

Linn County
Transportation Advisory Committee
April 11, 2017
Sweet Home Senior Center
880 18th Avenue Sweet Home
MINUTES

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

Staff Present: Mark Volmert

Visitors: Brittany Donnell, Sunshine Industries; Barry Hoffman,
Albany Transit/Linn-Benton Loop; Chris Bailey, City of
Albany Public Works Department; Jeff Sneddon, Linn
County Developmental Disabilities Program; Tarah Campi,
Albany Area MPO; Jim Owens, Cogan Owens Greene; and
Hank Berg, Senior Citizens of Sweet Home

Call to Order

Tim 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 February 7, 2017

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

Public Comment Opportunity

No comments from the public.

Discussion with Linn County Developmental Disabilities Program staff regarding transportation for people with intellectual/developmental disabilities

Jeff Sneddon, the Linn County Developmental Disabilities Program Manager, discussed transportation services for people with intellectual/developmental disabilities.

He said, during his 14 years of service in Linn County, “transportation has been a mess” and “Employment First transportation is currently a huge issue”. Sneddon said the DD 53 Local Match Transportation Program is “completely outside the Linn County Developmental Disabilities program”.

Sneddon described the development of an Individual Services Program for an I/DD client and noted he is able to provide, depending on specific needs, a 48 cents per mile transportation reimbursement for residential providers.

Mark Volmert provided a brief history of the DD 53 Local Match Program in Linn County. In 2007 the Senior Citizens of Sweet Home determined it would be unable to continue to provide rides for most I/DD clients if the only available resources continued to be limited STF funds. Volmert, with the concurrence of the TAC, applied for and received an ODOT grant for the 35% local match required by DHS for the DD 53 Local Match Transportation Program. The program was initiated in Linn County in 2008 but unfortunately ODOT was unable to fund the local match for any program in the state beyond June 2009. Since that time Linn County STF funds have been used as the source of the local match. In the past few years that has totaled between \$72,000 and \$80,000 per year. This amount is over and above the STF allocations to individual I/DD programs, Section 5310 allocations to individual residential and vocational I/DD programs for preventive maintenance and Section 5310 allocations to acquire vehicles for the Senior Citizens of Sweet Home’s I/DD transportation program.

TAC members noted I/DD transportation challenges have been discussed at length for a decade. Local I/DD programs have been great partners but DHS has not been a good partner. As discussed at the TAC meetings of November 4, December 13 and February 7, the 2017-2019 STF funding has been reduced by 17%. Carry-forward funds will be used to backfill the revenue shortfall in 2017-2018 but significant reductions will need to be made in 2018-2019. The TAC has indicated people should generally assume that STF funding for the DD 53 Local Match Transportation Program will not be available in 2018-2019.

Sneddon indicated there is an option that would not require a local match. He explained that DHS fully funds DD 53 Comprehensive Services (this is different than the DD 53 Local Match Transportation Program). If the Senior Citizens of Sweet Home executes a Provider Enrollment Agreement with DHS, it would be eligible to receive DD 53 funds without the need for a local match. Transportation services, under this arrangement, would be subject to DHS requirements and would need to be provided under the terms of an Individual Service Plan for each I/DD client.

Volmert indicated Linn County DD Program staff discussed this option a few weeks ago and then quickly indicated it was not an option. Ken Bronson said he had an initial discussion with Linn County DD Program staff about this potential option but has not received additional information.

TAC members asked why this option had not been previously discussed. No answer was provided.

Sneddon said he was not sure what this transportation option would specifically look like and he provided some general information about requirements including the need for additional documentation and the need for transportation providers (such as the Senior Citizens of Sweet Home's I/DD transportation program) to be a participant in the development of the ISP for each I/DD client.

TAC members asked who would provide transportation from home to work if the Senior Citizens of Sweet Home's I/DD Program stopped providing rides. Sneddon indicated "no one would be required to provide the rides".

Ken Bronson and Mark Volmert will work the Linn County DD Program on this matter and report back to the TAC.

