

Final Report

Lane Transit District Operations Command Center (OCC) Dedication Honoree Committee

Members of the Committee

Chair: Carrie Stewart, Compliance

Brianna Gutiérrez-Thorne, Executive

Sandra Wells, Fleet

Michael Bateman, IT

Cory Graham, ATU

Sam Busskohl, Facilities

Jeff Hoss, Finance- Materials Mgmt., Procurement

Sarah Koski, Marketing

Heather Lindsay, Planning

Liz Alpers, Customer Service and Accessible Services

Ashley Ziert, Human Resources

Brian Penn, Operations & Public Safety

August 2024 - September 2025

Final Recommendations of the Committee:

The Committee conducted a review of twenty-six candidates. Among them, two were identified as our finalists from an evaluation and ranking system, with the results being 92% Phyllis Loobey and 67% Wiley Griffon.

Consequently, we recommend that the Board approve the following actions.

In Honor of Phyllis Loobey

1. Dedicate the OCC building: “The Lane Transit District’s 'Phyllis Loobey Operations Command Center'”
2. Storyboard located at the front of the building to educate others about Loobey’s work and legacy
3. Memorial Herb Garden on LTD grounds

The Committee would also like to see Wiley Griffon honored outside of the OCC Dedication as a stand-alone opportunity. We have put forth suggestions and additional details in this report: “In Honor of Wiley Griffon.”



Lane Transit District Agenda Item Summary (AIS)

Prepared By: Carrie Stewart, Records
Management Officer

AIS Title: Operations Control Center (OCC)
Dedication

Action: Adoption

Agenda Item Summary:

The Operations Command Center (OCC) Dedication Selection Committee conducted a comprehensive review of twenty-six candidate nominations submitted for consideration. The Committee utilized an evaluation and ranking system to assess candidates' contributions to Lane Transit District (LTD) and the broader community.

Following this process, the Committee identified two finalists: **Phyllis Loobey** (92% score) and **Wiley Griffon** (67% score). Based on the Committee's scoring results and deliberations, the Committee unanimously recommends that the Board honor Phyllis Loobey for her extraordinary contributions to LTD and the Lane County community.

DISCUSSION

The Committee's recommendation reflects Ms. Loobey's lasting impact on LTD's culture, operations, and public service legacy. In recognition of her leadership and dedication, the Committee recommends the following actions:

1. **Dedication of the OCC Building** – Officially name the facility the *"Phyllis Loobey Operations Command Center."*
2. **Legacy Storyboard** – Install a permanent storyboard at the front of the building to share Ms. Loobey's story and contributions with employees, visitors, and the public.
3. **Memorial Herb Garden** – Establish a dedicated herb garden on LTD grounds as a living memorial and reflection space honoring Ms. Loobey's service and values.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee recommends the LTD Board of Directors adopt the attached resolution to dedicate the Operations Command Center in honor of Phyllis Loobey and authorize supporting memorial elements.

Attachments: Resolution 2025-09-10-31

I certify that my Department Chief has reviewed and approved this AIS: ☒



RESOLUTION NO. 2025-09-10-31

DEDICATING THE OPERATIONS COMMAND CENTER IN HONOR OF PHYLLIS LOOBEY

WHEREAS, the Lane Transit District (LTD) Board of Directors values the contributions of individuals who have demonstrated extraordinary service and leadership in advancing the mission of public transportation in Lane County; and

WHEREAS, the OCC Dedication Selection Committee conducted a thorough review of twenty-six nominations and, through an evaluation and ranking process, identified Phyllis Loobey as the leading candidate; and

WHEREAS, Phyllis Loobey's work, dedication, and legacy exemplify LTD's values of service, innovation, and community stewardship; and

WHEREAS, the Committee unanimously recommends dedicating the Operations Command Center in honor of Phyllis Loobey and establishing additional memorials to share her story and preserve her legacy;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LANE TRANSIT DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS THAT:

1. The Operations Command Center shall hereafter be known as the "Phyllis Loobey Operations Command Center."
2. A permanent storyboard shall be installed at the front of the facility to educate employees, visitors, and community members about Ms. Loobey's service and legacy.
3. A memorial herb garden shall be established on LTD grounds in recognition of Ms. Loobey's contributions and commitment to LTD and the community.

ADOPTED BY THE LANE TRANSIT DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS ON THIS 10TH DAY OF SEPTEMBER 2025.


Susan Cox Sep 11, 2025 11:39:13 PDT

Susan Cox, Board President

Phyllis Loobey

General Manager 1979-2000



First Woman GM in the Nation
Civic Leader, Social Advocate, Mentor, Mother, & Friend

Phyllis Loobey appointed general manager of LTD

By MELINDA EDEN
Of the Register-Guard

Phyllis Loobey, who resigned her position on the Lane Transit District Board to compete for a job as administrative assistant with the agency five years ago, will take over as general manager of the transit system by July 16.

Mrs. Loobey, 41, LTD budget officer and director of administrative services, was chosen for the No. 1 job by a 4-3 vote of the board in a special meeting Thursday night.

She will replace Fred Dyer, who resigned in April to take a similar assignment with the Miami Valley Regional Transit Authority in Dayton, Ohio. Dyer, 51, former administrator of the state Mass Transit Division, had been general manager of LTD since it was created in 1970.

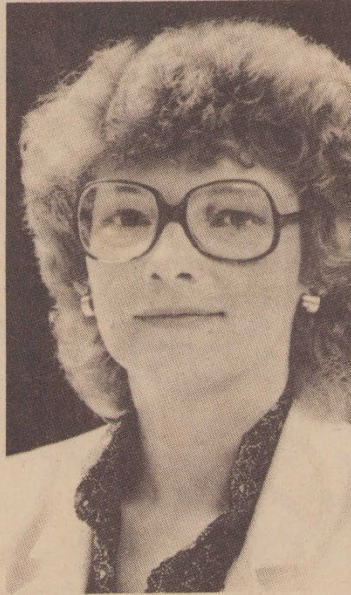
Voting in favor of Mrs. Loobey were board members Pat Randall, who nominated her, Chairman Kenneth Kohnen, Jack Craig and Carolyn Roemer.

Board members Richard Booth, Ted Langton and Dan Herbert voted to hire Tim Dallas, director of LTD operations. Dallas, 33, has served as acting general manager since Dyer's departure April 6.

The board also directed Kohnen and Booth to negotiate a salary with Mrs. Loobey. Dyer was paid \$32,500, and Dallas is being paid \$27,960 as acting general manager.

After Mrs. Loobey was selected, Randall moved that the board offer the position to her by a unanimous vote. The motion carried 6-0 with Booth abstaining. He had said earlier that the impact of a unanimous vote was lost by putting more than one name in nomination and that he did not want to "phony up" a unanimous offer.

Mrs. Loobey was appointed to a four-year term on the LTD Board in 1972 by Gov. Tom McCall. After serving nearly two years, she resigned to compete for a staff position as administrative assistant.



Phyllis Loobey

Promoted by 4 to 3 vote

She subsequently directed the district's affirmative-action program. Her present tasks as head of administrative services and budget officer include affirmative-action responsibilities.

"One of the main emphases as general manager is to emphasize the district's public relations amongst the community and to capitalize on the community support that has been coming through in the last six months from the business community as LTD's role expands as a partner in the exciting things going on in the metropolitan area," Mrs. Loobey said.

"I want to continue our effort to provide service as efficiently and effectively as it is possible for us to do so within our legal, political and financial structures," she said.

Before moving to Eugene 13 years ago, Mrs. Loobey worked as operations

manager of data processing for the Olympia School District in Olympia, Wash. Mostly through her involvement with the Central Lane County League of Women Voters, Mrs. Loobey served the community in various capacities.

She worked in support of the 1990 Plan, served on the Lane County Citizen Advisory Committee for Transportation, was appointed to the Eugene Human Rights Commission on Minorities in 1976 and was a member of transportation and minority affairs committees for the Lane Council of Governments.

Mrs. Loobey, who once worked for LTD as a student intern, earned bachelor of science degrees in political science and in community services and public affairs from the University of Oregon in 1974.

Kohnen said board members interviewed four finalists for the LTD managership: Mrs. Loobey, Dallas, and two men from other parts of the country who are currently employed and did not want their names disclosed unless they were hired. One was an assistant general manager of a large metropolitan transit system, and the other was a 29-year-old manager of a district much smaller than LTD.

After a half-hour of discussion, board members narrowed the choice to Mrs. Loobey and Dallas, concluding that with other qualifications being equal, candidates from outside the district would be less efficient in assuming responsibility than those already familiar with the workings of the LTD.

Then Booth nominated Dallas and Randall nominated Mrs. Loobey.

Randall added that Mrs. Loobey was a very inquisitive board member and expressed progressive views. "I have the highest regard for Tim Dallas. I just happen to feel that Phyllis is the better qualified," he said.

"I'm very glad," Dallas said after learning of Mrs. Loobey's selection. "They made an excellent choice. I'm sure she'll do a terrific job."

Phyllis was born in Hoquiam, Washington, to Ella C. (nee Beck) Price and Edward P. Price. Phyllis graduated from Hoquiam High School in 1956 and then went on to earn a degree in Computer Science from Olympia Vocational Technical Institute. She then moved to Eugene, Oregon, where her daughter, Gonya, was born. When Gonya was still young, she enrolled at the University to pursue a degree with an emphasis on Community Service and Public Affairs. Her chosen area of study speaks volumes about who she was and the lifetime of achievements to come.

As a student, she partnered with a like-minded graduate student, and together they led a “transportation needs study for physically limited area residents.” Much of the work centered on identifying the limitations, determining people's locations, and researching available resources by studying the obstacles people faced, examining other agencies, and even analyzing the city's travel patterns.



While in school, she attended the Lane Transit District Board of Directors' public meetings, and even as a spectator, she stood out; eventually, she became a member of the Board, appointed by the Governor of Oregon. You will hear the word 'strategic' throughout her story, and in her pursuit of transportation justice, serving on the Board was an integral part of her approach as she presented her college research in that capacity.

She emphasized that while lifts on buses could help many, they were not adequate to meet the equitable needs of the community; for example, she cited some folks have visual impairments, and others find themselves short of breath, citing cancer patients she had met who suffer from side effects of Cobalt-radiotherapy treatment; she asserted there needs to be a comprehensive approach, one that realizes different physical ailments dictate different solutions, and that only one way won't make the system accessible. She even researched blind persons and the inability to distinguish the sound of buses from other gasoline- or diesel-powered vehicles; she advocated for the development of an audible device to signal the rider and bus operator adequately.

