano, Assistant General Manager
Jo Sullivan, Clerk of the Board
Lynn Taylor, Minutes Recorder

Absent: Susan Ban, Vice President

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL – Mr. Gaydos called the meeting to order and Mr. Viggiano called the roll. Ms. Davis was not yet present.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS BY BOARD PRESIDENT – Mr. Gaydos welcomed those in attendance and thanked them for taking the time to speak to the Board.

PUBLIC HEARING ON FY 2007-08 FARE RECOMMENDATIONS – Director of Service Planning, Accessibility, and Marketing Andy Vobora indicated that the fare recommendations had not changed since the first public hearing on February 12, 2007. He noted that the agenda packet included public comments on the fare and service recommendations. He said the Board would not take action at the meeting but asked that its direction be affirmed to the audience at the conclusion of the hearings.

Mr. Vobora reviewed increases in the monthly pass and group pass prices. He indicated that the District created a discount structure to provide an incentive for riders to purchase prepaid fares and compared pass prices to cash fares. He said the last pass price increase had occurred in FY 2002.

Opening of Public Hearing: Mr. Gaydos opened the public hearing and called for testimony.

Valerie Anne of Springfield strongly objected to any price increases because transit was a federally funded program and there was no reason for a price increase. She said there were many people on fixed incomes who depended on transit as their only means of transportation. She said the proposed Lane County income tax would take away from that small income and the District should consider their needs.

Ms. Davis arrived at 5:40 p.m.

Misha Seymour of Eugene registered his concern about the disparity between people who had access to a pass program through their employers and those low-income people who had to purchase passes. He said that fares should not be raised; they should be lowered so that people who did not have a job were not prevented from riding the bus. He said the system should be just and equitable.

Ed Plimi of Eugene introduced his daughter, Bo. He stated that he was originally from Chicago and it was his experience that in the large metropolitan areas in the eastern part of the country people used mass transit by choice, but that was not the case in Eugene. He said that one of the biggest factors in use of transit here was the cost of owning and operating a car and most riders used transit because they had to. He said that raising prices hurt those riders who were forced to use the system.

Closing of Public Hearing: There being no further testimony, Mr. Gaydos closed the public hearing and called for comments from staff.

Mr. Vobora stated that the Board Finance Committee had reviewed the recommendation and supported it. He pointed out that LTD's fare structure was slightly below the average prices for districts of comparable size in college towns. He said that LTD was not subsidized by the federal government; funding came from a payroll tax on local businesses that cared very much about the fact that riders who used the system paid a fare share for the system.

Board Discussion: There were no comments from Board members.

PUBLIC HEARING ON FY 2007-08 SERVICE RCOMMENDATIONS – Mr. Vobora reviewed the four categories involved in the Annual Route Review (ARR) and highlighted the service additions. He indicated that staff recommended that changes in #28 and #36 service be implemented in June instead of September, as requested at the previous hearing. He said the additions totaled 6,317 hours and reflected a 2.11 percent increase in service. He said that future service presentations would identify the District's investment in accessible services.

Opening of Public Hearing: Mr. Gaydos opened the public hearing and called for testimony.

Mel Barnes of Springfield reminded the Board of his testimony at the February 12, 2007, public hearing and submission of a petition regarding bus service on Laura Street from Q Street to Hayden Bridge. He suggested a route on Virginia Street and Daisy Street to Thurston Station and down Jasper Road to serve high-density development in that area and

another route in the Hayden Bridge area to serve the River Glen development and Briggs Middle School.

Ed Pliml of Eugene said he had been riding the bus since before his daughter was born and there were a number of issues that were frustrating to riders. He listed the following concerns:

- inability to replace a lost youth pass without paying additional money
- children should not be charged to take the bus to go to school
- the difference between a transit district's rules and its practices and the importance of being flexible in applying those rules
- other transit districts would waive the fare if a rider could not pay

Mr. Pliml said he was pleased with the service additions but it was very difficult for riders when a route was eliminated. He urged that routes be given enough time to build a constituency for that service. He encouraged the District to add a trip planner to its website, as many other districts offered on their websites, to simplify trip planning for riders. He expressed concern that often a bus by design arrived at the Eugene Station five minutes after other buses had left, making transfers impossible. He said there were similar situations elsewhere in the system. He applauded the implementation of EmX service but thought that riders might be angry when fares were eventually charged.

