

Linn County  
Transportation Advisory Committee  
April 11, 2019  
Lebanon Senior Center  
80 Tangent Street, Lebanon Oregon  
MINUTES

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

Staff Present: Mark Volmert

Visitors: Phil Warnock, Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments

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: March 5, 2019 Meeting

Motion by Ken Bronson and seconded by Ted Frazier that the minutes of the March 5, 2019 meeting be approved as submitted. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment Opportunity

No comments from the public.

Discussion and recommendations regarding the STIF Plan

Mark Volmert summarized the STIF requirements, the STIF planning and implementation efforts in Linn County during the past year, the development of STIF projects, the TAC's March 5 review of applications/STIF allocation recommendations and the Board of Commissioner's March 19 allocation decisions (the BOC approved the allocations that were recommended by the TAC with a few updated budget adjustments).

Volmert indicated the Board of Commissioners also authorized the TAC and the Special/Rural Transportation Coordinator to develop a STIF Plan in accordance with

Oregon Administrative Rules and ODOT regulations and forward it to the BOC, with the TAC's recommendations, for review and action.

The draft STIF Plan was subsequently developed and each member of the TAC received a copy on March 31. Volmert indicated the STIF Plan is more of an extensive application/description of projects/description of development and implementation effort than a transportation plan such as the Linn County Coordinated Plan, the Lebanon Transit Development Plan or the Linn-Benton Loop Service Development Plan. The STIF Plan essentially takes information from the STIF applications of local programs and reformats it into a single document with additional information about the proposed projects; as well as general information about the STIF process in Linn County and information about how Linn County addresses STIF requirements.

Local programs continue to carefully review the starting dates for new/expanded service. Some programs would like to start service in the summer of 2019 but they will need a reasonable expectation that their projects will be approved by the Oregon Transportation Commission in September 2019. The current concept (and this is subject to change) is a favorable review by ODOT staff and the ODOT Public Transportation Advisory Committee would generally be sufficient for local programs to initiate new service in the summer (while fully understanding that projects are not approved until the OTC takes action).

Current estimated start dates:

Linn Shuttle expansion: September 2019 (Saturday service perhaps in July or August).

Sweet Home Dial-A-Bus: Summer 2019.

Sweet Home Dial-A-Bus "Shopper": September 2019.

Lebanon Dial-A-Bus: September 2019.

Linn-Benton Loop: Expanded evening service: January 2020. All other service: early 2021 (additional buses will be needed and it will take 12-15 month to receive the buses after they are ordered).

Albany Transit: Early 2021 (additional buses will be needed and it will take 12-15 month to receive the buses after they are ordered).

Volmert noted that the draft STIF Plan includes a few allocation changes made by the Board of Commissioners on March 19: (1) a reduction in Linn-Benton Loop funding from \$530,000 to \$421,000 based on a revised budget developed as part of the Linn-Benton Loop Service Development Plan (Benton County's allocation is \$420,000); (2) a \$30,000 increase to the Linn Shuttle; (3) a \$20,000 increase to the Sweet Home Dial-A-Bus; (4) an accompanying increase in the reserve fund from \$439,000 to \$498,000; and (5) a larger bus, on the 130% list, for the Lebanon Dial-A-Bus with an increase of funding from \$70,000 to \$150,000.

Following a discussion, motion by Sandra Wess and seconded by Ted Frazier that the TAC recommend the Board of Commissioners approve the STIF Plan as drafted. The motion passed unanimously.

#### Discussion and recommendations regarding applications for STIF Statewide Discretionary Grants

Volmert indicated STIF rules provide an opportunity for STIF Advisory Committees (in Linn County this is the TAC) to review and make recommendations regarding STIF statewide discretionary grant applications in their geographic area.

Linn-Benton Loop Expansion Bus. TAC members noted this bus is very important to the expansion of service supported by STIF Formula Fund money.

Salem-Keizer Transit District Feasibility Study for Transit Service Between Albany and Salem. Volmert and Frazier indicated this service has been discussed, in a general manner, for many years. An objective review by a consultant will determine whether this is a viable concept. Volmert noted there are two Albany to Salem vanpools and four Corvallis to Salem vanpools but no Salem to Albany or Salem to Corvallis vanpools. This suggests a general lack of support for commuter-based service that would generally be required to develop a fiscally sustainable fixed route service. Phil Warnock agreed and noted there are other Salem to Albany options including Amtrak, Bolt Bus and airport shuttles.

Tillamook County Transit District/NWOTA Website Trip Planner. Volmert indicated that the Coast-to-Valley service is a part of NWOTA and the Lincoln County route serves Albany, which is why ODOT has forwarded this application for review by the Linn County TAC. He noted that \$149,500 is a large sum of money and the benefits, other than improving information to travelers beyond the current 60 day window, are not clear. There is a general statement about "the foundation of a platform other transit agencies can easily adopt". There are comments in the application about linkages to

the Council of Government's Ride Line information system and Volmert said he would expect this effort, if approved by ODOT, to be coordinated with COG's Seamless Transit Experience project (if that project is also approved). Volmert noted the five NWOTA partners work very closely together and the Tillamook County Transit District's Manager is very well respected so the TAC may wish defer to NWOTA's partners regarding this application.

