

# MINUTES OF BOARD SERVICE COMMITTEE

## LANE TRANSIT DISTRICT

Friday, February 12, 2010

Pursuant to notice given to *The Register-Guard* for publication on February 8, 2010, and distributed to persons on the mailing list of the District, the Board Service Committee of the Lane Transit District held a meeting on Friday, February 12, 2010, beginning at 10 a.m. in the LTD Board Room at 3500 East 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Eugene.

Present: Greg Evans  
Ed Necker  
Doris Towery  
Andy Vobora, Director of Service Planning, Accessibility, and Marketing  
Will Mueller, Service Planning Manager  
Heather Lindsay, Service Planning Associate  
Nick Schillaci  
Marcia Maffei  
Ruth Linoz  
Kim Young, Minutes Recorder

### I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Evans called the meeting of the Lane Transit District (LTD) Board Service Committee to order.

### II. ROLL CALL

Mr. Evans called the roll.

### III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Towery moved to approve the minutes of the December 9, 2009, meeting. Mr. Necker provided the second. The motion passed unanimously (3:0).

### IV. 2010 SERVICE REDESIGN DISCUSSION

Committee members and staff debriefed the public hearing of February 11, 2010, and the testimony the Board heard regarding proposed service reductions. Staff reviewed the route changes discussed at the hearing and the potential changes that could be made to the staff recommendation about the redesign in response to that testimony, with a focus on the *Breeze* route and service to the Wilshire/Warren area and Q Street.

There was a great deal of testimony at the public hearing about the *Breeze* route and service to Ya-Po-Ah Terrace. Mr. Vobora indicated that reductions on the *Breeze* route provided the biggest return, and the route was covered by other bus service. Staff believed it should remain on the list of routes to be cut. The group discussed the option of having someone else fund the *Breeze* route. Mr. Vobora stated that LTD staff would talk to the University of Oregon (UO) about the service it provided to students; he added that LTD could propose that the UO pay for the *Breeze*

service. He also mentioned a discussion at the Metropolitan Policy Committee (MPC) about additional funding, and he suggested that perhaps that funding could be used to continue operating the *Breeze*. Mr. Vobora emphasized that there was no certainty about the funding sources, and he reminded the committee that staff would seek a decision from the Board about the service package at their February 17 meeting. Mr. Mueller reviewed boarding numbers for the *Breeze* route as contrasted to route 1 Campbell Center.

Mr. Necker asked about the certainty of the funding discussed by the MPC. Mr. Evans reported that the MPC agreed to provide LTD with \$1.5 million in federal funds over a three-year period. He believed there was concurrence about the funding because the community's elected officials received pressure about the contemplated reductions in bus service. He anticipated that the United Front representatives would seek federal funding for transit operations during the upcoming visit to Washington, D.C. Responding to a question from Ms. Towery, Mr. Vobora suggested it was unlikely that sufficient funding sources would come together in time to avoid future reductions.

Mr. Evans asked what the numbers would look like if Saturday or Sunday service was eliminated. Mr. Mueller stated that cutting Sunday hours would realize a savings of approximately six percent; eliminating Saturday hours would realize a savings of approximately nine percent. Mr. Evans posited the idea of a system redesign based on seven-day service that focused on major thoroughfares, with bus stops staggered at quarter-mile distances. He added that he anticipated that LTD would use EmX as a platform for the extension of neighborhood services. Mr. Mueller stated that this approach would require a route-by-route analysis of turnaround locations and cycle times, as well as consideration of frequency headways. He stated that it would be an iterative process, and he could not speculate on the outcome. Mr. Evans acknowledged that a more thorough analysis would be necessary to answer his question. He added that his focus was on maintaining seven-day service with maximum coverage, and suggested that this could mean that most of the neighborhood coverage would largely be gone. Mr. Mueller stated that this focus created the challenge of determining where a corridor ended and neighborhood service began. That decision defined the system cost.

Mr. Vobora suggested that the system design attempted to satisfy Mr. Evans' desire through recombining routes along corridors. He stated that creating coverage was a challenge.

Ms. Towery questioned whether the proposed reduction of services to areas that contained low-income, high poverty residents passed muster under Title VI. Mr. Vobora explained that Title VI was considered at the macro level rather than the micro level. Ms. Towery expressed concern that the most disenfranchised residents who were most dependent on the bus for their daily needs would be most affected by LTD's proposed reductions. She questioned what would happen to those residents when the bus service went away, and she added that she did not think they could afford taxis.

Mr. Vobora noted that LTD had scheduled two additional public input opportunities in Springfield. Speaking to the Q Street service reduction, Mr. Mueller discussed the difficulty of accommodating the area in the current closed system used in Springfield with existing headways.

Mr. Evans stated that the metropolitan area contained a large community of transit-dependent citizens who would be isolated without LTD services. He asked if the Board could reframe the discussion in a way that moved the community toward more of a value-driven approach. He posited a hierarchical approach that maximized service to the transit-dependent in a geographical context to the degree possible while maintaining rural services. He envisioned that service in the core area would be totally redesigned from Ground Zero, which he contrasted to a "death by 1,000 cuts" for future bids. He stated that the latter approach was more damaging psychologically to the community, the system, and LTD's employees in the long term.

Mr. Vobora suggested that a true corridor-based system would have a lot of impact on the low-income and transit-dependent. He stated that staff felt pretty good about the proposed redesign, acknowledging that there were service areas lost and further adjustments could be made, but he thought the result was a sustainable system that could be added to when LTD had more money. He said if a second round of reductions became a reality, LTD would likely be obliged to look at a total system redesign.