Marion Walter of Eugene urged Breeze service on weekends, particularly with the opening of the new movie theater. She was pleased that #28 service was being implemented in June. She said she sometimes took the EmX and was concerned with pedestrian safety in the area of the Walnut Station. She hoped the Board could put pressure on the City to make improvements. She preferred the old shelters to the new design. She was concerned about people who could not afford to ride the bus and suggested that those who were eligible for a free pass could donate funds to nonprofit organizations to help buy passes for those who could not afford one.

Christine Gherardi of Springfield distributed written testimony to Board members. She said that no service on #18 and #19 after 6:45 p.m. was a problem and that service changes should be based on customer and driver input. She said she had ridden EmX when she attended the last public hearing and the bus was so full of passengers that she had to "fight" her way to the door. She said that made it difficult for elderly people or people with bikes to get off the bus before the doors closed. She said that drivers should be allowed to be flexible about enforcing rules, as customer safety should come first.

Misha Seymour of Eugene said that the security guards at LTD facilities should be public servants and not employed by a private security company. He agreed with earlier comments that EmX service was good but it was very difficult for people with bikes or those who were slow to get off the bus before doors closed. He said there should be a button to push to request a stop. He thought the bus stop on 13th Avenue near Kincaid Street should be restored and there should be increased service to South Eugene residents. He asked that #11 service to Springfield be restored and service to Pleasant Hill on Sundays offered.

Valerie Anne of Springfield stated that the four-block spacing of EmX stops was not convenient for the public. She described advertising regarding public meetings as inadequate because the notices did not include specific information. She said that holding meetings at the Glenwood offices made them inaccessible to the public. She urged that notices of meetings be done three months in advance. She said that copies of "Bus Talk" were not available until after the meeting. In conclusion, she urged no fare increases, holding public meetings in a facility like the Library and placing "Bus Talk" on buses by the third of each month. She also remarked that a new bus, 6205, was lovely but the windows had been steamed up and none of them opened.

Andy Fernandez of Eugene, manager of the Hilyard Community Center, thanked the Board for schedule changes to #28. He said many of the center's patrons were people with disabilities and the changes would be very helpful to them.

Scott Meyers of Eugene said he was a disabled veteran and complained that a driver would not lower the bus to allow him to board more easily. He said he often walked in the rain because he could not afford bus fare and was concerned with the price increases. He thought there should be proper consideration for those with disabilities. He questioned why additional money was needed by the District.

Don Putnam of Donna Road, outside of the city, was appalled at the cruelty to riders and said he had observed instances of rider abuse at LTD and other districts. He said that drivers should be able to be flexible and assist passengers instead of being focused entirely on the schedule.

Sage Silverstein, Eugene, commented that there were always two sides to every situation. She said that her family and friends took the bus and had many stories of kindnesses shown by drivers to passengers or members of the public. She said that bus drivers were wonderful people and related an instance when a driver had shown compassion and been flexible.

Darien Davison of Roosevelt Middle School, winner of the LTD Smart Ways to School carpool contest, applauded the entire program. He said it helped him get to and from school by offering a wide range of choices in terms of the schedule and routes, and drivers had been very flexible when he lost his pass.

Closing of Public Hearing: There being no further testimony, Mr. Gaydos closed the public hearing. He noted that Mr. Meyers had left the meeting and asked staff to provide a written response to his comments.

Board Discussion: Regarding concerns about scheduling, Mr. Vobora said that coordinating all of the trips in the system was very complicated and occasionally trips took longer and were scheduled after transfers. He said that was a consequence of degradation of the system in terms of running times. He said staff could follow up on specific instances.

Mr. Evans asked about notification of public meetings. Mr. Vobora said that "Bus Talk" typically was printed in the first week of the month and placed on buses on Sundays and into

the customer service center as soon as they were published. He was not certain why "Bus Talk" was not found by one of the people testifying and said he would follow up on that issue. He would also review whether more specific meeting information should be provided. He said that notices of all public meetings were posted on the LTD website and placed in the *Register-Guard*. He said press releases were also issued, but staff would explore ways to get the word out more broadly.

Mr. Evans asked if a trip planner could be added to the website. Mr. Vobora said the District had explored that possibility several years ago by working with computing science interns from the University, but the complexity of the schedule defeated that effort. He said that many of the large districts, such as TriMet, had trip planners, but those were extremely expensive to develop and required a large information technology staff to maintain. He said that trip planners had to be custom systems because they used a district's scheduling data. He said that LTD had been chosen by Google as a test site for developing a trip planner function similar to the Google mapping function. He said another organization was also developing a trip-planning program and, if perfected, it would be free for any system to use, although it would require the system to provide daily information updates.

