

Linn County
Transportation Advisory Committee
December 29, 2020 1:30 pm
Zoom Teleconference
MINUTES

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

Staff Present: Mark Volmert

Visitors: Steph Nappa, Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments; Barry Hoffman, City of Albany; Jeff Babbit, City of Albany; and Chris Bailey, City of Albany

Call to Order

Tim McQueary called the (Zoom teleconference) 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 10, 2020 Meeting

Motion by Cris Kostol and seconded by Ken Bronson that the minutes of the March 10, 2020 meeting be approved as submitted. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment Opportunity (not related to STIF funding requests or allocations)

No comments from the public.

Discussion regarding the review process, including the Oregon Government Standards and Practices provisions

Mark Volmert described the STIF application and review process.

ODOT's current estimated STIF formula fund revenue is \$1,894,040 for 2021-2022; and \$1,995,941 for 2022-2023. Additionally the revised revenue for 2018-2021 is \$475,000 higher than the December 2018 revenue estimate; and there will be an estimated \$950,000 of 2018-2021 funds carried forward due to the delay in implementation of new projects (most of the funds relate to the delay in starting Albany Transit System expanded service and Linn-Benton Loop expanded service).

Volmert indicated the bylaws of the TAC, approved by the Board of Commissioners in January 2019, are consistent with state requirements for a STIF local advisory committee. The bylaws define “low income households” (and “low income individuals”); and define “areas with high percentage of low-income households” (and “areas with high percentage of low income individuals”).

Notices regarding the availability of STIF funds were sent to all cities and interested parties; and posted on the County’s webpage. A display ad was published in the Albany Democrat-Herald with information regarding the meetings of the TAC and the Board of Commissioners when STIF allocations would be discussed/recommended/approved and the STIF Plan would be discussed/recommended/approved. The review process and dispute resolution process are posted on the County’s webpage. The County’s STIF Guide Book for Applicants is posted on the County’s webpage and was forwarded to interested parties.

Volmert indicated the updated STIF Sub-Allocation Method, developed by the TAC working in collaboration with Public Transportation Service Providers, was approved by the Board of Commissioners on December 15, 2020.

Volmert indicated Local Public Transportation Service Providers and the Special/Rural Transportation Coordinator have reached out to communities during the past year to discuss transportation needs and the opportunities provided by the STIF program. This effort was consistent with the Special/Rural Transportation Program’s Public Participation Program. Volmert has talked with each local transportation provider, on several occasions during the past several months, regarding transportation needs and opportunities.

Following the submittal of STIF applications, Volmert forwarded the applications to TAC members with a staff report

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

Presentations by STIF-funded agencies regarding their 2021-2023 applications

Linn-Benton Loop (Barry Hoffman). Request of \$675,000. \$600,000 to approximately double existing service, consistent with the 2019 Linn-Benton Loop Service Development Plan. \$75,000 to shift funds from STF and Section 5310 resources to more appropriate programs serving seniors and people with disabilities. Hoffman indicated a STIF formula fund request for \$675,000 was submitted to Benton County.

He said the Benton County STIF Local Advisory Committee met on December 28 and members “were receptive” to the request; and allocation recommendations be will be made at an early January meeting. He noted that two new buses are required to expand service and the buses are expected to be received in March/April. One bus was funded thorough a 2018-2021 STIF discretionary grant (with the local match funded by Linn County and Benton County STIF allocations); and the other bus was funded by a \$220,000 2018-2021 STIF formula allocation from Linn County and a \$220,000 2018-2021 STIF formula allocation from Benton County.

Albany Transit System (Barry Hoffman). Request of \$900,000 to expand/enhance service from about 20 hours a day to about 36 hours on weekdays consistent with the AAMPO/Albany Transit Development Plan (medium term 5-10 years). Hoffman indicated service, at this time, will continue to be limited to weekdays since an expansion to Saturday service would result in a substantial increase in Albany Call-A-Ride ADA expenses.

Hoffman said the city has hired a consultant (with AAMPO Section 5303 funds) to refine the TDP into an operational plan. A 2021-2023 STIF funding request of \$150,000 has been made to Benton County to support the expansion of service in North Albany.

He indicated two new buses are required to expand ATS service and the buses are expected to be received in March/April. One bus was funded thorough a \$440,000 2018-2021 STIF allocation from Linn County; and the other bus was funded by a \$440,000 Section 5307 allocation from Albany/AAMPO.