Ms. Towery liked Mr. Evans' idea. She did not think the focus could be all about money. In the case of Q Street, she pointed out that there were 65 boardings a day in the corridor by people who may not have a voice. She was unsure she could support such a reduction. She asked at what point would the Board had a conversation with the community about the funding issue. Ms. Towery suggested that rather than taking service away from one place to add it to another, LTD should talk to the community, including its government and business partners, about what residents value as a community. She stated that 20 percent of residents lived below poverty level, and LTD was proposing to take away their life line. She did not feel that was okay.

Mr. Mueller pointed out to the committee that the Q Street routing involved 65 boardings a day and he contrasted that to the 100 people a trip carried by route 11 Thurston service. He suggested that the majority of those riders were in the same demographic as the residents living around Q Street; he added that the community's low-income population tended to live along its major corridors.

Mr. Vobora asked if the committee was comfortable with the summer package, and suggested that the committee could meet again to discuss staff's ideas on how to serve the areas of particular concern. Ms. Towery stated that she would like to see LTD look more carefully at those areas. She noted that United Way had created data mapping that showed the location of the community's poorest neighborhoods, and she suggested that could overlay this information on an LTD route map. Ms. Towery stated that she would like to see what it would look like in order to get an idea of the impact on the affected areas.

Mr. Evans believed that LTD had a case to make to the business community; employers needed their employees to be able to reach their places of employment. He pointed out that an employee of the nearby Comfort Inn was unable to reach that location because there was no bus service to the area.

While Mr. Mueller agreed with the committee's remarks, he questioned whether the business community would step forward for the working poor. Ms. Towery did not agree. Mr. Mueller stated that even if it did, it would not be in time for the service reduction process. He added that he was prepared to examine other options for Q Street, but if the Board wanted the reduction target to be 20 percent, LTD could not get there by adding services. Mr. Mueller stated that he wanted to know his new target if it was not 20 percent.

Ms. Towery acknowledged that the current reduction target was 20 percent. She reiterated that the Board could not think of the issue solely in terms of numbers and now contemplate the real impact of the reductions in the form of those offering testimony. While the reductions made sense from a system standpoint, she felt the Board also should consider the reductions in terms of a community standpoint. While the business community had not traditionally been supportive of LTD funding, she felt the community was at a different place; perhaps the community was beginning to think of things differently. She pointed out that Eugene residents had demonstrated the highest level of support for two recent state tax measures. Ms. Towery suggested that the target could be 18 percent, with the remaining 2 percent taken from reserves or other funding sources.

Mr. Vobora did not think the target needed to be exactly 20 percent. He reminded the committee that the total funding gap was \$6.5 million rather than \$3 million, requiring LTD to identify a considerable reduction now while looking for future funding sources. He added that the business community, while it had remained neutral on the payroll tax issue, was not necessarily supportive of contributing more to LTD. Employee compensation continued to be a concern for the business community, and LTD's ability to control contract costs was limited.

Ms. Towery noted that cities were negotiating very different contracts with their union members, and their unions appeared to be "getting it."

Mr. Necker raised the issue of sustainability and suggested that choice riders were important, too. Ms. Towery agreed but stated that there was a difference between being able to make a choice and being forced to use the bus. If she was to make a choice between the two, she would choose those who had to ride the bus to pay their bills.

Ms. Maffei urged the committee to keep carpooling in mind as a way to alleviate the impact of service reductions.

Mr. Evans asked if it would be possible to appeal to the state for funding to maintain services for as long as possible. He likened the District to a public utility and emphasized the importance of maintaining access for residents, and he envisioned uniting with other transit districts to approach the state. Mr. Vobora emphasized the importance of timing given the need for a balanced budget.

The committee agreed that to forward the summer package to the board with the concerns expressed by committee members. Mr. Evans advocated for a conversation with all seven board member about the larger picture issues involved to give staff a clearer vision of where the board wanted LTD to go in the long run. Mr. Vobora concurred, and said staff would attempt to do a more thorough job of explaining the impacts of the reductions. He observed that LTD did not reach a lot of neighborhoods now and had many pockets of low-income residents and seniors that received no service at all. The residents of Ya-Po-Ah were well-organized, but similar service reductions that affected seniors at Sheldon had produced only a few comments.

Ms. Towery supported moving forward with the proposed package and agreed there was a larger conversation to be had. She agreed that the system needed to be examined for impact on the transit-dependent. She agreed that the District was like a public utility and suggested that might be a conversation the District eventually had with the community.

Mr. Evans raised the issue of populations missing from the conversation, like Latinos with language barriers and the growing Southeast Asian population that were dependent on LTD but did not have the time or ability to engage with LTD. Mr. Vobora concurred and noted the outreach planned to the Latino community.

Ms. Linoz asked the committee to address the growing cost of what it took to provide the service. She added that she felt it was worth examining how service was provided by other districts.

Mr. Necker also supported the summer changes. He stated that the Board should consider the testimony it received or risk a public relations problem with residents who did not believe that LTD took their testimony into account. Mr. Evans stated that he felt LTD had been responsive to the public. Ms. Towery commented that LTD should be prepared to state specifically how it responded to the testimony.

**V. ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Evans adjourned the meeting at 11:44 a.m.

*(Recorded by Kimberly Young, City of Eugene)*

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