

Linn County
Transportation Advisory Committee
April 10, 2018
Sweet Home Senior Center
MINUTES

Members Present: Tim McQueary; Ken Bronson; Ted Frazier; Cris Kostol; Sandra Wess; and Kindra Oliver

Staff Present: Mark Volmert

Visitors: Karen Litwiller, Oregon Mennonite Residential Services; Suzanne Driver; Volunteer Caregivers; Brittany Donnell, Sunshine Industries; Barry Hoffman, Albany Transit/Linn-Benton Loop; Kate Hall, Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments; Lee Lazaro, Benton County; and Hank Berg, Seniors Citizens of Sweet Home, Inc.

Call to Order

Tim McQueary called the meeting of the Linn County Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) to order at 1:30 p.m. Members of the committee and members of the audience introduced themselves.

Approval of Minutes of November 7, 2017

Motion by Sandra Wess and seconded by Ted Frazier that the minutes be approved as written. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment Opportunity

No comments from the public.

Discussion regarding the 2018-2019 STF application and review process, including Oregon Government Standards and Practices provisions

Mark Volmert described the 2018-2019 process which is the same process that has been used for several years. He briefly reviewed the notification process regarding the availability of STF funds and the application process. He noted the Linn County Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Plan continues to serve as the guide for the investment of transportation resources.

Volmert reviewed the Oregon Government Standards and Practices provisions. There were no disclosures of conflicts of interest.

Volmert reported that, in addition to the local match required by the Medicaid Title XIX DD53 transportation services for people with intellectual/developmental disabilities, 11 of the 12 programs that currently receive STF funds submitted requests for 2018-2019 funding. The Senior Companion Program, which had received STF funds for more than a decade, closed its doors in December. He indicated that all of the programs are eligible to receive STF funds, most have submitted reports in a generally timely manner in the past year and all requests are consistent with the priorities identified in Linn County's Coordinated Plan.

Presentations by STF-funded agencies regarding their 2018-2019 applications

Representatives of programs requesting funds were present. Volmert reported that Chamberlin House was unable to send a representative. Chamberlin indicated it would submit information for Volmert to report to the TAC but no report was received.

The program representatives presented updates on their programs and discussed their STF applications. The representatives responded to questions from the TAC members.

Sweet Home Dial-A-Bus (Ken Bronson): Requests the \$23,500 currently funded. This year's ridership is similar to last year. The Dial-A-Bus "shopper" (deviated fixed route service) ridership continues to slowly increase. It now represents 51% of the total rides, an increase from last year's ridership share of 41%. The City of Sweet Home increased its contribution by \$5,000 to provide the local match for Section 5311 funds to expand the current three-days-a-week "shopper" service to five-days-a-week service. A pilot project providing service to Cascadia started this morning. It will provide two round trips a day on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Linn Shuttle (Ken Bronson): Requests \$98,000, \$3,000 less than currently funded and \$5,000 (5%) less than in 2016-2017. Ridership has increased 9%. There is a small increase in LBCC ridership but most of the increase relates to members of the general public.

Bronson also provided information regarding the I/DD transportation program. Ridership is down 9% from last year. He noted the importance of the "hub and spoke" partnership effort with Sunshine Industries. The SCSH's program provides long distance "hub" rides (particularly from the Albany and Lebanon areas) to Sunshine Industries. Sunshine Industries provides "spoke" rides to individual employment sites.

The continued partnership with LBCC was noted. Even though students ridership has declined in recent years (with lower total student enrollment and lower fuel prices) LBCC continues to provide the same level of support--\$50,000 a year.

Lebanon Dial-A-Bus (Kindra Oliver): Requests \$48,082, \$3,000 less currently funded and \$5,000 (10%) less than 2016-2017. Lebanon expects to initiate its deviated fixed route program in May. The intent is to improve service to more members of the general public and address current system capacity restraints. Oliver indicated the City of Lebanon's annual contribution is about \$77,000 in addition to \$8,300 of local match for the Section 5310 purchase service grant which funds the Linn Shuttle's Lebanon Express service.

