

Linn County
Transportation Advisory Committee
February 7, 2017
Albany City Hall (Santiam Room)
MINUTES

Members Present: Ken Bronson; Ted Frazier; Cris Kostol; Sandra Wess; Randi Moore; and Kindra Oliver

Staff Present: Mark Volmert

Visitors: Karen Litwiller, Oregon Mennonite Residential Services; Suzanne Driver, Volunteer Caregivers; Suzette Boydston, Senior Companion Program; Brittany Donnell, Sunshine Industries; Barry Hoffman, Albany Transit/Linn-Benton Loop; Theresa Conley, Albany Area MPO; and Hank Berg, Seniors Citizens of Sweet Home, Inc.

Call to Order

Ken Bronson 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 December 13, 2016

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 2016-2017 STF application and review process, including Oregon Government Standards and Practices provisions

Mark Volmert described the process which is approximately 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.

Ken Bronson, Randi Moore, Kindra Oliver and Ted Frazier noted their agencies submitted applications for STF funds; and Ken Bronson and Ted Frazier noted their agencies submitted applications for Section 5310 funds. Mark Volmert indicated that the Oregon Government Standards and Practices Commission and ODOT staff have determined that TAC members do not have a conflict of interest in reviewing applications and making recommendations to the Board of Commissioners.

Mark Volmert noted that the Linn County application for Section 5310 Mobility Management funds relates to a portion of his compensation under the terms of an agreement with the Linn County Board of Commissioners. Volmert indicated, since he is not a TAC member, he has no “actual conflict of interest” and no “potential conflict of interest” but there could be a “perceived conflict on interest”. Perceived conflicts of interest are not addressed by the provisions of ORS Chapter 244.

Theresa Conley noted she staffs the Albany Area MPO and, in that role, she serves as a member of the review committee for Section 5310 funds. An MPO member, the City of Albany, is an applicant for Section 5310 funds. Additionally, she staffs the Linn-Benton Loop Board and the Linn-Benton Loop is an applicant for Section 5310 funds. She indicated she has no “actual conflict of interest” and no “potential conflict of interest” but there could be a “perceived conflict on interest”. Similar to Volmert’s response, perceived conflicts of interest are not addressed by the provisions of ORS Chapter 244.

Presentations by STF-funded agencies regarding their 2016-2017 applications

Volmert reported that, in addition to the local match required by the Medicaid Title XIX DD53 transportation services for people with intellectual/developmental disabilities, all of the 12 programs that currently receive STF funds submitted requests for 2017-2018 funding. He indicated that all of the programs are eligible to receive STF funds, all 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.

Representatives of most programs requesting funds were present. The Benton County Special Transportation program and Chamberlin House were not present and did not indicate a reason for not attending the meeting.

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

Linn Shuttle (Ken Bronson): Requests the \$103,000 currently funded. A seventh daily route was added in September and will particularly benefit the LBCC health education facility that will open later this year. Ridership was lower this year than last year, with most of the reduction related to LBCC students. LBCC, however, continues to provide the same level of support--\$50,000 a year. He indicated most transit programs in the state and country had reduced ridership in the past year. When the cost of fuel is low transit ridership usually is reduced.

Sweet Home Dial-A-Bus (Ken Bronson): Requests the \$23,500 currently funded. The Dial-A-Bus “shopper” (deviated fixed route service) ridership continues to slowly increase. He has requested an additional \$5,000 from the City of Sweet Home 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.

Lebanon Dial-A-Bus (Kindra Oliver): Requests the \$48,082 currently funded. Lebanon is working on a new service design to expand its service to more members of the general public (currently about 95% of the riders and seniors or people with disabilities) and to address current system capacity restraints. Lebanon received a discretionary grant from ODOT to establish a pilot project and Lebanon is currently working on a transit development plan to assist in the development of this new service.