Discussion with City of Albany staff and AAMPO staff regarding transit services in Albany and regional transit services

Volmert introduced Tarah Campi, a planner with Cascades West Council of Governments who is providing staff services to the Albany Area MPO. Volmert indicated Theresa Conley, the AAMPO Manager, recently accepted a Regional Transit Coordinator position with ODOT Public Transit. COG is recruiting for a replacement and Campi is providing staff services during the interim period.

Campi provided a brief summary of the AAMPO Regional Transportation Plan and noted AAMPO has recently decided to proceed with the congestion reduction option rather than a capacity building option. AAMPO is also developing a Transit Development Plan which recently published a draft outline of a transit services plan for short (1-3 years), medium (5-10 years) and long (15-25 years) terms.

Volmert indicated his confusion about the AAMPO regional planning effort in light of the basic regional coordination and partnership concepts of the federal MPO planning process. He noted there was essentially no inclusion of the Linn-Benton Loop's service

or the Linn Shuttle’s service in either the Regional Transportation Plan or the Albany Transit Development Plan, even though both services “run straight through the heart of AAMPO’s boundaries”.

Chris Bailey indicated the primary focus of the Regional Transportation Plan is “roadwork and other items”. The primary focus of the Albany Transit Development Plan is the Albany Transit System. She indicated the Linn-Benton Loop and the Linn Shuttle are considered “static services”.

Volmert noted the draft Albany Transit Development Plan identifies an increase of ATS service of two hours a day in 1-3 years; with an increase of an additional eleven hours a day (and three hours to Jefferson) in 5-10 years. He noted that AAMPO has allocated about \$2 million of additional federal transit funds to the City of Albany in the past three years. Despite additional federal transit resources of about \$600,000 per year the draft plan would add only an additional two hours of service in 1-3 years. He indicated the only increase in the Albany’s transit service in the past several years has been funded by the Linn County special/rural transportation program: (1) the establishment of the medical/shopper deviated fixed route program for Albany Call-A-Ride (to help meet the increase calls for service and to reduce the cost associated with single rides); and (2) the establishment of the Linn-Benton Loop’s Express service between Corvallis and LBCC (linked to the Linn Shuttle’s Lebanon-LBCC Express service which was also funded by the Linn County special/rural transportation program).

In addition to the Linn Shuttle’s Lebanon Express service Volmert indicated the Linn Shuttle’s service, with the assistance of funding allocated through the Linn County special/rural transportation program, has significantly increased during the past five years. Five years ago four round trips between Sweet Home-Lebanon-Albany were provided each weekday and seven round trips are now provided. The Linn Shuttle’s ridership has more than doubled, whereas Albany Transit and Linn-Benton Loop ridership is essentially “static”.

Bailey said the City of Albany has experienced increased Call-A-Ride ridership, with additional time required for some handicapped accessible rides. Albany needs to develop a transit facility and Albany has set aside some money to acquire property which is a requirement for requesting state and federal funds to develop the facility.

Barry Hoffman indicated Albany, during the past three years, has purchased replacement vehicles for Albany Call-A-Ride and Albany Transit System. Additional Section 5307 funds have been programmed to acquire additional vehicles for Albany

Transit System and if other funds are available (for example, federal Section 5339 funds) Albany could re-program Section 5307 funds for (increased) operations.

Volmert reported that AAMPO, much to its credit, allocated \$27,000 in its 2016-2017 Work Plan for a “service analysis” of the Linn-Benton Loop and he asked Campi to describe the effort. Campi replied, in her role of providing interim staff services to AAMPO, she was not sure about the specifics of the effort and the scope of work was currently under development. Volmert indicated that the Linn-Benton Loop Governing Board had recently discussed the \$27,000 allocation and requested a report about a possible similar allocation from the Corvallis Area MPO. Volmert and Bailey noted that, over the years, the City of Albany has frequently provided additional funds to the Linn-Benton Loop (more funding than other Linn-Benton Loop partners when there was a budget shortfall). Now that Albany is the contracted service provider, rather than the direct recipient of state and federal funds for the Linn-Benton Loop, the City of Albany generally expects that all partners in the future will contribute funds in an equitable manner.