That evening, she reminded everyone that one person's need is truly *our* need, for we cannot see needs in terms of theirs versus mine; it is our need: "We will all be part of the group someday," she pointed out. This was all gathered and reported in the newspaper as her giving a detailed, passionate "one-and-a-half-hour presentation characterized by such transportation jargon as modal splits, cross tabulations, and person-trip data." Loobey concluded that a whole new approach to transportation was needed. "While such improvements as wheelchair lifts and redesign of steps could be included in any new vehicles ordered, Loobey suggested that only a "demand-responsive system" would solve the problem." She was truly ahead of her time—a transit advocate for all.



Early Career

Remaining strategic, Phyllis resigned her seat on the Board in 1974 to become the Executive Assistant to Fred Dyer. Within five years, she claimed the top spot as our General Manager, and nationally, she became one of the first female General Managers of a transit agency. Although one source claims she was the second female general manager, extensive research has not found a predecessor before her.



Mike Merrill & Phyllis Loobey

Just imagine the scene at that time: a still-new government agency funded by newly imposed taxes made people watchful, skeptical, critical, and nervous. It was a time of societal uncertainty. She took over LTD at a time of an energy crisis, and she bravely led the agency in securing fuel on the spot market. The economy left people feeling uncertain, and the need for strong leadership was evident.



Fred Dyer, Phyllis Loobey, & Ellen Bevington

The District had to comply with new transit regulations and vie for federal and state funds. The fledgling district had a lot to learn about being a public agency, and she rose to the challenge. The time was critical. It was a “make or break” situation. She says about the early days of establishing LTD, “We were trying to create an agency out of ashes, we were flying by the seat of our pants.” She was truly a leader of the people; she faced all challenges, and she ensured that the

District was not just surviving, but striving for greatness, and planning for future successes.

“Phyllis put LTD on the map. She built LTD from the ground up – she had personal ownership and what she was able to create here is vast; from modernizing the fleet, to building service models, connecting with the community, getting the right Board members, and lots of support, all things that helped build success at LTD.”

-Mark Johnson (shared as part of an oral history)

Phyllis constantly challenged the reliance on private automobiles. She was always a strong and vocal advocate of transit. In one newspaper article, she explained why it's fair for the city to have a transit system. She explained that public money funds airlines with federal subsidies, and public money pays for street signals that control traffic, as well as the police and ambulance squads that respond to problems caused by automobiles.

Therefore, she asserted, it only makes sense that transit, too, receives public support. She had a knack for engaging with people to gain their support for the cause. She made her case with the closing, **“And that’s that. End of story. Get on the bus.”**

She was a bold leader. Fairness was always the standard. There was a time when she pulled LTD’s American Public Transit Association (APTA) membership because she felt they were functioning as a “good ol’ boys club.” Under Phyllis’s leadership, LTD became more than just a transit provider—it evolved into a community-centered organization focused on equity, efficiency, and

Loobey Appointed

Phyllis Loobey, LTD Administrative Assistant and a former Board member, was recently appointed by the Eugene City Council to the newly created Human Rights Commission on Minorities. She is one of nine individuals who will serve on this commission, which is one of four new bodies created by a new human rights ordinance. The other groups are for women, the handicapped, and the elderly.

Phyllis serves at LTD's Affirmative Action officer, as well as performing administrative duties relating to grants, personnel, Board of Directors, and budget. She has held this position since July 1, 1974.

The commission, for which Phyllis was appointed to a two-year term, will investigate complaints made by Eugene residents regarding housing, employment, accommodations, and other matters for which fair practice laws and ordinances have been established. The commission will then recommend what it considers to be the appropriate action under the law. [sic] *Transit Tribune*

accessibility. She was instrumental in reducing payroll taxes and operating costs, making LTD a more sustainable and financially viable service for all. Phyllis's strategic direction helped to ensure that public transit remained affordable and responsive to the needs of underserved communities, setting the stage for the organization's long-term success.

Equity is one of LTD's current core values, and it began with Loobey. She always cared about equity in our community. She was appointed by the Eugene City Council to the Human Rights Commission on Minorities, served as LTD's Affirmative Action Officer, and the County Plan Advisory Committee, among others. Her community service was vast. She was a well-known civic activist.

Phyllis systematically led the implementation of public transit accessibility in the LTD fleet, and by 1985, the fleet was 100 percent accessible, years before the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) became law. This is a significant accomplishment, the first of its kind in the nation, if not the world. The National Easter Seals Society recognized Phyllis in 1992 with an EDI award for Corporate Leadership.

Phyllis felt it was paramount that LTD contribute to the community's livability, structured to serve the ridership, the business community, and all citizens. She ensured that LTD staff volunteered and participated in organizations, becoming part of the community's fabric. She truly understood that many relied entirely upon LTD for their transportation needs and was determined that service should be structured with the most public transit-dependent riders at its heart.



She was called a “heavy hitter” on other causes that were dear to her, including the United Way and the Chamber of Commerce, and she was the Chair of a committee that successfully pushed for the bond measure to expand Eugene's Mahlon Sweet Airport. She brought a “presence of humor” as one journalist, Eric Morteson stated in a 1990 article, “she can be flip” “we Sagittarius’s are like that” and profane “if I had lots of money, I’d take names and kick butt” and then pierce you with a sharp question and steely gaze, or break you up with a quip and grin.”

He goes on to say, “She can also get mushy.” “I have the best job in town! I learn something new every day!” and she can also be visionary. Other Transit districts are studying the LTD system of equipping buses with wheelchair lifts to serve the [community members who have disabilities], an idea that Loobey and another student proposed when they were still at the University of Oregon.



She's a manager who finds the stress of the problems of the job exciting; above all, she's fiercely committed to the community's future and LTD's role in it.”

“Phyllis has a real passion for people and a real passion for the transit district,” Dean Kortge said, “she understands what it means to be a member of the Union at the same time she can be straightforward with the Union.”

Ed Bergeron, LTD's former public affairs manager, said, "She is the leader who brought LTD to the 21st century." Another staff member and ATU official, Paul Headley, said, "...she has a heart for the employees. She's a very, very stubborn lady when she thinks she's right, but she mellows out when you reason with her. Our membership has respect for this lady and her leadership." Many have described Phyllis as dedicated, stubborn, humorous, indistinctive, compassionate, and direct.



Another journalist stated that Loobey's reputation for toughness is quickly disarmed when you meet her, she has an easy smile and blue eyes that beam, an auburn orphan Annie hair-do, and she pokes fun at herself and admits, "I go through adolescence every couple of years – I keep learning about the world."

She may be tough, but she genuinely cares about people and believes it's just good leadership. She explained, "There is a social aspect to providing transportation that doesn't exist if you're running a dime store; if the store fails, another will sprout up. If you take away the bus system, nobody else will do it. You can't tell your students, your elderly, your neighbors with disabilities, who do not have access to cars, to make do as best they can."

She had the respect and admiration of all in the industry, the manager of C-TRAN in Vancouver, Washington, said, "... vintage Loobey is the one who says, 'she's kicking butt and taking names, 'she's an aggressive manager who will not tolerate apathy. She's very caring about what she does, whether it's United Way, the chamber of commerce, or LTD. I think we need more folks like that."

In old LTD staff newsletters, she had a regular "column" in which she addressed employees directly, explaining both the good and the bad that LTD was facing. She encouraged staff to get involved and stay informed. When you are getting people

to change attitudes and lifestyles to ride the bus, it's necessary to be a crusader in that respect.

As you can imagine, there were hard times. And as great leaders do, she recognized them and made herself even more accessible. "I acknowledge there were hard times, one being in 1994 when there was a lot of tension with the Union." She said there are no winners when that happens, and found the conflict very hurtful.

She navigated the District through other rough roads, including layoffs and service cuts during the early 1980s recession, as well as several heated confrontations with the Union. Labor negotiations and relationships reached their low point during the 1980s. She said, "... it was awful, and everyone was sick about it. It left a scar... The key to overcoming the strife was getting all outside representatives out of the room and negotiating directly with employees. That helped the healing process." Paul Headley agreed that there were rocky times, and employees looked to Loobey to straighten out the disagreements. He said that when her team couldn't resolve the contract, everyone looked to Phyllis to appear on the scene and help resolve the issues.

Those who worked closely with her remember Phyllis's impeccable work ethic. Every day, Phyllis arrived prepared for the challenges ahead, with a cup of coffee and a newspaper on her desk, ready to engage with whatever came her way. Phyllis's leadership not only reshaped LTD but also transformed the role of women in transit leadership, inspiring future generations to pursue their own professional paths.



Stefano Viggiano & Phyllis Loobey

Shaping other Leaders

In 1986, Loobey lent its work to foster leadership in the community and encourage people to get involved in civic life. "Local government depends on participation by its citizens, but in the Eugene/Springfield area, fewer people are getting involved in the community, and current leaders are overextending themselves trying to fill vacancies." The Leadership Program, sponsored by the Eugene and Springfield

chambers of commerce, was trying to change this trend and recruit and train interested citizens in community involvement. And just like she did for LTD, when she took something on, it became even better.

"This program is the best program in the country," Phyllis asserted. "Before, we didn't have a way of training and identifying people interested in serving their community. But through the Leadership Program, government leaders can recognize potential leaders." Then she appealed this sentiment directly to the business community, as she often did. One of the reasons for Loobey's and LTD's success was due to the excellent relationship with the business community. She asserted that leadership and participation in local government are good business and reminded business leaders to encourage their employees to take a sense of responsibility to the community.



Phyllis Loobey, 1986

The Success of LTD Under the Leadership of Phyllis

Phyllis believed the lifeblood of LTD was an employee who felt cared about, connected, supported in being creative, recognized, and valued for the wisdom of their trade. She knew that her job was to create an environment in which shared interests, friendship, commitment, hard work, and play were fostered. It was this leadership style that allowed her employees to shine and make the goals of LTD possible.