In response to a question, Hoffman indicated Albany plans to expand ATS service using only STIF allocations from Linn County and Benton County.

Albany Call-A-Ride (Ted Frazier). Two requests totaling \$115,500: (1) \$35,500 to expand paratransit service by 1.5 hours per day to provide the increased ADA service related to the expansion of the Albany Transit System service. 50% funded by STIF money and 50% funded by Albany/AAMPO Section 5307 and local funds. (2) \$80,000 to acquire scheduling hardware and software for enhanced mobile management service with a contribution of federal and local funding totaling \$25,000. This project is consistent with and supported by the AAMPO/Albany Transit Development Plan.

Frazier indicated the existing software is inefficient and is “old, slow and not sufficient for record keeping and developing reports”. Albany will provide \$25,000 of federal and local funds toward the total estimated cost of \$105,000. He said there are 15

different scheduling software programs and he has specifically looked at 5 programs to compare their services and costs. He has not yet talked with OCWCOG about a possible interface with the Seamless Transit program.

Lebanon LINX/Dial-A-Bus (Kindra Oliver). Three requests totaling \$1,123,000: (1) \$718,000 to maintain the weekday deviated fixed route program (previous pilot project); maintain the 2019-2021 STIF funded Saturday service of the deviated fixed route program; maintain the 2019-2021 STIF funded extended hours for the deviated fixed route and Dial-A-bus service; and expand Dial-A-Bus service outside the city boundary (expanded to 3 miles in 2019-2021 and will be expanded to 5 miles in 2021-2023). (2) \$265,000 to expand Dial-A-Bus service to outlying areas such as Brownsville and Scio. (3) \$140,000 to acquire a 15 passenger bus to support the maintenance and expansion of service. The requests are consistent with and supported by the Lebanon Transit Development Plan.

Oliver indicated the specific service to Brownsville and Scio will depend on discussions with the two cities. In prior TAC discussions the general thought was two days a week to each city.

Senior Citizens of Sweet Home, Inc./Linn Shuttle (Ken Bronson). Request of \$810,000 to maintain the 2019-2021 STIF funded additional weekday runs/expanded hours of service increase and Saturday service; and add two weekday round trips to fill mid-day service gaps. The request is consistent with and supported by the Linn County Coordinated Plan.

TAC members noted the Saturday service is an important lifeline service. Bronson indicated the Linn Shuttle particularly serves a very high number of “riders of need” compared to some transit programs that serve a high number of “riders of choice”. The current ridership is 57% of the pre-COVID ridership which is perhaps the highest percentage for a fixed route program in the state.

Senior Citizens of Sweet Home, Inc./Sweet Home Dial-A-Bus (Ken Bronson). Request of \$550,000 to maintain the 2019-2020 STIF funded increase of service from 8 hours per weekday to 16 hours and Saturday service; adds a third day of weekday service to Cascadia (two round trips per day); adds Saturday service to Cascadia; and adds Saturday service to rural areas. The request is consistent with and supported by the Linn County Coordinated Plan.

Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments (Steph Nappa). Request of \$39,375 to maintain the 2019-2021 STIF Discretionary Grant funded Seamless Transit projects;

specifically the AVL technology, centralized website and its administration/ coordination. She indicated Benton County and Lincoln County will also contribute funds for this project.

Volmert referred to a memo he sent to Nick Meltzer that questioned the timing and expense of the request (it appears that some of the 2021-2022 expense could be paid through existing funds in the nearly \$500,000 grant). Nappa was unable to answer the question and said Meltzer would return to his office on January 5.

Bronson noted the long-standing request for OCWCOG's assistance on its website and on the development of brochures. Volmert said he has discussed this with Meltzer several times and Linn County considers this to be a commitment that OCWCOG made in 2019 when the grant was reviewed.

Linn County Medicaid Title XIX DD53 Local Match Program (Mark Volmert). Request of \$50,000 to provide the local match required for Medicaid funded rides to I/DD clients served by the City of Lebanon's transportation program. Volmert clarified that 2019-2021 STIF funding included the local match for the Senior Citizens of Sweet Home's I/DD program but for several reasons (including Oregon DHS' unworkable contractual demands) the SCSH ended its long-standing I/DD program on June 30. The request is consistent with and supported by the Linn County Coordinated Plan.