Ms. Walter stated that often "Bus Talk" was not available on buses. Mr. Vobora said that the number of copies printed would be doubled and copies would be available on the platforms for both main stations.

Mr. Evans suggested distributing copies to community centers and other locations. Mr. Vobora said he would consider that but it was a resource issue. He noted that "Bus Talk" was also posted on LTD's website.

Mr. Gaydos conducted a straw poll that indicated unanimous support for the fare and service recommendations.

WORK SESSION

Commuter Solutions Annual Report –Commuter Solutions Program Manager Connie Bloom Williams stated that Commuter Solutions was a regional program to encourage travel by means other than driving alone and was supported by local jurisdictions and the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT), with LTD as the lead agency. She said that Commuter Solutions was a sponsor of the Climate Masters program to reduce greenhouse gases in the community. She provided an overview of the Commuter Solutions partner agencies, programs and services as described in detail in the *Commuter Solutions 2005-2010 Strategic Plan*, copies of which were distributed to Board members. She described several of the successful projects done in conjunction with ODOT and local jurisdiction to mitigate congestion during roadway construction projects.

Ms. Williams said the strategic plan was focused on two goals:

1. Increase participation in regional transportation options programs and services
2. Support local, regional, and statewide land use/transportation policies

Ms. Williams reviewed activities in various programs and noted that participation in bus pass programs was steadily increasing. She explained that the Smart Ways to School program was begun as a pilot program on a two-year grant from the Department of Energy (DOE). She said the program evolved into a research and development project with DOE and expanded to include Lane Council of Governments and Pacific Continental Bank as partners. She said that 27,000 students were covered by the program. However, it no longer qualified for DOE funding and school districts had declined to pay a fee per student, so staff were exploring other funding options.

Mr. Eyster referred to testimony during the public hearing from the young man who praised the Smart Ways to School program and suggested that word about the need for funding should be spread broadly to stakeholders to encourage financial support.

Mr. Evans suggested that the City of Eugene's sustainability program would be a good partner and that possibly the City would be willing to help subsidize the program. Ms. Williams said that the issue of funding had been discussed with staff from local school districts and the matter would be presented to the Metropolitan Policy Committee.

Mr. Viggiano said the Chalkboard Project, a statewide K-12 education initiative, was considering ways to change how transportation was funded and would be presenting a proposal to the legislature regarding increased flexibility in how school districts could use their transportation funding, including student transit passes.

Mr. Gaydos thought that the Board should be more involved in advocating for the program and suggested that the Service Planning and Marketing Committee should take the issue under consideration.

Ms. Williams reviewed current funding for Commuter Solutions, which consisted of state, regional, and local funds. She said the program used a "corridor" approach to prioritize implementing services because of heavy demands. She listed the criteria used to identify a priority corridor or project. She continued with a review of activities and performance.

Mr. Kortge asked if the program was considering the transportation impact of the new hospital planned for Junction City. Service Planner Ruth Linoz replied that she was on a committee involved with Junction City's development and had emphasized the need to make transit a part of the planning process.

Mr. Evans asked about the status of land acquisition and construction for Park and Ride facilities and to what extent other agencies shared those costs. Ms. Williams said that LTD owned two facilities and the other were used at the discretion of the property owner. She said that two facilities had been withdrawn over the past six months and she hoped that the Park and Ride program would be the subject of some long-term planning efforts. Director of Planning and Development Tom Schwetz said that Park and Ride was a large part of the EmX strategies and he was looking at a spectrum of options, including joint development opportunities.

Mr. Gaydos asked that Park and Ride be discussed by the Board Service Planning and Marketing Committee.

Gateway Mall Station Relocation Project Update – Mr. Schwetz said that the Gateway transit station would be moved in connection with the Pioneer Parkway project in order to serve EmX better and provide more efficient routing to the mall. This project was funded through ConnectOregon. He used slides of conceptual drawings to illustrate the existing station and routing and compare it with the proposed station and routing. He said there would be a walkway from the station to the mall entrance. He said the walkway design was intended to channel pedestrians to the mall entrance and would result in a net gain of three parking spaces. He said the design also would provide some degree of traffic calming and had met with the approval of the mall owners. He also was working with six key mall tenants.

Mr. Eyster asked if the walkway was subject to any standards regarding accessibility, with respect to length. Mr. Schwetz said he was not aware of any requirements beyond width, but would check on that issue.

Mr. Schwetz noted that the new facility would be at the north end of the mall entrance instead of at one end, as the original design had indicated.

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.



Board Secretary

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