LTD celebrated many achievements with Loobey at the helm, and many will point to accessibility in transit, as by 1985, LTD became the first transit agency in the world to have a 100% lift-accessible fleet, setting a standard for inclusivity in public transportation. (Interestingly, MTA in NYC claims they were the first public agency in the world to have a bus fleet 100 percent accessible to customers who use wheelchairs. But a Wikipedia page states it wasn't until 1991 that they were fully wheelchair accessible.) LTD grew to great honor and a model in the industry; as a true leader, she empowered people and the staff at LTD, and from this support and trust, we accomplished great things.

“She was good at bringing the right leadership and talent in for LTD to become a sophisticated organization and earn the trust of the community. LTD became a very sophisticated organization, and to see how we were able to be successful, I think it was because of Phyllis. For success, you must attract good talent and place them into leadership roles. She looked for people who were high caliber, and to bring LTD further, [she was] very strategic.”

- Tom Schwetz (shared as part of an oral history)

Let's examine some of the team's accomplishments under her guidance. In 1981, a Comprehensive Service Redesign was undertaken to improve routing and service delivery, and also the “Park & Ride” service was implemented. One year later, LTD began promoting a free service system-wide during the week of the Lane County Fair. The day pass was introduced, and a term pass for Lane Community College

and University students was also introduced. Additionally, many transit stations were completed.



In 1984, the 500 series buses were retrofitted with wheelchair lifts, power steering, "next stop" signs, and automatic destination signs as part of a fleet standardization project.

That year also saw LTD recognized as the "Business of the Month" by the Eugene Chamber of Commerce, marking the first time a public agency had won the award in the Eugene-Springfield area.

The Summer Youth Pass was also introduced. In 1985, the Oregon State Legislature established a Special Transportation Fund through a tax on tobacco products to provide transportation services to the elderly and individuals with disabilities. In 1988, the first group pass contract was signed with the Associated Students of the University of Oregon (ASUO). Additionally, that year, the Saturday service was extended to McKenzie Bridge and Junction City, and bus stops were installed on all non-urban routes (previously, you had to flag down the bus operator).

LTD purchased eight 35-foot buses from Tri-Met in Portland to increase capacity for expected ridership gains. A redesign of the Springfield sector was implemented, and as a result, ridership on Springfield routes increased by 25 percent. A University of Oregon Group Pass program was implemented for students, faculty, and staff, and the District added a university-oriented service to handle the increased ridership.

Later in the 1980s, LTD provided successful shuttle services for the World Veterans Games, and at that time, it was the most significant track event in Eugene-Springfield's history.

In 1989, the cigarette tax was increased, which in turn led to increased state support for transportation services for the elderly and people with disabilities.



In 1990, the City of Eugene Group Pass Program for Lane Council of Government (LCOG) and Sacred Heart Hospital began, and a single-day ridership record of 39,241 total rides was set during the Lane County Fair.

In 1991, the Board of Directors participated in long-range strategic planning to define direction for the District in the coming years. Additionally, around this time, a new wheelchair tie-down design was introduced. Twenty-five new Gillig Phantom buses (900 series) were added to the Fleet, and seventeen Flexible buses (500 series) were placed in contingency status. The football sports shuttles set a new ridership record, averaging 5,045 rides per game.

Then in 1992, LTD introduced a new bus top sign system featuring route numbers and names, accessible and express stop symbols, and a complementary sign and pole color scheme. Accessibility and sensitivity training were provided for all LTD employees. A comprehensive service redesign was undertaken to improve system performance, increase the frequency of service on some corridors, and extend the hours of evening operation.

As mentioned before, and again here because of the significance of this achievement, the National Easter Seal Society has chosen Lane Transit District as one of three national winners of its prestigious E.D.I. award. Award for Corporate Leadership (1992). Ridership for a single fiscal year (FY 92-93) surpasses 5 million

for the first time in District history. In September, a 6 percent service increase was implemented to target early-morning bus service on major routes, new commuter-oriented bus routes, and increased service on some of the heavily used routes.

The expansion of the University Station was completed to provide improved service to the UO. LTD received the first “Barrier Awareness” Award from the City of Eugene in recognition of its leadership and contribution to making Eugene a better place and more accessible for persons with disabilities.

In 1994, LTD and the University of Oregon shared the Governor's State of Oregon Energy Award for the Group Pass Program. In 1995, a significant reorganization of the District was implemented, emphasizing better coordination of service delivery. It enhanced long-range planning, and ridership increased 5.7 percent during FY95 and reached an all-time high of 5,227,669 annual riders. The “Commuter Solutions” program was established to help area employers address the transportation needs of their employees. By 1996, ridership increased 7.6 percent in FY 95-96, reaching an all-time high of 5,627,026 annual trips. By then, the planning for the development of our BRT system (EmX) had re-emerged.



In 1997, for the third time, the University of North Carolina at Charlotte ranked LTD among the nation's top transit systems for service efficiency and effectiveness. The first new 30-foot buses were delivered. Congress authorizes funding of Phase 1 of the BRT project in the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21).

In 1998, the Creswell City Council requested annexation into the LTD service area. Six weekday trips were implemented. LCC/LTD combined efforts to provide a subsidized term pass to students, and sales exceeded all expectations. Also, this year, the Cottage Grove service pilot project ended, although voters rejected the measure to annex into the LTD district. However, not long after, voters changed their minds and approved a measure requesting annexation into the LTD service area, effective January 2000. LTD set a new 12-month ridership record of 5,945,000 rides. Nineteen 40-foot, low-floor buses were added to the fleet, and \$19 million in state funds was appropriated to transportation services for the elderly and people with disabilities.

BRT

Outside of accessibility, another well-known accomplishment of LTD is our Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) EmX system that was unveiled in 2007, and although this put LTD on the map again in terms of innovations, both nationally and globally, the innovative LTD Planners began planning for this in 1974, unveiling it as part of the “T2000” plan in 1977-78; unfortunately, the public rejected it.

However, Loobey brought a sense of trust and ownership to the community, and her team was able to revive it and finally bring it past the finish line.

Rob Bennet Sr, a local business leader, former member of the LTD Board of Directors, and close friend of Phyllis Loobey, reflected on the success of the BRT, stating, “She was strategic and was able to bring in a diverse set of expertise to the Board of Directors. She wanted a conservative small business



owner for a perspective and felt I could contribute with the other experts that were involved with EmX and the Board. Phyllis was getting around with people, gaining support for the BRT, and people supported her. She brought the business community together. She was a great lady and someone I cared a lot about. She involved herself in the community; it didn't matter whether you were a conservative, progressive, or what your political views were. She engaged with you. And she was an active member of the Chamber of Commerce, she met with different business groups, and she just made herself available. She had great respect in the community, by everyone."

Facilities of LTD

Facilities have always been a symbol of LTD's success, and she oversaw the most significant periods of facility growth at LTD.

In the 1980s, the Eugene Mall on-street transit station along 10th Ave., the Customer Service Center at 10th and Willamette, a transit station at Lane Community College, the Gateway Mall transit station, and the Valley River Center transit station were completed. We also moved into our brand-new Glenwood Maintenance and Operations facility in 1989 (and quite frankly, we should have dedicated the building to her at that time).

In 1995, the first expansion of the bus yard was done, including the warehouse (aka the Batcave). In 1996, ground was broken on a new Eugene Transit Station, and shortly after, the new Thurston Station Park & Ride was opened. In 1998, Seneca Station Park & Ride opened, and of course, a big one - the new Eugene Station opened for service in April. The Eugene Station was a landmark facility and has been instrumental in changing the mix-use and redevelopment of Eugene.

Her legacy is not only in the memories of those she worked with but also in her philosophy for the District's many construction projects. She insisted that they be well-built, inexpensive to maintain, and aesthetically pleasing. Famous for saying that "just because something is built with public money, it does not have to be ugly." She took great pride in the Downtown Transit Station. She also was very proud of the Glenwood Administration building and I know she would be beaming with pride to see the OCC building.

Retirement

As Phyllis was looking at retirement, LTD marked its 30th anniversary. She retired after serving as General Manager for 21 years. Upon her retirement, Phyllis reflected on her tenure with LTD, saying that the organization had been a defining part of her life. She had devoted so much of herself to LTD, and, meeting with a journalist, said, **“I'm promoting myself to a new career, and part of my new career is just to find out who Phyllis is. I don't know who she is without LTD.”**

That statement sums up the level of dedication and service that Phyllis Loobey has provided to us at LTD, to our city, our county, state, and, quite frankly, the world. She set standards for transit that have improved the lives of so many. She has been the most significant gift, and we have been beyond lucky that she chose us.

After her retirement at the District, she continued to dedicate her time and passion to civic leadership, becoming increasingly active in the League of Women Voters of Lane County, where she eventually served as Treasurer. It was said of her tenure as Treasurer, "Phyllis had great sense of humor, which showed even through the dry accounting work. She could deliver an amusing treasurer's report that had the audience laughing. It was often noted that her wit was delivered with a sly grin and a twinkle in her eye." She was a member since 1968! She also held the position of Chair of the 4J Capital Improvements Committee and was a member of the United Way Executive Committee.

After Loobey's passing in 2019, the Women's League of Voters held a celebration of life, during which they gathered to share stories of the beautiful life she had lived. They danced, per her wishes, to shake a tail feather to some of her favorite tunes. In the celebration announcement, readers were informed of the proper bus routes to arrive at the event held at Tsunami Books, and the management there said, "Phyllis was one of Tsunami's favorite people. She was the first woman to serve as General Manager of a bus district in America, right here in Eugene." She loved art, cooking, French cuisine, and a well-articulated sentiment; she was never afraid to have her fancy tickled. She had an infectious laugh, a pretty smile, and unwavering loyalty to her loved ones.

Phyllis Loobey's legacy lives on in the lasting impact she had on LTD's operations, its culture, and the communities it served. Her contributions have shaped the

direction of public transit in Lane County, making her a revered figure in LTD's history and a true pioneer for women in leadership.

Phyllis retired from LTD in 2000 and remarked that she was honored and privileged to have been a part of LTD's history.

In closing, the time has come for us to truly recognize Phyllis Loobey for all that she has done for us, for the community, for the riders, accessibility, equity, and fairness, just to name a few.

Phyllis Loobey's legacy will forever stay in the hearts of everyone who enters our facility and everyone who boards our buses.

In Honor of Wiley Griffon

Griffon was a close second for the OCC Dedication. The Committee admires his legacy, and although a Griffon honor isn't part of the original OCC Dedication project, it is included here as a recommendation for a stand-alone opportunity and is progressing accordingly.