Linn County Project Planning, Coordination and Development (Mark Volmert). Request of \$60,000 to provide program and project planning, development and coordination services similar to 2019-2021. The request is consistent with and supported by the Linn County Coordinated Plan.

Linn County Administration (Mark Volmert). Request of \$216,000 for administrative services including support from Linn County departments. The request is consistent with and supported by the Linn County Coordinated Plan.

Contingency (Reserve) Account (Mark Volmert). Depending of the recommendations of the TAC and the allocation decisions of the Board of Commissioners, this could total \$1,334,000 including the carry forward of \$498,000 in 2018-2021 contingency (reserve) funds. As the decision making process moves forward, and 2019-2021 expenditures are updated, this amount could change.

Public hearing regarding STIF allocations

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

Discussion and recommendations by the TAC (STIF Advisory Committee) regarding STIF allocations

Cris Kostol indicated a large amount of funds have been allocated to the Linn-Benton Loop and, at this point, there has been no change in service. Volmert said the Linn-Benton Loop expansion of service has, indeed, been delayed. As Hoffman indicated two new buses are required to expand service. The ordering of the buses was substantially delayed but they are expected to be delivered in March/April. Expanded service is expected to start in the summer of 2021. \$220,000 in 2018-2021 in budgeted STIF funds (matched with an equal sum from Benton County) will be spent for one bus; with \$44,000 (also matched with Benton County funds) will be spent for the local match required for the STIF discretionary grant-funded bus. The remaining \$157,000 in 2018-2021 STIF funds will not be spent by June 30 and will be carried over into the STIF funds available for 2021-2023 allocation.

Kostol and Ted Frazier, noting the total requests for funds and the potential use of carry forward funds to support the expanded service (with requests that exceed ODOT's estimated 2021-2023 STIF resources), asked about the sustainability of STIF funded programs in 2023-2025. Volmert indicated, in response to the Board of Commissioner's long standing interest/caution about the fiscal sustainability of programs, he had carefully reviewed this matter. With a large contingency account (including the carry forward of \$498,000 in 2018-2021 contingency funds), the current requests are sustainable in 2023-2025 if the estimated STIF revenue is not substantially reduced. He noted, that based on prior experience, it is likely that not all allocated funds will be spent in 2021-2023 (the implementation of some projects tends to be delayed). If this happens and/or if the revenue for 2023-2025 increases there should be sufficient funds to sustain 2021-2023 projects, provide a limited expansion of service in 2023-2025 and preserve a reasonable contingency fund.

TAC members discussed the request for Albany Call-A-Ride software/hardware and the whether the OCWCOG Seamless Transit project could assist demand response systems. A question was asked whether this is a "need" or more of a "cool thing to have"? And whether it would actually save money. Frazier indicated he is talking with managers of similar sized agencies and will talk with OCWCOG. He said the software/hardware programs claim they can save money for demand response providers.

TAC members indicated they need additional information regarding OCWCOG's request for funds and want Volmert to obtain answers to the questions he asked Nick Meltzer.

TAC members indicated they supported Lebanon's requests. They particularly noted the proposal to provide limited service to Brownsville and Scio that has been discussed for nearly a decade.

TAC members commended Ken Bronson and the SCSH for developing important public transportation services in a very timely manner and successfully leveraging funds for "the best use of taxpayer money".

TAC members indicated they supported the funding requests for the Medicaid DD53 Local Match program and the Linn County Program Development and Administration program.

TAC members had a lengthy discussion with Albany staff regarding the request for STIF funds to expand Albany Transit System service.

Members noted that Albany had recently received \$2.7 million in CARES Act funds. Hoffman said the correct amount was \$1.7 million. He said Albany, at this time, had very limited COVID-related expenses.

In response to questions Chris Bailey explained that Albany contributes a substantial sum of General Fund money to ATS and Albany Call-A-Ride (including local match required by FTA Section 5307 and Section 5310 funds). The city does not want to use "one time only" CARES Act funds for on-going operational expenses. She said the city is "super excited about expanded service". Bailey indicated the city used Section 5307 funds in 2014, 2017 and 2021 to acquire buses.

In response to an operational question Hoffman said the city does not plan to construct additional bus shelters at this time. He said they are expensive and the city wants to first look at ridership numbers and the boarding/de-boarding locations.

