

Linn County
Transportation Advisory Committee
January 21, 2021 1:30 pm
Zoom Teleconference
MINUTES

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

Staff Present: Mark Volmert

Visitors: Nick Meltzer, Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments; and Chris Bailey, City of Albany

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.

Election of Officers

Ken Bronson nominated Tim McQueary to continue to serve as the TAC Chair in 2021 and Sandra Wess seconded the nomination. No other nomination was made. Motion by Kindra Oliver and seconded Cris Kostol that Tim McQueary serve as the TAC Chair in 2021. The motion passed unanimously.

Kindra Oliver nominated Ken Bronson to continue to serve as the TAC Vice Chair in 2021 and Sandra Wess seconded the nomination. No other nomination was made. Motion by Kindra Oliver and seconded by Cris Kostol that Ken Bronson serve as the TAC Vice Chair in 2021. 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 December 29 review of applications/STIF allocation recommendations and the Board of Commissioner's January 12 allocation decisions.

The BOC approved the 2021-2023 STIF Formula Fund allocations that were recommended by the TAC including a \$30,625 allocation to OCWCOG to help maintain the Seamless Transit projects. This updated allocation amount was forwarded to the TAC, after a discussion with OCWCOG and a clarification about the budget, as requested at the December 29 TAC meeting; and it was then forwarded to the BOC prior to its January 12 meeting.

Volmert indicated the Board of Commissioners 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. Volmert reminded the TAC members that the STIF Plan essentially takes information from the approved 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.

Following a brief discussion, motion by Ken Bronson and seconded by Cris Kostol that the TAC recommends 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 Qualified Entities to review and make recommendations regarding STIF statewide discretionary grant applications in their geographic area. In 2019 the state rules gave this assignment to the STIF Local Advisory Committee. Following a change in Oregon Administrative Rules, in 2021 ODOT requests that Boards of Commissioners, after consultation with its STIF Local Advisory Committee (in Linn County this is the Linn County TAC), provide comments on proposed projects. ODOT requests a “fund/do not” fund” comment and additional comments are optional.

Four project applications related to the Linn County area were received and one of the applications (from Oregon Cascades West Council of Government) includes two distinct projects. The applications were forwarded to TAC members prior to the meeting.

The TAC discussed the four applications:

1. Linn Shuttle vehicle. \$276,000 grant request. Class “B” bus with 29 seats + 2 wheel chair ADA position bus to support the expansion of Linn Shuttle service. This would be the first Linn Shuttle bus with two doors which would improve the safe and efficient loading/unloading at locations where there are large numbers of passengers (Sweet Home Senior Center, LBCC Lebanon, LBCC Albany and the Albany Transit Station); and would limit contact between drivers and passengers to improve safety during periods of infectious disease.

TAC members agreed this is an important vehicle that supports the Linn Shuttle’s services.

Motion by Sandra Wess and seconded by Ted Frazier that a “Fund” recommendation be forwarded to the BOC. The motion passed unanimously, with the abstention of Ken Bronson.

2. Lebanon Transportation System vehicle. \$76,000 grant request. Class “D” bus with 14 seats + 2 ADA wheelchair positions to support the expansion of the Lebanon transportation system.

TAC members agreed this is an important vehicle that supports the Lebanon Transportation System’s services.

Motion by Ken Bronson and seconded by Cris Kostol that a “Fund” recommendation be forwarded to the BOC. The motion passed unanimously, with the abstention of Kindra Oliver.

3. Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments Ride Line upgrade of software for existing Ride Line non-emergent medical transportation system. \$96,000 grant request.

The TAC recognizes the importance of the Ride Line program and the need to upgrade its software (the software is so old it is no longer supported). The TAC, however, questioned whether STIF funding to support a long-standing existing service is the most appropriate use of these funds. TAC members questioned whether the new software would result in additional rides. Members were cautious about yet another request to fund software with STIF funds, noting the Albany Call-A-Ride’s STIF Formula Fund request for scheduling software. Given the very large number of rides provided TAC members asked why a couple cents per ride were not set aside for software updates.

TAC members discussed Ride Line’s very limited outreach to local communities and indicated many people, particularly rural area residents, are not aware of the program even though the program started in 2015. In response to a question Meltzer said he was “not aware” of a strategic plan for Ride Line.

Since ODOT does not provide a “Neutral” funding recommendation the TAC discussed a “Fund” recommendation with a requirement that OCWCOG very specifically explain to ODOT how a software upgrade would result in increased rides and improved transportation service to local residents.

Motion by Cris Kostol and seconded by Kindra Oliver that a “Fund” recommendation be forwarded to the BOC with a note to with a note requiring OCWCOG to very specifically explain to ODOT how a software upgrade would result in increased rides and improved transportation service to local residents.

4. Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments “Addressing Regional Transit Network Gaps”

A. Design of a mobility hub (larger than a bus stop and smaller than a transit station) at OSU and a mobility hub at LBCC. Grant request \$200,000. Local transit program managers have discussed the LBCC facility for nearly a decade and the OSU facility has been discussed in the past year to replace a small campus parking lot. Both hubs would improve the safety of bus traffic and bus loading/unloading. They would also support bus connectivity and increased ridership by providing a better place for passengers to wait for connecting buses and by providing secure bicycle parking. The Linn-Benton Loop TAC requested that OCWCOG submit this application; and if this project is funded that OCWCOG would take the lead role in obtaining a qualified design contractor and managing its effort.

TAC members agreed the transit hubs are important to the Linn Shuttle, the Linn-Benton Loop, the Albany Transit System and the Corvallis Transit System. TAC members stressed the importance of both transit hubs and both must be treated equally in this project

Motion by Ken Bronson and seconded by Cris Kostol that a “Fund” recommendation be forwarded to the BOC.

B. Development of a Regional Transit Coordination Plan. Grant request \$90,000.

TAC members expressed concern that OCWCOG, which has not been involved in the development of Coordinated Plans during the past 15 years prepared and submitted a grant application without talking with the people in the three counties (and the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians) who have developed plans in 2007, 2009 and 2017. Members noted the three counties have collaboratively worked with local communities and transportation providers for 15 years in identifying public transportation needs and opportunities; and developing strategies to implement realistic and fiscally sustainable programs to address the identified needs. The application incorrectly implies there has not been a regional coordination effort. The three counties developed the first “regional chapter” in their 2007 Coordinated Plan. Meltzer said he was not aware of the “regional chapter”.

In addition to county Coordinated Human Services-Public Transportation Plans, in the past three years and with the participation of their transportation partners, many local communities and the two MPOs have also developed public transit plans.

Since public transportation needs, opportunities and resources are already well known and described in existing plans TAC members indicated another public transportation planning effort/document is not needed at this time.

Motion by Cris Kostol and seconded by Sandra Wess that a “Do Not Fund” recommendation be forwarded to the BOC.

Other Business

Volmert indicated the TAC would meet on February 9 to review STF applications and make recommendations to the Board of Commissioners; and on February 10 to review Section 5310 applications and make recommendations to the Board of Commissioners.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 2:51 pm.

Submitted by:

Mark Volmert