Tim McQueary thanked Albany and AAMPO staff for their efforts, indicating the long history of successful transportation partnerships in Linn County.

Discussion regarding the update of the Linn County Coordinated Human Services-Public Transportation Plan including prioritized funding strategies

Jim Owens provided a PowerPoint handout and briefly described the status of the Coordinated Plan, the revisions that have been made since the TAC meeting of December 13, the engagement of health and human services providers and the public review process.

Owens distributed information that the TAC requested about non-emergent medical transportation for Medicaid recipients (Cascades West Ride Line). He is still reviewing the information provided by Cascades West Ride Line (some of the information is internally inconsistent) but it is clear that only a very small percentage of eligible clients receive transportation services through Ride Line (either direct, third party contracted rides or mileage reimbursement if they drive themselves or have a family member or someone else drive them to medical appointments).

Volmert indicated he served on the Ride Line advisory committee for a dozen years and the need to increase Ride Line’s outreach effort has been discussed for many years. He noted that he recently visited several senior centers, health facilities, social

services offices and libraries and did not find a single Ride Line brochure. There are no brochures in the lobby of the COG building.

Volmert and Owens indicated Ride Line could potentially be an important resource in meeting one of the highest priority needs identified in the Coordinated Plan—medical-related rides to low income residents of small cities and rural areas that are not served by public transportation.

TAC member agreed to hold an open house to discuss the draft Coordinated Plan with local residents on Tuesday May 9 4:00-6:00pm at the Albany Senior Center.

Owens indicated ODOT recently requested that an additional item be included in Coordinated Plans. Given the reductions in 2017-2019 funding ODOT wants a new section that summarizes revenues received during the past several years, as well as an identification of strategies if there are additional funding reductions.

Owens distributed revenue information Volmert prepared regarding STF, Section 5310, Section 5311, and Section 5339 funds.

Volmert led a discussion about strategies in the event revenue is further reduced in future years.

Volmert said the TAC had already allocated carry-forward STF funds in 2017-2018 to address the 2017-2019 reduction in STF revenue. This provides significant time for the TAC to work with local programs to review reduction options. He noted the discussion earlier in the meeting that the TAC has already indicated people should generally assume that STF funding for the DD 53 Local Match Transportation Program will not be available in 2018-2019.

Volmert said some counties are reviewing potential reductions in administrative costs. He said Linn County's administrative costs (including technical services and planning services) are about 7%--nearly the same as they were a decade ago and a little less than two years ago. By comparison, ODOT's administrative costs are about 10% and Benton County's administrative costs are about 18%.

Following a discussion, TAC member agreed:

In the event of additional STF funding reductions: (1) all partners would need to seek alternative funding sources for transportation programs serving people with intellectual/developmental disabilities; and (2) public agencies should consider

increasing their contributions to public transit (it was noted that the City of Lebanon and the City of Sweet Home both currently contribute about \$4.00 per capita toward public transit while the City of Albany currently contributes about \$14.00 per capita). If additional reductions would need to be made the TAC would look at programs that have greater resources (deeper pockets) than other programs.

In the event of additional Section 5310 funding reductions: (1) alternative funding sources would need to be found for preventive maintenance for vehicles used by residential and vocational program serving people with intellectual/developmental disabilities; and (2) the replacement of some vehicles would be delayed (or an alternative source of funding would need to be found).

Other Matters

Volmert noted several local programs, during the February 7 review of STF and Section 5310 applications, indicated the regional, state and national challenge of recruiting and retaining volunteers. He indicated that *Generations*, which is no longer published, provided important support to local volunteer programs with its “volunteer opportunities” page. He asked TAC members if a request should be made to the Council of Governments about a possible COG-led workgroup (perhaps including members of the Senior Services Advisory Council and the Disabilities Services Advisory Council working together with COG’s RSVP staff and representatives of local volunteer-based programs) that could review volunteer needs and consider options to improve recruitment, training, support and retention of volunteers. TAC members supported the suggestion and asked Volmert to contact the Council of Governments.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:52.

Submitted by:

Mark Volmert