In response to questions Hoffman said if there are insufficient STIF funds to provide approximately 36 hours of weekday service (AAMPO/Albany Transit Development Plan medium term 5-10 years) the city would reduce evening hours. Bronson expressed concern about this response, indicating that the city is requesting funds for a level of service that it may not deliver. He said he is concerned that the city does not

have enough commitment to the expansion of service. Bronson suggested the city needs “skin in the game” and a 20% match of STIF funds would be “a good faith effort”. Hoffman said there is no local match requirement for STIF funds. Volmert said, from what he has heard, TAC members are not suggesting a contribution of additional general fund money. He indicated the city has always allocated a large sum of general fund money to its public transportation programs; and the current annual general fund allocation is about \$650,000. Volmert indicated the TAC appears interested in having Albany commit some of the city’s nearly \$1 million annual FTA Section 5307 allocation to the long-discussed expansion of service.

Volmert noted the TAC had asked in May for a three year funding plan for ATS, the Linn-Benton Loop and Albany Call-A-Ride; outlining proposed allocations from Section 5307 (including fund balances), STIF and the CARES Act. He said it took Albany several months to develop a two year draft plan. In a follow up discussion Albany recently indicated it would have an estimated June 2021 Section 5307 operating account balance of \$750,000 for the Linn-Benton Loop; and an estimated June 2021 Section 5307 operating account balance of zero for ATS. He said the Albany Public Works financial staff indicated last year there was a very substantial balance in the ATS Section 5307 operating account and Albany’s recent report is “a mystery”. Bailey objected to the word “mystery” and said she would “be happy to explain it but is not the time or the place today”. Volmert asked Bailey to provide a written memo to the TAC that very clearly reports and describes the Section 5307 balance of the L-B Loop account and the Section 5307 balance of the ATS account.

The discussion continued. Hoffman reported that Section 5307 funds were used to acquire buses (in addition to the 2018-2021 STIF \$440,000 allocation to acquire one bus). In response to questions about the schedule for the expansion of service Hoffman said “the goal is to start medium term service (outlined in the AAMPO/Albany Transit Development Plan) on July 1. But, he said, the specific timing is a matter of discussion and service perhaps will start in August or September.

McQueary asked whether the city has been working on service expansion efforts since AAMPO approved the plan in late 2017. Hoffman said the city has been talking about it and looking at possible specific routes. Some TAC members indicated, having allocated STIF funds to Albany as requested in 2019, they were bothered by the delay in the expansion of service, worried about timing and perhaps interested in providing an incentive to meet schedules.

Bailey said the city could conceptually contribute some Section 5307 funds over a period of time. She indicated expanded service (medium term 5-10 years) would start years earlier than planned because of the availability of STIF funds.

TAC members discussed the commitment from Albany and “skin in the game”. Frazier clarified that “no other local agency has more skin the game than Albany”. Kindra Oliver noted Lebanon requested less STIF funds because it received CARES Act funds. Bronson said the SCSH also requested less STIF funds because of the amount of CARES Act funds received.

TAC members discussed the concept of requiring Albany to contribute \$100,000 per year of Section 5307 funds. Each member said they supported the concept except Kostol who said she preferred to have more time and was neutral.

Motion by Ken Bronson and seconded by Sandra Wess that the TAC recommend to the Board of Commissioners the allocation of \$450,000 in 2021-2022 STIF Formula Funds and \$450,000 in 2022-2023 STIF Formula Funds to the Albany Transit System with the requirement that the City of Albany match the first \$100,000 of STIF funds for each year with \$100,000 of locally controlled federal funds. The motion passed unanimously.

TAC members confirmed they had carefully reviewed the applications and thoroughly considered how the proposed projects met the sub-allocation method and service to low income households; as well as (a) priorities of the Legislative Assembly and the criteria listed in Oregon Administrative Rules including service to low income individuals/households; (b) the visions outlined in the Oregon Public Transportation Plan (c) transit opportunities and priorities outlined in local/regional transit plans; (d) partnerships, linkages and coordination of service with other transit providers; (e) an assessment of the interest that local communities have in expanding transit service; (f) an assessment of the interest to allocate locally controlled public transportation resources to leverage Statewide Transportation Improvement Funds; (g) the capacity/capability of the transit provider to initiate service in a cost-effective/”good value to taxpayers” and timely manner; and (h) the ability of the transit provider to address all accountability and reporting methods required by ODOT and Linn County. The review also considered geographic equity.