1. Rename or attach Griffon's name to Route 36, as this aligns most closely with his historic route.
 - The renaming of Route 36 appears straightforward to execute, with information added to route pages in the Rider's Guide and on the website; implementation and feasibility research are ongoing.
2. Five-cent Fare Day as an annual and continuing honor, to occur on Transit Equity Day.
 - The LTD Chiefs and CEO are aware of this idea and support it; however, the Finance Department needs to be consulted further; implementation and feasibility research are ongoing.

Other ideas suggested included a bus wrap featuring Griffon's image or an art contest among local children that illustrates Griffon's legacy and what his service and perseverance mean to them today, further merging the two ideas as a contest for a bus wrap. However, it is important to note that buses are not assigned to specific routes; therefore, if the goal is to have a Griffon (wrapped) bus on Route 36, it would create a non-standard procedure and likely result in additional daily work for the Planning, Operations, and Fleet departments. Please consult these departments for more details. Adding a wrap may also drive the need for a contract. Wraps must be maintained, and clear installation, maintenance, and removal guidelines should be in place; therefore, funding should be allocated. Marketing is hosting an art contest with children this year, and if this idea is given further thought, it could be helpful to gather feedback from staff to identify lessons to learn.

Wiley Griffon

Griffon's story highlights the resilience and impact of Black Americans in shaping Oregon's history, particularly in the realm of public transportation.



Wiley Griffon, 1893. Eugene and College Hill Street Railway. Courtesy of Lane County History Museum

In 1891, Griffon began operating Eugene's first mule-drawn streetcar. This service marked the city's initial step toward establishing a formal public transportation system. Wiley Griffon was the first Black transit operator in the Eugene and Springfield area. Although Henry Holden owned the transit company, Griffon was often left alone to run the entire outfit, and from this service, he was well known. He was very kind, and the children loved him; he always gave them hard candies, and they saved money to ride with him.

Newspapers mentioned him by name several times, noting that he was always accompanied by a ready smile, kind words for others, and was a devout and devoted man of faith, not known to drink or use profanity (which was a significant issue at the time). Griffon inspires many still today by his spirit of perseverance; he displayed great strength in mind and body.

The transit fare was 5 cents during that time period, the speed limit was six miles per hour, and the mules were changed out every four hours. There were eight

mules. Upon entering the streetcar, a dog box was located up front for pets, in which children would often hide.

Holden's sons, Al and Harry, ran the line after their father left Eugene, and for much of the time, as mentioned, Griffon was in sole charge. This was after W.B. Dennis, owner of the Black Butte quicksilver mines south of Cottage Grove, had purchased the system and intended to utilize the rails within the mines. Later, the track was taken up, and the rails were shipped to the mines, while the cars were sent to Salem, where they were used by the street railway company as trailers.

Sometimes, when the roads were flooded and the transit car could not operate, a humorous sign would be placed out that said, "Ferry not running." Although the picture below was taken at a later date, we can imagine this is what the roads looked like during our rainy season.



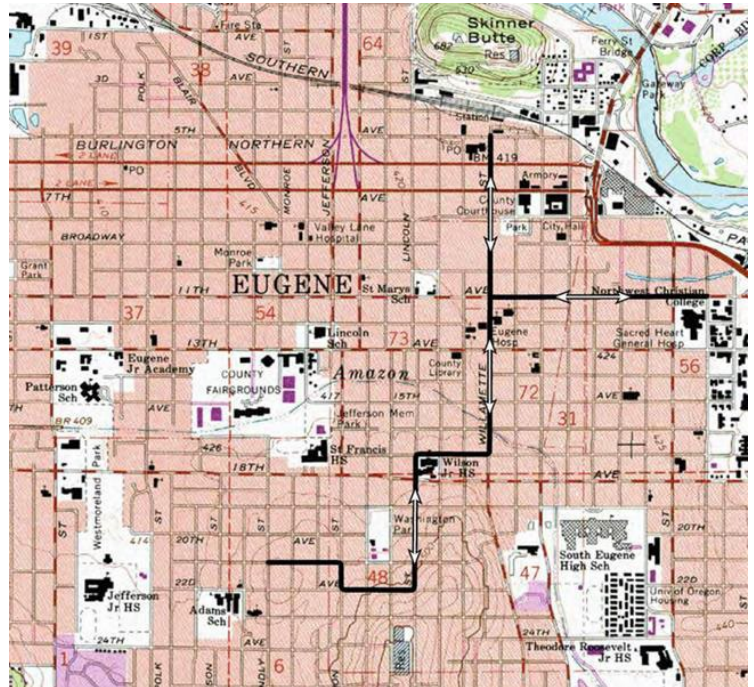
Those in Eugene during the time remembered Wiley Griffon and transit, as seen in the following excerpt.

"In 1964, Pauline Walton, a 1904 graduate of the University of Oregon who was 85 years old at the time, recalled riding the mule-drawn streetcars many times as a child, and especially remembered Wiley Griffon, one of the streetcar drivers and one of the very few African-Americans in Eugene. Griffon apparently came from Texas with Henry W. Holden to work on the new street railway in Eugene (Tims 1964:4).

Walton continued:

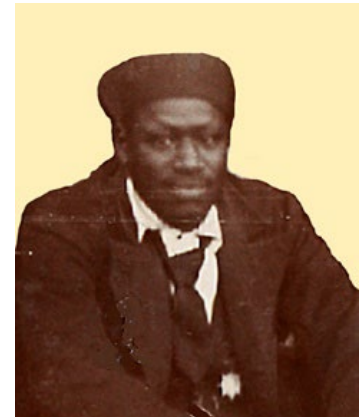
“I remember that Wiley used to hitch his mule to a pole near Villard Hall on the campus when he didn’t have any passengers on board. Then he would go into the hall to see what was going on. Often, when he came back out, the car would be filled with passengers. There were times when there were so many passengers that the poor mule couldn’t get the car started. Then the passengers had to get out and start pushing [Tims 1964:4].” (Rick Minor credit)

Three-mile route of the Eugene & College St Railway



The streetcar plied two routes up Willamette, one of which ran towards College Hill, but the main line ran out to Eleventh to the State University (Deady Hall). This made Griffon popular with many college students and led to one of his later jobs, as custodian of the university.

The transit enterprise didn’t raise enough cash to keep the streetcar and lines in good repair. With tracks often muddy and broken, one of the challenges of running the operation was simply to keep cars upright on the tracks. Sometime around 1900, the Eugene Street Railway System ceased operation.



Friendly Hall University of Oregon, Griffon in front row.

Griffon continued to serve the community through various roles, including as a waiter, janitor at the University of Oregon, and as a porter at the Elk's Club at the time of his passing. He also did many odd jobs around the valley. He helped build Eugene's infrastructure, digging sewers and basements for some of the larger buildings around town, demonstrating his many talents. He was also a cook and worked for Grandma Munra (aka Munro). Although we are not sure, he may have worked at her famous eating house on the O.R. & N. line at Meacham, she also had charge of a hotel and a University dorm. Grandma Munra is described from newspapers, "...her influences were always of the very best, the great motherly heart was solace to many a young man and woman striving to get upwards."

The most comprehensive piece about Griffon's life was done in 2017 and published as part of the Lane County Historian, *"Little House on the Millrace"* by Douglas Card, and the following information is sourced from that article, which highlights Griffon as a homeowner.



Mural by Ila Rose (Willamette between 20th & 22nd Ave.)

Today, we may think of Black homeownership as common; however, this is quite remarkable when you consider the context, as not another Black resident owned a home in Eugene until C. B. and Annie Mims, 40 years later.

Context helps see the true significance of Griffon's Legacy. It is essential to know the context of Oregon during that time period. Not long before Griffon arrived in Oregon around 1890, the 1844 Territory government banned enslaving Black Americans, but they made it illegal for Black people to live within its bounds. In 1857, Oregon reaffirmed exclusionary laws in its state constitution. In 1859, Oregon was the only state in the nation to have an exclusionary law. In 1926, thirteen years after Griffon's death, exclusionary laws were finally repealed, and in 1959, the 15th Amendment of the US Constitution was ratified (90 years after the federal government approved it).

Thanks to two published obituaries, it was known that Griffon owned a home by the millrace; however, it was only through more recent research that the exact location of the home was discovered.

Eugene Daily Guard 6/27/1913: "Wiley Griffon, Eugene's best-known colored citizen and for 26 years a resident of this city, died at his home near the Eugene flour mills, last evening at the age of 46 years ... He owned his little home down by the river, where he died."

Eugene Morning Register 6/27/1913: "Wiley Griffon, for years the only negro in Eugene and perhaps the best-known character on Eugene streets for 25 years, died yesterday afternoon at 5 o'clock in his little cabin on the millrace in the factory district."

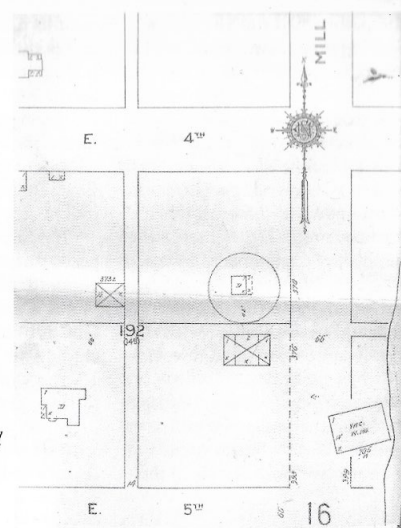
Griffon bought his property directly, as his name is on the first mortgage from 1908. However, this transaction required a willing white person to sell to a Black person, as well as some financial support from a friend, who in this case was the famous builder Nels Roney.

Much of what is reviewed in Card's article was made possible with the assistance of the late LTD bus operator, Debbie Bitterlich, who was one of his colleagues in researching Lane County property records and legal documents located in the Oregon State Archives in Salem.

The 1912 Sanborn fire map provides an accurate depiction of the buildings and features surrounding Griffon's house during the last years of his life. The immediate vicinity is mostly vacant, and a broader view would show that denser housing began on the higher ground to the north and west, with the industrial area along the railroad and millrace to the south. Griffon's small home is on the flat land just west of Mill, one lot from Fourth, and across from the millrace and a vacant warehouse to the south. The nearby larger building to the south is a stable, and the closest house is near Fifth and High.

While the house itself was rectangular, it appears square on the map with the full porch added to the east. The porch provided him with a comfortable spot to enjoy the view of the millrace, trees, fields, and the Willamette River.