OCWCOG Senior and Disability Services (Randi Moore): Requests the \$16,000 currently funded. Moore indicated the funds are used to purchase bus tickets for low income residents and to provide gas vouchers. The average cost per ride is about \$1.00 and the STF allocation is very important to low income residents of Linn County. When STF funding was increased the per person annual limit increased from \$50 to about \$85. Moore acknowledged that transportation was not listed as a priority in the recently-approved Area Agency on Aging’s plan which was developed by the Council of Governments.

Volunteer Caregivers (Suzanne Driver): Requests the \$21,329 currently funded. Driver indicated the total number of riders provided in the past year was a little less than the previous year but the mileage is higher. The program is providing longer rides, including rides to Portland. Driver noted Volunteer Caregivers has provided transportation services for 34 without a single accident.

Senior Companion Program (Suzette Boydston): Requests the \$15,000 currently funded. Boydston noted that the number of volunteers has decreased which is unfortunately a national trend. RSVP is helping recruit volunteers. Boydston was recently appointed to the Transportation Brokerage Advisory Committee and she wants to explore the potential use of RideLine to increase transportation options for people who are currently not eligible. Boydston encouraged programs to consider applying for Samaritan Health's Community Benefit Grant program.

Volmert reminded TAC members that STF funding for the Senior Companion Program increased in 2015-2016 from \$10,000 a year to \$15,000 a year to help support a pilot transportation program serving people with cancer. The Linn County STF program worked closely with Samaritan Health Services staff in late Fall 2015 to develop an application for an ODOT STF discretionary grant. Unfortunately SHS' attorney rejected the concept citing concerns about Medicaid regulations prohibiting "incentives" for patients (providing transportation could be viewed as providing an "incentive" to people to sign up for SHS' medical services).

Oregon Mennonite Residential Services (Karen Litwiller): Requests the \$5,000 currently funded. Litwiller reported that the small OMRS group home in Sweet Home has moved to Albany which had enabled residents to access additional services. She noted the challenge of recruiting and retaining staff. OMRS's annual turn over is greater than 50% and some I/DD programs have a 100% turn over rate.

Sunshine Industries (Brittany Donnell): Requests the \$5,000 currently funded. Donnell reported on significant changes regarding vocational/employment programs in the past year including the May 2016 closure of Co-Opportunity which had about 35 clients. Sunshine Industries has made a significant, and still evolving, transition from a facility-based program to a community-based program. This is consistent with the state's development of the Employment First Program. The number of clients has increased from about 60 to 83, with 6 to 8 additional clients expected in the coming weeks. Sunshine Industries has three new janitorial contracts and is now serving clients and contracts in more distance areas. This impacts transportation and Sunshine Industries continues to work closely with the Senior Citizens of Sweet Home's I/DD transportation program.

Chamberlin House (Volmert in lieu of Judie Foster-Lupkin): Requests the \$5,000 currently funded. Volmert reported Chamberlin acquired 6 mini-vans last year 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. He said 14% of the ridership is seniors and people with disabilities. Benton County, with considerable encouragement from Linn County, in 2015 increased its annual allocation from \$4,000 to \$22,000. Hoffman is hopeful Benton County will provide the same level of support in 2017-2018.

Albany Call-A-Ride (Ted Frazier): Requests \$36,000, an increase of \$11,000 from the 2016-2017 allocation. Frazier said the city asked him to request additional funds. He indicated Section 5310 funding is likely to be lower in 2017-2019 than 2015-2017. Volmert noted that the average cost of a ride is about \$26.00 compared with Lebanon and Sweet Home which are about \$15.00 per ride. Frazier noted the lack of volunteers as a factor.

Benton County (Volmert in lieu of Lee Lazaro): Requests the \$3,000 currently funded.

Title XIX DD53 Local Match Program (Mark Volmert): Requests \$79,205, an increase of \$7,205 from the 2016-2017 allocation. Volmert indicated these funds are used for as the local match required for third party I/DD rides provided by the Senior Citizens of Sweet Home's I/DD transportation program and the City of Lebanon. Unfortunately DHS, despite multiple efforts by Linn County/Linn County TAC members over many years, refuses to provide the local match. In 2015-2016 \$82,678 was allocated to the local match program. After careful review with the program providers and the Linn County DD program it was determined that \$72,000 would be adequate in 2016-2017. After a review of anticipated expenses for the next year nearly \$80,000 will be needed in 2017-2018.