Motion by Cris Kostol and seconded by Ken Bronson to recommend that the Board of Commissioners approve STIF Formula Fund allocations listed on the attached spreadsheet with the following notations: (1) the \$675,000 allocation to the Linn-Benton Loop assumes a similar allocation to the Linn-Benton Loop from Benton

County; (2) the \$50,000 for the Linn County Medicaid DD53 Local Match Program assumes the Oregon DHS's allocation of Medicaid funding for this transportation service; and (3) the allocation to Oregon Cascades West Council of Government shall not exceed \$39,375. Following a discussion with OCWCOG staff regarding existing grant funds for the requested project the Special/Rural Transportation Coordinator shall report back to the TAC members and, if the request is reduced, shall forward the revised request to the Board of Commissioners. The motion passed unanimously.

Other Business

There were no other matters discussed.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:20 p.m.

Submitted by:

Mark Volmert

**2021-2023 STIF Formula Fund Allocations
Recommended by the Linn County Transportation Advisory Committee
(STIF Advisory Committee for Linn County)
December 29, 2020**

Linn Shuttle: \$810,000

Adds two weekday round trips to fill mid-day service gaps. Maintains the 2019-2021 expanded hours (last trip from Albany is 9:00pm instead of 6:30pm and this particularly assists LBCC students with evening classes); as well as Saturday service SH-Lebanon-Albany. Adds two additional round trips per day.

Sweet Home Dial-A-Bus: \$550,000

Maintains the 2019-2021 increase in “Shopper” (deviated fixed route) service from 8 hours a day to 16 and Saturday service which provides some service to high school students in the late afternoon (this meets STIF requirements to serve students in grades 9-12 “if practicable”). Adds a third day of weekday service to Cascadia (two round trips a day). Adds Saturday service to Cascadia. Adds Saturday Dial-A-Bus service. The additional Saturday “Shopper” service to Cascadia and the additional Saturday service of the Dial-A-Bus particularly serves low income residents in rural areas and provides, with a link to the Linn Shuttle, service to Lebanon and Albany.

Lebanon LINX/Dial-A-Bus: \$1,123,000 total

Maintains the deviated fixed route pilot program; maintains the 2019-2021 Saturday service of the deviated fixed route service and Dial-A-Bus service; maintains the extended hours for the deviates fixed route and Dial-A-Bus service; and the expansion of Dial-A-Bus service beyond the city boundaries. Expands Dial-A-Bus service from 3 miles outside city boundaries to 5 miles. \$718,000.

Adds new Dial-A-Bus service to outlying areas such as Brownsville and Scio. \$265,000 which the TAC has discussed with Lebanon for many years.

Purchase of 15 passenger small bus. \$140,000

Linn-Benton Loop: \$675,000

Approximate doubling of existing service, consistent with 2019 Linn-Benton Loop Transportation Development Plan and matched with equal Benton County STIF funds, with an emphasis on service to the general public (particularly low income residents). Expanded evening service to better serve LBCC. Funds the shift of \$75,000 in STF and Section 5310 resources, matched with equal Benton County funds, to more appropriate programs serving seniors and persons with disabilities.

Albany Transit System: \$900,000

Implements service expansion envisioned in the Albany Transit Development Plan (from 20 hours a day to approximately 36 hours a day). Benton County will provide \$150,000 related to increased service to North Albany. Albany will contribute \$100,000 per year of federal Section 5307 funds related to this expansion of service.

Albany Dial-A-Bus (Software): \$80,000

Scheduling software and hardware for mobile management service.

Albany Dial-A-Bus (Operations): \$35,500

Expands paratransit service by 1.5 hours per day to provide the required increased ADA service related to the expansion of Albany Transit System service.

Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments: \$39,375 * Subject to clarification of existing grant resources

Support on-going AVL technology, centralized website and administration/coordination of the OCWCOG Seamless Transit project.

Linn County DD 53 Local Match: \$50,000

Maintains local 35% match funding for Medicaid Title XIX DD53 transportation for people with intellectual/developmental disabilities. Limited in 2021-2023 to Lebanon transportation program.

Linn County Program Development and Administration: \$216,000 total

Provides program and project planning, development and coordination services similar to 2019-2021 (and six prior years of funding through Section 5310 Mobility Management grants) at the same cost as 2013-2015. \$60,000.

Provides funds for administrative services including support from County departments. \$156,000.

Contingency (Reserve) Account:

2018-2021 contingency (reserve) account funds carried forward: \$498,000

2018-2021 carry forward fund balance that was not allocated: \$836,000