OCWCOG Senior and Disability Services (Kate Hall): Requests the \$16,000 currently funded. Hall indicated the funds are used to purchase bus tickets for low income residents and to provide gas vouchers. With 15,800 annual rides the average cost per ride is about \$1.00 and the STF allocation is very important to low income residents of Linn County. The per person annual limit is \$85 (when STF funding increase the per person limit increased from \$50 to \$85). The limit can be increased, on a case-by-case basis, where needed. About 35% of the funds are used to purchase bus tickets and 65% for gas vouchers. All of the STF funds are used for bus tickets and gas vouchers; COG does not use any of the funds for administrative purposes.

Volunteer Caregivers (Suzanne Driver): Requests the \$21,329 currently funded. Driver indicated the total number of riders provided in the past year is approximately the same as the prior year but the mileage driven is higher. She noted the success of the East Linn County effort , with additional STF funded provided a few years ago and an ODOT grant which funded two cars. 221 medical-related rides were provided in the last 6 months to East Linn County residents. Driver reported the unexpected receipt of \$10,400 from a regional fund raising event.

Oregon Mennonite Residential Services (Karen Litwiller): Requests the \$5,000 currently funded. Ridership is similar to the prior year. The Employment First program has not been very helpful to OMRS and "support has not been adequate". Litwiller reported that the relocation of the small OMRS group home in Sweet Home to Albany had enabled residents to access additional services.

Sunshine Industries (Brittany Donnell): Requests the \$5,000 currently funded. Donnell reported on significant changes regarding vocational/employment programs in the past two years. Sunshine has worked with the Employment First program and the home and

community based services program to provide “as much of an integrated atmosphere as possible”. A year ago 75/80% of Sunshine Industries’ clients were served at the facility in Sweet Home and today about 10% are served at the facility with about 90% placed in the community. Transportation continues to be the largest barrier to placement in community employment and Donnell said Sunshine Industries “could not do this without the Senior Citizens of Sweet Home’s I/DD transportation program”. Sunshine Industries currently has 4 grounds keeping crews and 4 janitorial crews. Individual employment placements are limited but clients are currently employed by Sweet Home Sanitation, Santiam Seed, Sweet Home Chamber of Commerce and a mechanical shop. Donnell noted that most of the \$5,000 in STF funding is used as the required local match for the Section 5310 preventive maintenance grant.

Chamberlin House (Volmert in lieu of Judie Foster-Lupkin): Requests the \$5,000 currently funded. Annual ridership of about 17,000 is similar to last year. Volmert reported Chamberlin operates 12 vehicles including 6 mini-vans acquired three years ago to replace very old vehicles.

Linn-Benton Loop (Barry Hoffman): Requests the \$17,000 currently funded. Hoffman reported the establishment of a new Linn-Benton Loop Governance Board and Technical Advisory Committee. Hoffman reported a small increase in ridership in the past year (but ridership is lower than a few years ago) and 14% of the ridership is seniors and people with disabilities. The 2018-2019 budget will be reviewed by the TAC and the Governing Board later this month and the Corvallis Area MPO/City of Corvallis will be asked to provide the same level of funding as the Albany Area MPO/City of Albany (for the past several years the Albany Area MPO/City of Albany has provided an additional \$36,000 for maintenance).

Albany Call-A-Ride (Ted Frazier): Requests the \$25,000 currently funded. Frazier reported an annual ridership of about 20,000 provided through three programs: ADA rides required by Albany Transit, senior rides and medical/shopper special rides. The total ridership is similar to recent years but there has been a significant increase in wheelchair rides which are more expensive to provide. About 7% of the total rides are provided to North Albany residents.

Benton County (Lee Lazaro): Requests \$3,250, an increase of \$250 from the current allocation. Lazaro noted that the ridership is small but “the service is vital”. About 350 annual rides are provided to North Albany residents. The Benton County Board of Commissioners allocates \$16,000 per year of General Fund to this service.

Title XIX DD53 Local Match Program (Mark Volmert): Requests \$70,205, a decrease of \$9,000 from 2017-2018 based on the projected rides for 2018-2019. In the event additional rides are provided or if the ride rate is increased the expense would be covered by carry-forward 2017-2018 funds.