Public hearing regarding 2017-2018 STF fund allocations

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

Discussion and recommendations by TAC regarding STF funds

Volmert briefly reviewed the January 25 written report that included general background as well as an analysis of STF revenues. In particular he noted ODOT has reduced the STF allocation to all counties by 17% for 2017-2019. Volmert indicated the TAC, at its December 13 meeting, agreed in concept to allocate \$15,000 from the \$30,000 2016-2017 contingency account and to allocate \$50,000 from the Supplement B/C account in order to provide funding in 2017-2018 at approximately the same level

as 2016-2017. This would buy time in 2017 for programs to adjust to smaller 2018-2019 STF allocations.

Volmert also discussed the development of a STF and Section 5310 allocation “road map” which the TAC, at the December 13 meeting asked Volmert, the Chair and the Vice Chair to develop. For the STF program the “road map” suggests: (1) an allocation to Albany Call-A-Ride at the current level of \$25,000 and (2) an allocation to the Senior Companion Program at a level of \$10,000—the amount funded prior to the 2015-2016 increase to \$15,000 to support the pilot program serving people with cancer. If this “road map” is acceptable to the TAC, an additional \$4,000 would need to be reduced from the current requests in order to balance the 2017-2018 STF budget.

TAC members discussed the “road map” and offered suggestions about \$4,000 in additional reductions. Ken Bronson suggested a reduction of \$2,000 in funding for the Linn Shuttle and Kindra Oliver suggested a \$2,000 reduction in funding for Lebanon Dial-A-Bus.

Cris Kostol indicated the TAC has discussed for at least eight years the challenges of transportation for people with intellectual/developmental disabilities and said it is perhaps time to reduce the DD 53 funding in 2017-2018. Other members, while agreeing to the frustrations of working with DHS, indicated I/DD transportation is complex and said the elimination of DD53 funding in July would not provide sufficient time for I/DD programs to adjust. All members agreed that a strong statement must be sent to the Board of Commissioners and to I/DD programs that the current STF support of I/DD transportation is not sustainable. Although, by using “rainy day” funds, the DD53 program can be funded in 2017-2018, people should assume that funding will not be available in 2018-2019. This approach will provide all partners with time in 2017 to review other options and to make appropriate adjustments.

Motion by Kindra Oliver and seconded by Cris Kostol that the TAC recommend to the Board of Commissioners the allocation of STF funds (1) in the amount requested by Sweet Home Dial-A-Bus, COG Senior and Disability Services, Volunteer Caregivers, OMRS, Sunshine Industries, Chamberlin House, the Linn-Benton Loop and Benton County; (2) \$101,000 to the Linn Shuttle; (3) \$46,082 to Lebanon Dial-A-bus; (4) \$25,000 to Albany Call-A-Ride; (5) \$10,000 to the Senior Companion Program; (6) \$79,205 to the DD53 Local Match Program with the clear understanding that funding will very likely not be available in 2018-2019; and (7) an authorization to transfer \$15,000 from the 2016-2017 STF contingency account and \$50,000 from the STF Supplement B/C account. The motion passed unanimously.

Presentation by agencies regarding their Section 5310 applications

Consistent with the TAC's partnership efforts and in consideration of ODOT and federal requirements, Theresa Conley, the Manager of the Albany Area MPO, joined the TAC members for the review of Section 5310 funding requests and the subsequent recommendations to the Board of Commissioners.

Volmert provided background information about federal Section 5310 program in Oregon. (1) The Oregon Transportation Commission transfers \$25 million each biennium from federal highway funds to the Section 5310 transit program. These funds are allocated, on a population basis, to counties/transit districts for their allocation to local transit programs. (2) The Federal Transit Administration allocates Section 5310 to states and urban programs based on population. Prior to 2013 the FTA funds were allocated to ODOT which then allocated the funds to counties/transit districts based on population. MAP-21, the 2012 federal transportation act, changed the allocation to provide 60% to large urban areas, 20% to small urban areas and 20% to rural areas. Jurisdictions in Oregon receive nearly \$8 million from these FTA funds. About \$5 million is allocated directly to the three large urban areas in Oregon; \$1.6 million to seven small urban areas; and \$1.6 million to small city/rural areas.

