

Linn County
Transportation Advisory Committee
January 29, 2019
Albany City Hall (Willamette Room)
Albany, Oregon
MINUTES

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

Staff Present: Mark Volmert

Visitors: Suzanne Driver; Volunteer Caregivers; Brittany Donnell, Sunshine Industries; Barry Hoffman, Albany Transit/Linn-Benton Loop; Judie Foster-Lupkin, Chamberlin House; Alisha Tarr, Chamberlin House; Ashley Bogue, Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments; Andrea Smith, Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments; and Hank Berg, Seniors Citizens of Sweet Home, Inc.

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.

Volmert reported that the Board of Commissioners at its January 29 meeting re-appointed Tim McQueary, Cris Kostol, Ted Frazier and Sandra Wess to the TAC; and appointed Cyndi Robeck to the TAC.

Appointment of TAC Chair and Vice-Chair

Motion by Ken Bronson and seconded by Ted Frazier to appoint Tim McQueary as Chair. The motion passed unanimously.

Motion by Cindy Robeck and seconded by Cris Kostol to appoint Ken Bronson as Vice-Chair. The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes of November 1, 2018 and December 4, 2018

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

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

No comments from the public.

Discussion regarding the 2019-2020 STF application and review process, including Oregon Government Standards and Practices provisions

Mark Volmert described the 2019-2020 process which is 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. There were no disclosures of conflicts of interest.

Volmert reported that ODOT, in October 2018, published the estimated 2019-2021 STF biennial targets. Linn County's allocation estimated was published as \$586,915; essentially the same as the 2017-2019 allocation of \$584,232.

Recently ODOT reported that the Governor did not include in her 2019-2021 budget the \$10 million in General Funds that have been allocated in the past two biennia (\$2 to \$10 million in General Funds were allocated during the legislative sessions in the prior three biennia). This would translate to a reduction of about 40% of the total STF funding. By moving some funds from the ODOT STF discretionary grant program the net reduction could be in the range of \$8 million—a reduction of about 35%. This would translate to a biennial reduction of about \$210,000 for Linn County.

At this time several transportation and human services partners are exploring this issue and are starting to develop a legislative strategy.

ODOT has requested transit districts/counties/tribes to make allocation recommendations based on the allocation targets published in October. ODOT also requests that transit districts/counties/tribes identify program funding priorities (in a general manner) to assist them in the event some or all of the \$10 million in General Funds are not approved. This will also provide a “heads up” to local programs that currently receive STF funds.

Volmert reported that all 11 programs that currently receive STF funds submitted requests for 2019-2020 funding. He indicated that all of the programs are eligible to receive STF funds, most 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.

Volmert reminded TAC members of the decision made in April 2018 to not provide STF funds, beyond June 2019, for the Medicaid Title XIX DD53 Local Match Program for transportation services for people with intellectual/developmental disabilities. Significant STF contingency funds were used in 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 to fund the Medicaid Title XIX DD53 Local Match Program in an effort to obtain funding from other sources. These were considered "one-time only" funds, supporting an important program that would otherwise have been terminated. In April 2018 the use of contingency funds was recommended by the TAC after receiving information from ODOT staff that STIF could be used as the source of the required local match for this program.

Presentations by STF-funded agencies regarding their 2019-2021 applications

Representatives of most programs requesting funds were present.

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

Linn Shuttle (Ken Bronson): Requests \$95,000, the same amount as 2018-2019. Ridership has increased 10% (very few transportation agencies in the state had a ridership increase of 10%). The program continues to provide 7 round trips each weekday between Sweet home, Lebanon and Albany; in addition to 5 round trips each weekday of the "Lebanon Express" between Lebanon and Sweet Home.

Sweet Home Dial-A-Bus (Ken Bronson): Requests the \$23,500 currently funded. This year's ridership is similar to last year. The Dial-A-Bus "shopper" (deviated fixed route service) ridership continues to slowly increase. It now represents about one-half of the total rides.

Bronson provided a very brief summary of his plans for STIF formula funds.

Linn-Benton Loop (Barry Hoffman): Requests \$24,000, an increase of \$7,000 from the current allocation. Hoffman explained that Benton County provides nearly \$24,000 a year in STF funds. Some people have, over time, simply looked at STF allocations

from the two counties and have been unable to understand that Linn County (with a large Section 5310 allocation) indeed contributes far more support to the Linn-Benton Loop than Benton County. This is intended as a step toward “one to one” equal funding from both counties. Hoffman reported that more rides are provided to Benton County residents than Linn County residents. He also reported that 12-14% of the rides are provided to seniors or people with disabilities. Hoffman reported the ridership has been nearly the same during the past few years.

Albany Call-A-Ride (Ted Frazier): Requests the \$25,000 currently funded. Frazier reported an annual ridership of about 21,000 provided through three programs: ADA rides required by Albany Transit, senior rides and medical/shopper special rides. The total ridership is a little higher compared to recent years but there has been a significant increase in wheelchair rides that are more expensive to provide. He reported that, after a long history of using volunteers, Call-A-Ride plans to hire dispatchers.