Public hearing regarding 2018-2019 STF fund allocations

Following the presentation about the programs, McQueary opened the public hearing. No member of the public requested to speak and McQueary closed the public hearing.

Discussion and recommendations by TAC regarding STF funds

Volmert briefly reviewed the March 30 written report that included general background as well as an analysis of STF revenues.

Volmert indicated that the core 2018-2019 allocation question for the TAC relates to transportation services for people with intellectual/developmental disabilities. As discussed at countless TAC meetings, DHS and statewide advocates have failed to help address I/DD transportation challenges. Although residential and vocational programs in Linn County have been excellent partners over the years and are very supportive of our efforts to address the challenges in a comprehensive manner, the statewide residential and vocational advocacy groups have simply not considered transportation as a priority item to address. He indicated that Linn County, for a decade, has asked DHS to fund the 35% local match but DHS has refused to provide the funds. With a 17% reduction in 2017-2019 STF funding the TAC, in February 2017, once again asked all partners to consider other options in the coming months. TAC members made it very clear to the Board of Commissioners that “unless DHS makes changes or other funding sources become available the TAC indicates the current DD53 transportation program is not financially sustainable beyond June 2018”.

Volmert reported we have not made progress with DHS program in the last year and the Legislative Assembly did not provide additional STF funds. But the Legislative Assembly, in the state transportation funding package approved last summer (HB 2017), included significant funding for public transportation through the adoption of a new one-tenth of one percent tax on employees. ODOT staff indicates that the eligibility rules are generally flexible and, at this time, the Title XIX DD53 Local Match program appears to be eligible for HB 2017 funding.

The core question is whether to terminate a long-standing program that serves 55-60 I/DD clients at a time we are reviewing HB 2017-funded options to significantly increase public transit service in 2019.

Cris Kostol indicated, although it seems to make sense to fund the Medicaid Title XIX Local Match program for another year, the TAC made it crystal clear a year ago that 2017-2018 would be the last year that STF funds would be allocated to the program. We have, once again, made no additional progress with DHS.

Kindra Oliver noted the importance of the program not only to I/DD clients in Lebanon but also to the Dial-A-Bus' budget.

Ken Bronson reported he allocates about \$40,000 a year of administrative expenses to the SCSH's I/DD transportation program. If STF funding for the Medicaid Title XIX DD53 Local Match program is eliminated and the SCSH's I/DD transportation program is terminated he will need to move these administrative expenses to the Linn Shuttle and the SH Dial-A-Bus programs and this would create a budget challenge. It would make more sense, in 2018-2019, to transfer \$40,000 from the STF contingency fund to support the DD53 Local Match program and thereby leverage more than \$80,000 in Medicaid funds.

Sandra Wess noted it would be difficult for the public to understand the termination of transportation for 55-60 people with intellectual/developmental disabilities at the same time we are pursuing a significant increase in public transportation in 2019.

Volmert noted the importance of SCSH's I/DD transportation program to Sunshine Industries. Removing the "hub and spoke" system would seriously impact Sunshine Industries' significant progress in changing vocational/employment services

Motion by Frazier and seconded by Wess that the TAC recommend to the Board of Commissioners:

1. The transfer of \$15,000 from the 2016-2017 STF contingency account and \$25,000 from the STF Supplement B/C account to the 2018-2019 ST account; and
2. The following allocation of 2018-2019 STF funds:

Lebanon Dial-A-Bus	\$43,082
Sweet Home Dial-A-Bus	\$23,500
Linn Shuttle	\$98,000

COG Senior/Disabilities Services	\$16,000
OMRS	\$5,000
Sunshine Industries	\$5,000
Chamberlin House	\$5,000
Linn-Benton Loop	\$17,000
Albany Call-A-Ride	\$25,000
Benton County Dial-A-Bus	\$3,000
Title XIX DD53 Local Match	\$70,205
Total	\$332,116

As the motion was being made Lee Lazaro indicated he wanted to revise Benton County’s request from \$3,250 to \$3,000.

Additionally the motion includes a very clear statement in the event ODOT for some reason determines HB 2017 funds cannot be used to support the Medicaid Title XIX DD 53 Local Match program or if 2019-2021 STF funding is significantly reduced the Medicaid Title XIX Local Match Program “third party” I/DD rides will need to be terminated June 30, 2019 unless DHS provides the local match.