Oregon Cascades West COG Providing a Seamless Transit Experience. McQueary invited Phil Warnock to describe the \$497,752 grant application. Warnock said the project was "a complex set of different services" that respond to discussions over the years about improving travelers' access to information. COG's internal discussions includes the need to assist people in understanding their potential eligibility for special services. The proposed project includes a drivers training program. The specifics of the transportation technology services are not yet known and will be developed in partnership with local transportation programs. Warnock indicated the budget was "conservative" and should be sufficient to ensure appropriate technology for all parties (realizing that not all parties may need funds from this grant for their technology). Warnock said COG is committed to partnering with NWOTA and others to ensure there is a coordinated effort to address regional issues and opportunities. Warnock said COG has not yet secured the \$50,000 local match that would be required by ODOT; but expressed confidence that the money will be secured.

TAC members expressed concern that COG did not contact most local transit managers before developing the grant proposal. Warnock apologized for this and indicated he has reached out to local programs in the past few weeks. McQueary and Frazier indicated this effort would require the development of an active stakeholders/advisory committee; with significant involvement by local transportation providers. Warnock said he was completely comfortable with that requirement and COG commits to the establishment of a stakeholders/advisory committee. Wess stressed the importance of establishing the committee early and making certain it meets frequently.

Benton County Coast-to-Valley Expansion and Lincoln County Coast-to-Valley Expansion. Volmert outlined the \$379,660 request from Benton County (for operations and one vehicle) and the \$721,800 request from Lincoln County (for operations and two vehicles) to double the current Coast-to-Valley service. In response to questions from TAC members, Volmert indicated the Benton County service averaged 2.7 riders per trip leg in the second quarter. Benton County terminated the Corvallis to Albany portion of the service a few months after the service was initiated in 2012 with ARRA funding. In response to a question about of the cost of the service Volmert indicated if

ridership doubles (which is unlikely according to Coast-to-Valley partners) the STIF cost per ride would be \$30-35.

McQueary asked if there was any studies that reviewed needs and supported additional daily service. Volmert said he was not aware of any study including any survey of employment-related trips. He said a third mid-day round trip between Newport and Corvallis, to better serve medical-related passengers, has been discussed in a general manner by Lincoln County but there has been no survey/study. Warnock said the Coast-to-Valley service item came forward during the development of the Linn-Benton Loop Service Development Plan; specifically the potential use of expanded Coast-to-Valley service to move Linn-Benton Loop service off US 20 and onto OR 34. Warnock indicated this concept was rejected by the Linn-Benton Loop TAC and is not a part of the Linn-Benton Loop Service Development Plan.

Volmert said, in light of the Linn-Benton Loop TAC's decision, he asked Benton County and Lincoln County to delete from their applications the removal of the Linn-Benton Loop service on US 20. Lincoln County staff expressed an interest in deleting this item but did not make a formal request to ODOT. Benton County staff repeated the concept listed in its application and indicated it wants to retain future options regarding service on US 20. Benton County staff did not return phone calls in the past 10 days.

Kostol wanted a clarification of the TAC's assignment and asked "if ODOT really cares about the TAC's recommendations?". Volmert said he discussed the TAC's role with the ODOT Public Transit Manager who made it very clear that ODOT provides this opportunity in an effort to receive knowledgeable, objective and candid "fund" or "do not fund" recommendations from local stakeholders.

Following additional discussion about each grant application and specific suggestions about recommendations, motion by Ken Bronson and seconded by Ted Frazier that the TAC recommend to ODOT:

Linn-Benton Loop Expansion Bus: Fund. Highest priority.

Salem-Keizer Transit District Feasibility Study for Transit Service Between Albany and Salem: Fund. Consider including Jefferson in the study.

Tillamook County Transit District/NWOTA Website Trip Planner: Fund. Coordinate with OCWCOG.

Oregon Cascades West COG Providing a Seamless Transit Experience: Fund.  
Stakeholder/local advisory committee should be a requirement of the grant agreement.

Benton County Coast-to-Valley Expansion: Do not fund. Very low current ridership.  
No evidence of the need to double service. Negative impact on Linn-Benton Loop. “A  
poor investment of \$379,660 of STIF funds”.

Lincoln County Coast-to-Valley Expansion: Very low current ridership. No evidence  
of the need to double service. Negative impact on Linn-Benton Loop. “A poor  
investment of \$721,800 of STIF funds”. Consider deleting current Corvallis-Albany  
portion of this service and redirect the funds to a third daily round trip between  
Newport and Corvallis to better serve medical-related riders.

The motion passed unanimously.

#### Other Business

There were no other matters discussed.

#### Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:20.

Submitted by:

Mark Volmert