The small urban area funds are deducted from the county allocation formula and then redistributed on a statewide basis. As a result of MAP-21 the 2013-2015 Section 5310 allocation to Linn County dropped from \$789,000 to \$690,00 but the Albany urban area was allocated \$181,000; so the combined amount was \$873,000--\$84,000 larger than 2011-2013.

For 2017-2019 ODOT decided not to distribute the \$1.6 million FTA funds for small city/rural area through its prior population formula to small city/rural areas. Instead ODOT will develop a statewide competitive grant program with these funds. Because this \$1.6 million has been eliminated from the population-based formula the 2017-2019 Section 5310 allocation to Linn County is \$630,509, a reduction of nearly 7% from the 2015-2017 allocation of \$673,141. The Albany small urban area allocation for 2017-2019 is \$191,714, a 2% increase from the 2015-2017 allocation of \$187,793. The two allocations total \$822,223, a decrease of nearly 5% from the total 2015-2017 allocation of \$860,934.

Volmert indicated that all of the programs are eligible to receive Section 5310 funds, all 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.

He noted the Linn County Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Plan continues to serve as the guide for the investment of transportation resources.

The Senior Citizens of Sweet Home: Requests \$305,082 to replace a large (37 + 2 wheelchair positions) vehicle and a medium (24 + 2 wheelchair positions) vehicle; \$69,756 for preventive maintenance for 14 vehicles; and \$145,000 for purchase service (operations) funds to support the Linn Shuttle’s “Express Service” between Lebanon and LBCC/Albany.

Lebanon: Requests \$15,407 for preventive maintenance for 5 vehicles.

Oregon Mennonite Residential Services: Requests \$9,000 for preventive maintenance for 3 vehicles.

Chamberlin House: Requests \$10,768 for preventive maintenance for 12 vehicles.

Sunshine Industries: Requests \$13,460 for preventive maintenance for 6 vehicles.

The City of Albany: Requests \$55,000 of urban area funds for purchase service (operations) to support the Linn-Benton Loop service; and \$136,714 of urban area funds for purchase service (operations) to support Albany Call-A-Ride.

Linn County: Requests \$60,000 for Mobility Management services to assist local agencies improve coordination and efficiency and increase Linn County residents’ access to services.

Public hearing regarding 2017-2019 Section 5310 allocations

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

Discussion and recommendations by the Review Committee regarding Section 5310 funds

Volmert indicated that the requests are essentially consistent with the “road map”. To address the revenue shortfall and to fund the highest priority small city/rural area programs in Linn County at about the current level of service two programs that received 2015-2017 funds from the small city/rural area “bucket” of Section 5310 funds (purchase service funds of \$55,000 for the Linn Benton Loop and preventive

maintenance funds of \$23,000 for Albany Call-A-Ride) would be moved to the Albany small urban area “bucket” of FTA funds.

By moving these programs to the Albany small urban area “bucket”, all of the \$630,509 in the small city/rural area “bucket” is available to support the small city/rural area programs at about the current level of service.

Since the funding requests total \$820,187 it was suggested that the preventive maintenance allocation for Sunshine Industries be increased by \$2,036 (from \$13,460 to \$15,496).

Motion by Cris Kostol and seconded by Sandra Wess that the TAC/Review Committee recommend to the Board of Commissioners (1) the allocation of \$630,509 of “county” funds in the amounts requested by each agency (with an increase of \$2,036 for Sunshine Industries preventive maintenance); and (2) the allocation of \$191,714 in “Albany urban area funds” in the amounts requested by the City of Albany. The motion carried unanimously.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:22.

Submitted by:

Mark Volmert