*Insert of the Sanborn
Fire Map from 1912.
Griffon's home is encircled
and marked "D" for
dwelling.*



The Guard added that "for some time previous to his death, he had been a porter at the Elk's Club. The Elks gave him a decent burial." And in fact, he did have quite a funeral and burial, with Branstetter's bill coming to \$64.15, a tidy sum in those days. It should be noted that his death was marked with great respect, as the funeral was held in the regular chapel, flowers were provided, and his burial was in the Masonic Cemetery, north side. However, Griffon's estate, rather than the Elks, ended up paying for his own medical and funeral expenses.

While we don't know how Wiley Griffon truly felt about his life in Eugene, we know that he was outwardly cheerful and well-liked, and his many friends included such renowned citizens as Nels Roney and Deputy Sheriff M.S. Wallis.

Griffon was physically strong, as shown by his various jobs, and mentally tough enough to handle life in a town where he was a true minority. The fact that he was able to buy a home here says a lot about both him and the community.



Skinner's 1852 Plat Map. Griffon's property, outlined on the map, is just one lot from the corner of Fourth and Mill, across the street from the millrace and near the river.

Griffon's Legacy Recognition: In 2013, a monument was dedicated to Wiley Griffon at the Eugene Masonic Cemetery, near his gravesite.

The plaque features a photograph of him with his mule-drawn trolley, honoring his contributions to Eugene's early transportation system.

The monument is next to Griffon's grave, and he is one of only two known Black people buried in the historic cemetery. The marker at Eugene Masonic Cemetery was of the work by the Lane Community College Black Student Union, Erik & Ann Muller, Eugene Water and Electric Board (EWEB), Lane ESD Teaching American History, the Eugene Human Rights Commission, Lane County Human Rights and Affirmative Action Advisory Committee, Adrian & Khaliyah Rodriguez, Cheri Turpin & Mark Harris: I, Too Am Eugene: A Multicultural History Project.



Also, part of the project is a mural that Ila Rose painted in May 2019. Eugene resident Gwynne McLaughlin led the project's part.

Other honors in the community include a Street Name in Eugene, Wiley Griffon Way, and a Historic Marker from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and Eugene Water and Electric Board (EWEB) Partnership.



Sources & Credit

Much of the material is also within the “LTD Operations Command Center Dedication Honoree Candidates” book.

Black in Oregon, National and Oregon Chronology of Events,
<https://sos.oregon.gov/archives/exhibits/black-history/Pages/context/chronology.aspx>

Lane County Historian – Lane County Historical Society vol.62, no.1., Spring 2017 Douglas Card’s article.

Lane Transit District Archive - pictures of Phyllis Loobey and employee yearbooks.

Newspapers of the Oregon Daily Emerald and Register-Guard.

Oral Histories housed in the District Archive, of Bob Evers, Mark Johnson, and Tom Schwetz.

Phyllis P. Loobey - Obituary, 12/03/1937 - 11/12/2019, Source:
<https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/registerguard/name/phyllis-loobey-obituary?id=14483024> 2/

Rick Minor, Heritage Research Associates Report No. 384. An archeological assessment of Eugene Street Railway remains on Willamette Street, Eugene, Lane County, Oregon.

Special Thanks to Madeline Saldana, who authored an essay on Phyllis Loobey, which was sourced here.

The Wiley Griffon tribute would not have been possible without the generous support and countless hours of Douglas Card, Ph.D., a retired University of Oregon instructor and author, who provided copies of numerous primary and secondary records that he and Debbie Bitterlich uncovered through extensive research. He has been a wonderful teacher of Griffon’s legacy to Carrie Stewart, the District’s Archivist and Records Management Officer. If you wish to learn more about Wiley Griffon, including the full article that was sourced in this report, please visit Carrie in the archive!

Appendices

- A. Phyllis Loobey Scrapbook
- B. Past Boards and Committees of Phyllis Loobey

Newspaper Articles:

- C. Oregon Daily Emerald, January 11, 1974, Transportation needs studied for physically limited area residents
- D. Oregon Daily Emerald, April 12, 1974, LTD sees handicap needs; board member presents plan
- E. Oregon Daily Emerald April 21, 1977, Group Handles Race, Religious Complaints
- F. Oregon Daily Emerald, January 06, 1986, Program Fosters Leaders
- G. Leadership Program
- H. Register Guard January 21, 2000, LTD Chief taking a new road

A. Phyllis Loobey Scrapbook

“She was inquisitive, progressive, and civically minded. Notorious for her humor, intelligence, and love of articulate expression.”





LANE TRANSIT DISTRICT
Employee Appreciation Banquet 2000
February 27, 2000

Phyllis said she has the best job in town, “it is exciting, varied, challenging, and the employees are first-rate people.”



The big wheel of LTD

By GEORGE BARKER
Of The Register-Guard

Phyllis Loobey belies her reputation for toughness with a manner immediately disarming.

Her easy smile, blue eyes beaming through rimless glasses, an auburn Orphan Annie hairdo, all combine to suggest bonhomie and fair play. She pokes fun at herself with such admissions as "I go through adolescence every couple of years — I keep learning about the world."

Whatever the Lane Transit District's 46-year-old general manager is learning from the world may not be nearly as significant as what the transportation world may want to learn from Loobey:

- The LTD board last week approved a \$7.5-million fiscal budget which — based on a \$1-million excess of revenue — allowed for a decrease in the payroll taxes that support the

Phyllis Loobey is on a roll as manager of the successful Lane Transit District

system.

- The transit district is achieving national attention for having 60 percent of its vehicles equipped to accommodate the physically handicapped.

- Compared with Portland's financially strapped Tri-Met, a twin sister system conceived by the state in 1970, LTD is riding smooth road. While Portland ridership is diminishing, the number of bus riders in Lane County was up 22 percent last year and is expected to climb similarly this year.

Lane County business owners, although irked at being singled out to support a communitywide "social service," have not felt badly

enough in recent years to organize a protest. Hearings scheduled by the bus district to address such grievances have gone unattended.

The transit district, in fact, is being bathed in the type of adulation expressed last month by the Springfield Chamber of Commerce, which sent a vote of confidence to Loobey and the transit district for being able to reduce taxes and operating costs while "more and more government agencies find themselves asking for increased taxes."

And while a continuing sense of frustration evident among members of the bus drivers'

Turn to LTD, Page 2C



staff photo by Don Bates

Much of the success of the Lane Transit District is traced to Phyllis Loobey

LTD

Continued from Page 1C

Transit Union Local 757 is being left to simmer until their contract comes up for renegotiation next year, community reaction to the bus company is one of general approval.

When asked to explain such success, Loobey manages simultaneously to take credit and share it.

"When I got the job in the late '70s I was confronted by the need to redress inequities put on the system by the union," Loobey says. "The union took me to court but we budgeted \$80,000 for legal costs."

Loobey then called back East to hire a tough labor lawyer.

The district won the battle over wages and benefits but still is fighting the war.

Del Hadley, business representative in Portland for the transit union, says it's "hard to get Loobey to listen" to the union's side in negotiations.

"She's very tough, very determined to do what she's going to do," Hadley says. "Depending on the issue, she can be fair — or she can be something else. She loses hard — she takes defeat personally."

Pat Randall, who was secretary-treasurer of the Oregon AFL-CIO and a member of the LTD board when Loo-

bey was hired, says he never has been sorry he encouraged her bid for the job — "even though she has felt she had to use tactics I personally didn't agree with. But I don't think she ever perceives herself to be unfair . . . and there's no doubt she has lots of smarts."

Loobey, a native of Aberdeen, Wash., came to Eugene from Washington with her husband in the mid-1960s. When her marriage broke up, she found day-care help for her 5-year-old daughter and enrolled at the University of Oregon to complete college work begun at Washington State University. She graduated from the U of O in 1974 with a degree in political science.

While in school she became a civic activist, serving with the League of Women Voters, the county plan advisory committee, the Lane Council of Governments and, prophetically, was appointed to a spot on the board of directors of the Lane Transit District.

The year she graduated from the U of O she also resigned her position on the bus board to take the job as administrative assistant to Fred Dyer, LTD general manager. Four years later, when Dyer resigned to take a job in Dayton, Ohio, the board spent five months in a national search for his replacement — and hired Loobey.

"At the time, I was the only woman

in the United States in a transit job this size," Loobey says.

Loobey now attributes some of the bus line's success to force of circumstance.

The Eugene area payroll tax never reflected the severity of the recession, she said. Income from that source was maintained.

About 65 percent of the district's revenue last year came from a .6 of 1 percent payroll tax paid by Lane County employers within the district — now reduced to .5 of 1 percent. Federal assistance pitched in another 11 percent — leaving just about 25 percent of the total to be supplied by the passengers, most of whom are students or senior citizens.

"We're the right size, just 54 buses and 200 employees, which is not too big to be manageable," she says. "Big cities like Portland have problems caused by sheer size. It forces you to interpose many levels of management and top management gets too far away from actually running the show."

"I told a friend of mine, Bernie Ford, manager of the Chicago system, 'Bernie, your company is not well run.' He said he knew it but there wasn't much he could do about it. He could order a change tomorrow and not see the remedial result in his lifetime . . ."

Current successes in Lane County have been built on philosophical questions that never have been completely answered. For example, humanitarian considerations aside, where is the justice in having hard-pressed shop owners subsidize bus travel for students and old folks? Should not a bus business have the opportunity to fail if it cannot be supported by its customers?

"It was just 10 years ago that the private bus company serving Eugene and Springfield did fail and there was no other to take its place," Loobey answers. "At that point, government had to decide whether it could get along without public transportation. The state Legislature, led by Gov. Tom McCall, set up the plan by which the Lane County and Tri-Met systems operate."

"There's a social-service aspect to providing transportation that doesn't exist if you're running a dime store," Loobey says. "If a store fails, another will come along to fill the need. If you take away a bus system, nobody else will do it."

"You just can't tell your students, your elderly, your handicapped — people who do not have access to cars — to just make do as best they can," she says.

Dr. Bob Loomis, who served on

some of the early LTD boards and was a business critic of the payroll tax, says the issue has become moot.

Loomis says that while it's true that Oregon government in the early 1970s felt "it could get away with putting any tax they wanted on business," the payroll tax turned out to be the only acceptable way to fund the transit system. Both a sales tax and a personal income tax were even more objectionable, Loomis says. Many business people now say the tax they pay becomes "a general tax" in that they charge it as another cost of doing business and pass it along to their customers.