Kostol said she fully understands the issues and is personally “okay with the proposal”. But, after discussing this same item every year, “this is not the way funding decisions should be made”. She wants to voice her protest regarding the lack of response from DHS and others.

Tim McQueary noted “DHS once again rides off without a lesson”.

The motion carried on a 5-1 vote, with Kostol voting “no”.

Update on the Linn-Benton Loop’s proposed expansion of service and recommendation regarding the funding of consultant services

Volmert reported on the effort to substantially increase the Linn-Benton Loop’s service to the general public. Following the approval of HB 2017 Volmert talked with Benton County regarding a general concept of doubling the Linn-Benton Loop’s current service with an emphasis on serving the general public and, in particular, people with low income. Volmert proposed, as a general concept and not intended to jump in front of policy decision makers, a \$300,000 contribution of HB 2017 funds from Linn County with a \$300,000 contribution from Benton County. Benton County agreed in concept. The concept has been received strong support from the Linn-Benton Loop

Governing Board and TAC, the Albany Area MPO Policy Board and the Corvallis Area MPO Policy Board.

The current route and schedule has, essentially, not been updated in 20 years so to better serve the general public a complete review/revision of the route and schedule needs to be made. Volmert and Lee Lazaro have, in the past few months, developed a scope of work for consulting services that was approved by policy makers. The estimated cost of the study is \$60,000. The Albany Area MPO Policy Board approved an allocation of \$28,000 but the Corvallis Area MPO Policy Board declined to contribute a matching sum. The Linn-Benton Loop Governing Board subsequently requested that the other partners (LBCC, OSU, Linn County, Benton County and the Corvallis Area MPO) each contribute \$6,400.

The logical source of Linn County's contribution is STF funds. The Senior Companion Program was allocated \$10,000 in 2017-2018 STF funds but the program closed its doors in December without executing the legal agreement for 2017-2018 and without submitting a quarterly report or a reimbursement request for the first two quarters. Volmert indicated \$6,400 of this \$10,000 allocation could be reprogrammed to help fund the Linn-Benton Loop study.

Motion by Bronson and seconded by Wess to recommend that the Board of Commissioners reprogram \$6,400 from the Senior Companion Program's 2017-2018 allocation to fund the Linn-Benton Loop study. The motion passed unanimously.

Update on HB 2017 and recommendation regarding the use of the Transportation Advisory Committee as the HB 2017 Local Advisory Committee

Volmert reported ODOT has drafted Administrative Rules related to HB 2017 transit funding. Following the adoption of the rules, which will take 4 to 6 months, ODOT will proceed with the allocation process.

HB 2017 requires the establishment of a "local advisory committee" to assist the "Qualified Entity" (in our area this will be the Linn County Board of Commissioners) in carrying out the requirements of HB 2017.

From the start of the rule development process Volmert suggested that districts/counties/tribes be given the option to use their current STF Advisory Committee (or other local committee) rather than create another local advisory committee. It seems illogical, for most entities, for one committee to handle STF, Section 5310 and other transportation funds and another committee to handle HB

2017 funds. Since local transit programs will access a combination of STF, Section 5310, HB 2017 and other funds the allocation efforts should be coordinated with the assistance of a single advisory committee. The Rules Advisory Committee agreed with this suggestion and the draft OARs allow Qualified Entities to use an existing local advisory committee as their HB 2017 local advisory committee as long as they meet the requirements of HB 2017. Requirements of the local advisory committee are included in the (draft) Administrative Rules.

Following discussion by TAC members, motion by Bronson and seconded by Wess to recommend that the Board of Commissioners designate the Transportation Advisory Committee at the HB 2017 “local advisory committee” and draft amendments to the TAC’s bylaws consistent with the requirements of HB 2017. The motion passed unanimously.

Other Business

TAC members discussed general concepts regarding HB 2017 public transportation opportunities and time frames. Members agreed to meet on April 24 in Albany to take the first steps in reviewing public transportation needs and potential opportunities to address these needs with HB 2017 funds.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:55

Submitted by:

Mark Volmert