Other complaints bounce off Loobey like pingpong balls:

How about outlying merchants, like those in Junction City, who say they resent having to subsidize their customers' shopping trips to Eugene?

"I never saw a person carrying a refrigerator home on the bus," she says.

What about those expensive park-and-ride stations that are not being used?

"Most of them are \$1-a-year arrangements with churches," she says. "The station at River Road and Belt Line Road was purchased by the county mostly with federal funds and we

pay the county \$100 a year for its use. About 30 people an hour use it now, but its real value will come in the long term."

She says the LTD was fortunate in that it took its lumps early during the recession and learned from its mistakes in time to turn around a threatening decline in ridership and revenues.

"To cut costs we tried eliminating certain routes a few years ago, and found it was a mistake," she says. "More recently, we've decreased frequency during certain time periods, and found it didn't affect ridership a bit. It takes a long time for people to respond, but they will if service remains stable."

She says the company no longer increases fares across the board. Instead, it will raise the price of cash fares one time, token fares another, and pass rates a third — small, 5 percent increases and never all at once.

"This way, riders always feel they have a less-expensive alternative," Loobey says.

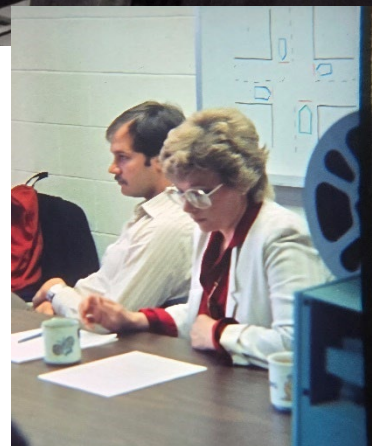
Isn't this sort of a fare box shell game?

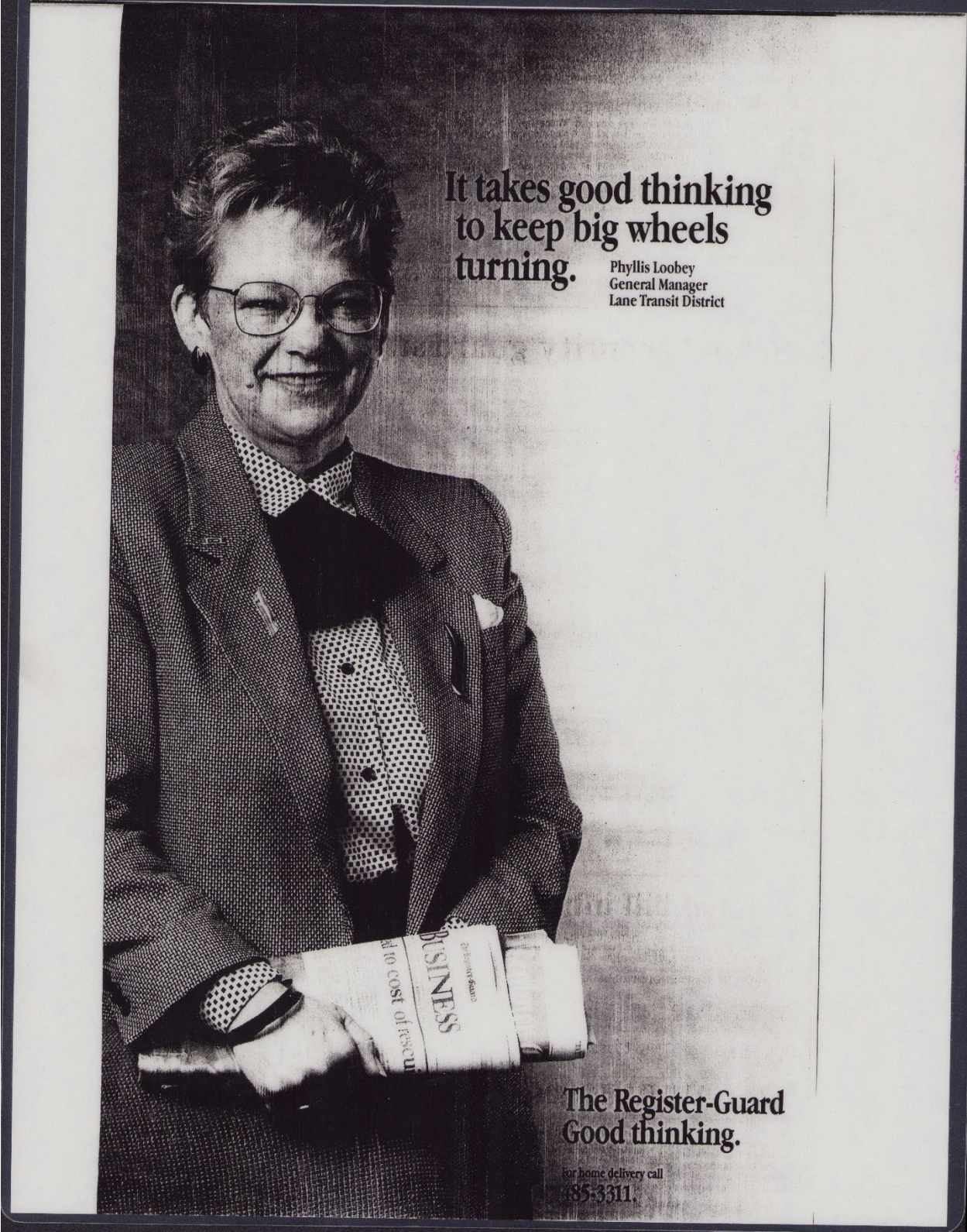
"Not at all," Loobey says, the smile returning. "I see it as creative marketing."

Her philosophy was to give more to the community and friends than she receives.



**“She loved people, and everyone loved her; she took good care of all of us. From whatever your position was at LTD, each person was important to her.”
- Bob Evers, retired LTD Customer Service**





**It takes good thinking
to keep big wheels
turning.**

Phyllis Loobey
General Manager
Lane Transit District

**The Register-Guard
Good thinking.**

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 City Manager Mike Gleason
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 PL
 Congressman Peter DeFazio
 L-COG Planner Steve Gordon

March 1990



PHYLLIS LOOBEY
General Manager
Originally hired July 1, 1974

Phyllis says she "has the best job in town; it's exciting, varied, challenging, and the employees are first-rate people." She has held a variety of positions at LTD. Her philosophy is to give more to the community and friends than she receives.



Phyllis Loobey
General Manager

Phyllis enjoys cooking for her friends, reading, gardening, and is outrageously indulgent with her two cats.



Phyllis to the right of the podium, this was at the opening of our Glenwood building



B. Service: Past Boards and Committees of Phyllis Loobey

- Lane Council of Governments
Advisory Committees on
Transportation and Minority Affairs
- City of Eugene Human Rights
Commission
- Lane County Plan Advisory
Committee
- Lane Transit District Board of
Directors
- American Public Transit Association
(APTA)
Executive Committee
Vice President, Marketing
Chair, Small Operations
Committee
Chair, Federal Allocations
Subcommittee
- American Red Cross
Regional Director
Board of Directors
Financial Development
Committee
- Eugene/Springfield Convention and
Visitors Bureau
Treasurer
Board of Directors
- Eugene-Springfield Metropolitan
Partnership Board of Directors
- United Way of Lane County
1985 Campaign Co-Chair
1986 Campaign Chair
Board of Directors
- Second Century Committee
- Eugene Chamber of Commerce
Governmental and Legislative
Affairs (GALA)
Board of Directors
Eugene Chamber
Transportation/Land Use
Committee
Eugene Chamber and Downtown
Eugene, Inc., Vision for the
Future process
- Springfield Chamber of Commerce
1992 President
Governmental Affairs Committee
- Eugene/Springfield Joint Chambers
Chair, Eugene/Springfield Joint
Chamber Auction Committee
Eugene/Springfield Chambers
Leadership Program
- Downtown Eugene, Inc. (DEI) Board of
Directors
- Cascade Employers Association Board of
Directors
- Oregon Transit Association
Chair, Legislative Committee
President
- Oregon Transportation Plan
Financing Systems Advisory
Committee
Legislative Steering Committee,
Transportation Alliance of Oregon;
Oregon Transportation '93 Committee

C. Oregon Daily Emerald, January 11, 1974

Please note: Optical Character Recognition (full text scanning) may not always be accurate. For the best results, read the paper at the link; also, be aware that terms might be outdated, and read material with context.

<https://oregonnews.uoregon.edu/lccn/2004260239/1974-01-11/ed-1/>

Transportation needs studied for physically limited area residents

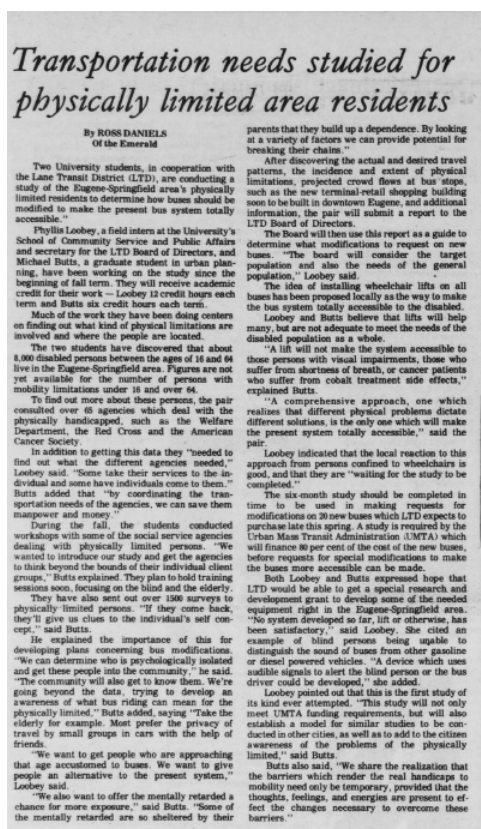
Oregon Daily Emerald, January 11, 1974

By Ross Daniels Of the Emerald. Two University students, in cooperation with the Lane Transit District (LTD), are conducting a study of the Eugene-Springfield area's physically limited residents to determine how buses should be modified to make the present bus system totally accessible."

Phyllis Loobey, a field intern at the University's School of Community Service and Public Affairs and secretary for the LTD Board of Directors, and Michael Butts, a graduate student in urban planning, have been working on the study since the beginning of fall term. They will receive academic credit for their work — Loobey 12 credit hours each term and Butts six credit hours each term. Much of the work they have been doing centers on finding out what kind of physical limitations are involved and where the people are located.

The two students have discovered that about 8,000 disabled persons between the ages of 16 and 64 live in the Eugene-Springfield area. Figures are not yet available for the number of persons with mobility limitations under 16 and over 64.

To find out more about these persons, the pair consulted over 65 agencies that deal with the physically handicapped, such as the Welfare Department, the Red Cross, and the American Cancer Society.



In addition to getting this data they “needed to find out what the different agencies needed,” Loobey said. “Some take their services to the individual and some have individuals come to them.” Butts added that “by coordinating the transportation needs of the agencies, we can save them manpower and money.”

During the fall, the students conducted workshops with some of the social service agencies dealing with physically limited persons. “We wanted to introduce our study and get the agencies to think beyond the bounds of their individual client groups,” Butts explained. They plan to hold training sessions soon, focusing on the blind and the elderly.

They have also sent out over 1500 surveys to physically limited persons. “If they come back, they’ll give us clues to the individual’s self-concept,” said Butts. He explained the importance of this for developing plans concerning bus modifications.

“We can determine who is psychologically isolated and get these people into the community,” he said.

“The community will also get to know them. We’re going beyond the data, trying to develop an awareness of what bus riding can mean for the physically limited,” Butts added, saying “Take the elderly for example. Most prefer the privacy of travel by small groups in cars with the help of friends.

“We want to get people who are approaching that age accustomed to buses. We want to give people an alternative to the present system,” Loobey said. “We also want to offer the mentally retarded a chance for more exposure,” said Butts. “Some of the mentally retarded are so sheltered by their parents that they build up a dependence. By looking at a variety of factors, we can provide potential for breaking their chains.”

After discovering the actual and desired travel patterns, the incidence and extent of physical limitations, projected crowd flows at bus stops, such as the new terminal-retail shopping building soon to be built in downtown Eugene, and additional information, the pair will submit a report to the LTD Board of Directors.

The Board will then use this report as a guide to determine what modifications to request on new buses. “The board will consider the target population and also the needs of the general population,” Loobey said.

The idea of installing wheelchair lifts on all buses has been proposed locally as the way to make the bus system totally accessible to the disabled.

Loobey and Butts believe that lifts will help many, but are not adequate to meet the needs of the disabled population as a whole. "A lift will not make the system accessible to those persons with visual impairments, those who suffer from shortness of breath, or cancer patients who suffer from cobalt treatment side effects," explained Butts. "A comprehensive approach, one which realizes that different physical problems dictate different solutions, is the only one which will make the present system totally accessible," said the pair. Loobey indicated that the local reaction to this approach from persons confined to wheelchairs is good, and that they are "waiting for the study to be completed." The six-month study should be completed in time to be used in making requests for modifications on 20 new buses, which LTD expects to purchase late this spring. A study is required by the Urban Mass Transit Administration (UMTA) which will finance 80 per cent of the cost of the new buses, before requests for special modifications to make the buses more accessible can be made.

Both Loobey and Butts expressed hope that LTD would be able to get a special research and development grant to develop some of the needed equipment right in the Eugene-Springfield area. "No system developed so far, lift or otherwise, has been satisfactory," said Loobey. She cited an example of blind persons being unable to distinguish the sound of buses from other gasoline or diesel-powered vehicles. "A device which uses audible signals to alert the blind person or the bus driver could be developed," she added.

Loobey pointed out that this is the first study of its kind ever attempted. "This study will not only meet UMTA funding requirements, but will also establish a model for similar studies to be conducted in other cities, as well as to add to the citizen awareness of the problems of the physically limited," said Butts.

Butts also said, "We share the realization that the barriers which render the real handicaps to mobility need only be temporary, provided that the thoughts, feelings, and energies are present to effect the changes necessary to overcome these barriers."

D. Oregon Daily Emerald, April 12, 1974

Please note: Optical Character Recognition (full text scanning) may not always be accurate. For the best results, read the paper at the link; also, be aware that terms might be outdated, and read material with context.

<https://oregonnews.uoregon.edu/lccn/2004260239/1974-04-12/ed-1/>

LTD sees handicapped' needs; board member presents plan

By KEN DOCTOR Of the Emerald

What is it like to be blind, confined to a wheelchair or mentally disabled and also be dependent on public transportation to get around? The Board of the Lane Transit District (LTD) addressed itself to this question and tried to come up with some answers Wednesday night. Board Member Phyllis Loobey presented the results of a study she had prepared. The report provided the Board with data on the location and special needs of the physically limited and elderly in the Eugene-Springfield metropolitan area. Loobey estimated that the District could provide transportation for as many as 6600 of the 10,800 people identified as either physically limited or elderly if changes in the transit system were made. She cited the special problems of members of these groups. Loobey noted that while a number of students at the Pearl Buck school in Eugene regularly ride the buses, some students still have difficulty in identifying the fare box and depositing the proper amount of change.



Similarly, older riders have difficulty reaching the bell cord to signal the driver that they want to get off the bus. And wheelchair-bound residents of all ages simply cannot use the system at all. There is no way in which they can board the bus and no place for their wheelchairs within. Loobey reminded the Board and the two dozen members of the public who attended that it is likely that they too will someday be in need of special services in order to ride the bus. "We will all be part of the group (elderly) someday," she pointed out.

In a one and a half hour presentation characterized by such transportation jargon as modal splits, cross tabulations and person trips. Loobey concluded that a whole new approach to transportation was needed. While such improvements as

wheelchair lifts, and redesign of steps could be included in any new vehicles ordered, Loobey suggested that only a “demand-responsive system” would solve the problem. Such a system, operating somewhat like a public taxi, would be able to accommodate those unable to walk to bus stops, wade through downtown crowds or stand for long periods of time.

In other discussion, the Board expressed its unanimous endorsement for measure two in the upcoming primary election this spring. The measure, which was passed by the Legislature and approved by Governor McCall and now needs public endorsement to become law, would allocate 8 per cent of state highway funds for public transit.

Fred Dyer, LTD General Manager, estimated that the measure, if passed, would provide a windfall of over a million dollars this year in Lane County alone. The Board failed to make a formal endorsement as Wednesday’s meeting was a special and not a regular gathering. Formal approval of the measure is expected at their next meeting. Ballot measure no. 2 has been endorsed by the Oregon Transportation Commission and by every candidate for governor.

E. Oregon Daily Emerald April 21, 1977

Please note: Optical Character Recognition (full text scanning) may not always be accurate. For the best results, read the paper at the link; also, be aware that terms might be outdated, and read material with context.

<https://oregonnews.uoregon.edu/lccn/2004260239/1977-04-21/ed-1/seq-6/>

Group Handles Race, Religious Complaints

Group handles race, religious complaints

Editors note: This is the fourth in a five-part series about Eugene's human rights commissions. Friday's article will look at the Commission on the Rights of the Aging.

By TIM SCHELL
Of the Emerald

The Commission on the Rights of Minorities is not a known resource to enough people in the community, according to newly elected commission president, Marjorie Moy Colcord.

Colcord, a Chinese-American resident of Eugene for 14 years, describes the Minority Commissions' present goal as "to become more visible, active and to resolve social problems."

The Minority Commission deals only with ethnic and religious discrimination, according to Clement Colcord stressed the need to fight "ethnic minority discrimination" in the Eugene area.

Most of the cases the Minority Commission handles are ones where employers are accused of racial discrimination when the job applicant is not hired.

It is hard to win these cases, said Colcord, and the Minority Commission has failed to win a case as of yet. The reason, said Colcord, is the job situation is so poor in the Eugene area that little hiring is done and many unsuccessful applicants file discrimination charges with little or no evidence.

Though the Minority Commission has failed to win a case, they have handled complaints. A complaint becomes a case only if it goes to a hearings official after mediation has failed to alleviate the dispute.

Recently a black veteran of the Vietnam War tried to get a job as an ambulance driver in the Eugene area,

Colcord said. He had been a medic in the war. The Minority Commission stepped in, and the veteran got the job, one month later.

Like the other four human rights commissions, the Minority Commission has nine members and operates on

an annual budget of \$1,200. The nine commission members come from different backgrounds. Newly elected Chair Marjorie Moy Colcord is a librarian at the Eugene City Library; Lewis Merrick, a black who works as coordinator of special problems for the Oregon State System of Higher Education; Kathryn Andrieu, is a white junior high school teacher in the Bethel school district, where she teaches courses in black literature; Phyllis P. Loobey, is white and works as an administrative assistant on affirmative action for the Lane Transit District; Shirley Minor, is black and the acting coordinator of Public Service Employment in Lane County's CETA program; Glenette Olivera, a Chicano who is a social worker; Joe Scovell, a Native American who is an elementary school teacher at Ida Patterson; Tokshin Yi, a Korean employed by the Oregon State Public Welfare Division, and Whitty Bass, a white who works with Upward Bound. Commission members serve terms from one to three years and are appointed by the Eugene City Council.

The Minority Commission meets the second Thursday of each month and meetings are open to the public. On that same Thursday there is a minority report in the Register Guard written by commission member Andrieu.

In last week's report Andrieu noted that Lane County Commissioners will hold a public hearing May 3, at 7:30 p.m. in Harris Hall. The proposed reorganization of Lane County's Affirmative Action Program will be presented.

In the last decade human rights has become a prevalent social concern, with people who have been discriminated against finally being recognized as equal citizens. The Minority Commission in Eugene is one place for a person who feels discriminated against because of his race or religious preference to turn for help.



C. REENE

Group handles race, religious complaints

Editor's note: This is the fourth in a five-part series about Eugene's human rights commissions. Friday's article will look at the Commission on the Rights of the Aging By TIM SCHELL Of the Emerald The Commission on the Rights of Minorities is not a known resource to enough people in the community, according to newly elected commission president, Marjorie Moy Colcord, a Chinese-American resident of Eugene for 14 years, describes the Minority Commissions' present goal as "to become more visible, active and to resolve social problems. "The Minority Commission deals only with ethnic and religious discrimination, according to Clement Colcord stressed the need to fight "ethnic minority discrimination" in the Eugene area. Most of the cases the Minority Commission handles are ones where employers are accused of racial discrimination when the job applicant is not hired. It is hard to win these cases, said Colcord, and the Minority Commission has failed to win a case as of yet. The reason is the job situation is so poor in the Eugene area that little hiring is done and many unsuccessful applicants file

discrimination charges with little or no evidence. Though the Minority Commission has failed to win a case, they have handled complaints. A complaint becomes a case only if it goes to a hearing official after mediation has failed to alleviate the dispute. Recently, a black veteran of the Vietnam War tried to get a job as an ambulance driver in the Eugene area, saying He had been a medic in the war. The Minority Commission stepped in, and the veteran got the job one month later. Like the other four human rights Commissions, the Minority Commission has nine members come from different backgrounds.... librarian at the Eugene City Library, Lewis Merrick a Black who works as coordinator for the Oregon State..., Kathy Andrieu is a white junior high school teacher, ... Phyllis Loobey is white and works as an Administrative Assistant for the LTD, Shirley Minor is black and acting coordinator of Public Service... [this optical character recognition was poor and therefore you can read the rest at the link

<https://oregonnews.uoregon.edu/lccn/2004260239/1977-04-21/ed-1/seq-6/>]

F. Oregon Daily Emerald, January 06, 1986

Please note: Optical Character Recognition (full text scanning) may not always be accurate. For the best results, read the paper at the link; also, be aware that terms might be outdated, and read material with context.

<https://oregonnews.uoregon.edu/lccn/2004260239/1986-01-06/ed-1/>

Program Fosters Leaders

The OCC Dedication Committee would also like to see a program, like described here, be revived in her honor in the future.

Local government relies on participation by its citizens, but in the Eugene/Springfield area, fewer people are becoming involved in the community, and current leaders are overextending themselves trying to fill vacancies. The Leadership Program, sponsored by the Eugene and Springfield chambers of commerce, is working to change this trend and train interested citizens in community involvement, says Phyllis Loobey, task force chair of the program.

"It is a vehicle for individuals who want to be involved in their community's growth." Loobey explains. "It provides a way for individuals to get involved in their community development." Loobey adds that "Individuals are more fully prepared to take leadership roles in voluntary organizations and have learned enough about the community to become more engaged with their interests."



This allows participants to gain firsthand exposure to the subject matter, Loobey says. Participants will attend daylong seminars each month for nine months, covering local government, legal systems, education, transportation, and local business and industry.

"It's 72 hours of instruction that give the individual a comprehensive view of the community, and what results is a sense of background and incentive," Loobey states. "Each topic is different, and the program is designed to give individuals a comprehensive understanding of the community." The leadership task force seeks out individuals who are not heavily involved in community activities but show an interest in the program, a desire to serve, and are geographically and personally diverse.

"We are looking for new talent and aiming to maintain a balance between people from the public and private sectors," Loobey explains.

Essentially, the task force is seeking people they haven't yet met. The community is small enough that anyone who has actively participated will be recognized by at least one member of the team. The program also offers individuals an opportunity to become more involved in community affairs and creates a pool of potential leaders for future openings.

Loobey notes. "This program is the best in the country," she says. "Previously, we lacked a structured way to train and identify people interested in serving their community. But through the Leadership Program, government leaders can recognize potential leaders."

Several businesses, such as Pacific Northwest Bell and IBM, encourage their employees to participate and will cover either half or all of the tuition. "Many employers support their employees in becoming active in the community," Loobey says. "It's good business, and they want to foster a sense of responsibility among their workers toward the community."

G. Leadership Program

The Committee has learned that the "Leadership Program" that Phyllis Loobey participated in during 1986 is still active. We have a couple of staff from Marketing who participate. We are mentioning this so that more staff are aware of this program and consider others from the District who may want to further develop their leadership skills.

"Program Fosters Leadership" Oregon Daily Emerald, January 6, 1986, at this link: <https://oregonnews.uoregon.edu/lccn/2004260239/1986-01-06/ed-1/>

Leadership Eugene-Springfield is more than a leadership course—it's a year-long journey into the heart of our region. Through immersive, day-long sessions each month, participants:

- Explore critical challenges and innovations in Eugene and Springfield
- Build practical leadership skills for personal and professional impact
- Form lasting connections with peers, community leaders, and changemakers

Core program elements include:

- Regional Economic Development & Land Use
- Public Safety, Health & Human Services
- Education & Government Leaders
- Arts, Culture, and Community Orientation
- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging
- Personal Leadership Styles & Communication
- Advocacy, Influencing Policy, and Media Relations
- Conflict Resolution, Negotiation & Team Building
- Facilitation and Speaking/Presenting

<https://www.eugenechamber.com/leadership-eugene-springfield.html>

F. Register Guard January 21, 2000

Please note: Optical Character Recognition (full text scanning) may not always be accurate. For the best results, read the paper at the link; also, be aware that terms might be outdated, and read material with context.

LTD Chief taking a new road

<https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=4pF9x-cDGsoC&dat=20000121&printsec=frontpage&hl=en>

LTD chief taking a new road

■ Retirement: Phyllis Loobey has been with the agency since its infancy.

By SCOTT MABEN
The Register-Guard

When Phyllis Loobey first began riding the bus in Eugene as a college student nearly 30 years ago, she had no clue that she'd wind up steering the Lane Transit District from its infancy to the edge of a new frontier in public transportation.

INSIDE
■ Finalists to replace Loobey will be interviewed this weekend / 12A

And now her last stop is approaching.

Loobey, 62, will retire at the end of March after more than 20 years as general manager of LTD. She has held the top job at a public transit district longer than any woman in the nation, helping LTD grow to 125 buses from 66 and to nearly 6 million riders' trips a year from 4.36 million.

Her departure comes just as LTD begins its foray into Bus Rapid Transit, touted as the new wave in bus systems. The novel approach will whisk riders across Eugene and Springfield in sleek, trainlike buses operating in dedicated lanes.

Loobey said she wanted to bow out before the district got bogged down in building the BRT system. "If I stayed here into the construction part of it, then I'd want to see it finished," she said.

And that would add another three

Turn to LOOBEY, Page 12A

"I've had the best job in town for 20-plus years," says Phyllis Loobey, who is retiring as general manager of Lane Transit District. She's seen the agency through years of growth and change, funding challenges and construction of new facilities.

Curtis PETSCH / The Register-Guard



LOOBEY

Continued from Page One

years to her career — time she'd rather spend cooking, gardening, reading, remodeling her kitchen and occasionally speaking out on community issues.

"I've had the best job in town for 20-plus years," Loobey said. "I'm promoting myself to a new career, and part of my new career is just to find out who Phyllis is. I don't know who she is without LTD."

Loobey grew up in Aberdeen, Wash., and held a number of odd jobs around the nation before settling in Eugene in the late 1960s.

She charged through the University of Oregon in three years, earning a double major in political science and community service and public affairs. In her senior year she co-wrote a transportation study on the needs of elderly and disabled riders, which LTD used to improve its service to those residents.

In the 1980s, LTD became the first public transit district in the nation to equip all of its buses with lifts to help passengers with disabilities board more easily.

After graduating in 1974, Loobey joined the 4-year-old transit district as administrative assistant to the general manager. Two years later she rose to director of administrative services, then was appointed general manager in 1979.

The early years were arduous, Loobey recalled.

"We were flying by the seat of our pants," she said. "We were trying to create an agency out of ashes."

LTD's predecessor, the privately operated Emerald Transportation bus line, disintegrated as the suburbs grew and America's car culture flourished. Gov. Tom McCall approved creation of LTD in 1970, and the city of Eugene subsidized bus operations for the first couple of years. But the fledgling district had a lot to learn about being a public agency, Loobey said.

"That was a big task for that first board of directors," she said.

"And we're still learning."

Complying with new transit regulations and vying for federal and state funds have posed steady challenges over the years, Loobey said.

And she navigated the district over some rough roads, including layoffs and service cuts during the recession of the early 1980s and several heated confrontations with the union representing drivers and other transit workers.

Although LTD drivers have never gone on strike, relations between management and labor reached a low point during a particularly contentious round of bargaining in the '80s, Loobey recalled.

"That was awful. We were all sick about that. It left a scar that all of us still have here," she said.

The key to overcoming the strife, Loobey said, was getting all outside representatives out of the room and negotiating directly with the employees.

"That really helped the healing process," she said.

Paul Headley, LTD's senior driver with 32 years of service, is on the executive board for the Amalgamated Transit Union 757. He agreed that there have been rocky times between labor and management, but he said Loobey was an advocate for the employees and they looked to her to straighten out disagreements.

"When her team couldn't resolve a contract, the rest of the team demanded Phyllis appear on the scene. And she helped us resolve that issue," Headley said.

Loobey rebuffed periodic waves of public criticism as well — gripes about changes to bus routes, rising fares and, from business owners, the payroll tax that provides two-thirds of LTD's operating fund.

"When we look at how we rank against other transit properties our size, then LTD matches up pretty well," she said.

She counts among her accomplishments the construction a

decade ago of the LTD offices and bus facilities in Glenwood and the 2-year-old downtown Eugene station. Of the latter she said, "It's a landmark facility and has been instrumental in changing the mix of uses and the redevelopment of that part of Eugene."

Another achievement has been development of rider passes for large employers, including the UO, Lane Community College and Sacred Heart Medical Center.

Friends and colleagues describe Loobey as dedicated, stubborn, humorous, instinctive, compassionate and "extremely direct."

"She has the desire to succeed in anything she does," said Donna Fuess, a retired banker and past president of the Springfield Chamber of Commerce. "Things just don't faze her to the degree they would some, particularly if it seems to be the right thing to do. She very doggedly goes after it."

Dean Kortge, secretary of the LTD board, described Loobey as direct yet compassionate.

"Phyllis has a real passion for people and a real passion for the transit district," Kortge said. "She's interested in all aspects of it. She really understands what it means to be a member of a union. At the same time she can be incredibly direct with the union, a person who tells you what her vision is."

Ed Bergeron, LTD's public affairs manager, was hired a month after Loobey became general manager. "Phyllis is the leader who brought LTD into the 21st century," he said.

Headley said many drivers are worried about what the change in management will mean for LTD's future, and they'll miss Loobey.

"She does have a heart for the employees," he said. "She's a very, very stubborn lady when she thinks she's right, but she mellows out when you reason with her."

"Our membership has respect for this lady and her leadership."