Lebanon Dial-A-Bus (Kindra Oliver): Requests the \$43,082 currently funded. Lebanon initiated its deviated fixed route program last May. The intent is to improve service to more members of the general public and address current system capacity restraints.

OCWCOG Senior and Disability Services (Andrea Smith): Requests the \$16,000 currently funded. Hall indicated the funds are used to purchase bus tickets for low income residents (47% of the STF allocation) and to provide gas vouchers (53% of the STF allocation). With 15,800 annual rides the average cost per ride is about \$1.00 and the STF allocation is very important to low income residents of Linn County. The per person annual limit is \$85 (when STF funding increased a few years ago the per person limit increased from \$50 to \$85). COG does not use any of the funds for administrative purposes. In response to a question Smith indicated transportation is not listed as a priority in the current Area Agency on Aging Plan.

Volunteer Caregivers (Suzanne Driver): Requests the \$21,329 currently funded. Driver indicated the total number of riders provided in the past year is approximately the same as the prior year but the mileage driven is higher. She noted the success of the East Linn County effort, with additional STF funded provided a few years ago and an ODOT grant which funded two cars. Driver indicated Volunteer Caregivers is doing a better job of transporting more than one person in a car at the same time.

Sunshine Industries (Brittany Donnell): Requests the \$5,000 currently funded. Donnell reported on significant changes regarding vocational/employment programs in the past three years. Sunshine has worked with the Employment First program and the home and community based services program to provide “as much of an integrated

atmosphere as possible”. Two years ago 75/80% of Sunshine Industries’ clients were served at the facility in Sweet Home and today about 10% are served at the facility with about 90% placed in the community. Transportation continues to be the largest barrier to placement in community employment and Donnell said Sunshine Industries “could not do this without the Senior Citizens of Sweet Home’s I/DD transportation program”. Sunshine Industries operates several work crews in the community. Individual employment placements are limited but a few clients are currently employed by Sweet Home Sanitation, Santiam Seed, Sweet Home Chamber of Commerce and a mechanical shop. Donnell noted that most of the \$5,000 in STF funding is used as the required local match for the Section 5310 preventive maintenance grant.

Donnell reported that Sunshine Industries is exploring options to expand its efforts in Albany. Opening an office in Albany would result in less rides to Sweet Home.

Oregon Mennonite Residential Services (Mark Volmert in lieu of Karen Litwiller): Requests the \$5,000 currently funded. Ridership is similar to the prior year. The Employment First program has not been very helpful to OMRS and “support has not been adequate”. Volmert reported that the 2017 relocation of the small OMRS group home in Sweet Home to Albany had enabled residents to access additional services.

Chamberlin House (Judie Foster-Lupkin): Requests the \$5,000 currently funded. Annual ridership of about 17,000 is similar to last year. Foster-Lupkin noted her clients are aging and this results in more medical-related trips. She reported that changes in federal requirements has increased the need to provide additional “community involvement” rides.

Benton County (Mark Volmert in lieu of Lee Lazaro): Requests the \$3,000 currently funded. Volmert noted the ridership continues to be small and most rides are provided to Benton County residents. The Benton County Board of Commissioners allocates \$24,000 a year to this program and the Benton County STF program allocates \$16,000 a year.

Public hearing regarding 2019-2020 STF fund 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 TAC regarding STF funds

TAC members discussed the Medicaid Title XIX DD53 Local Match Program. Bronson reported that about 35 of the people served by the Senior Citizens of Sweet Home’s I/DD transportation program are funded through this program; with 15 people served through the brokerage program. TAC members, once again, noted the importance of this program and its partnership with local residential and vocational programs; but confirmed there are not sufficient STF funds (even if the \$10 million of General Funds is restored) to continue to fund the program. Members noted transportation is, essentially, an orphan under DHS. DHS seems unable to understand the particular challenge of serving residents in small cities and rural areas. Bronson reported that one of his I/DD buses travels about 165 miles a day and the other bus travels about 180 miles per day.

Volmert reported ODOT indicated, a year ago, that STIF funds could be used for the Medicaid Title XIX DD53 Local Match Program. He will meet on Thursday with Mark Bernard, ODOT Rail and Public Transit Regional Transit Coordinator, about STIF funding for the program.

Motion by Cris Kostol and seconded by Ted Frazier that the TAC recommend to the Board of Commissioners the following allocations of 2019-2020 STF funds with the very clear understanding that the allocations are based on the STF biennial targets published by ODOT in October and the TAC and the Board of Commissioners will need to review all allocations in the event the \$10 million General Fund allocation is not approved by the Legislative Assembly. The motion passed unanimously.

Lebanon Dial-A-Bus	\$43,082
Sweet Home Dial-A-Bus	\$23,500
Linn Shuttle	\$98,000
COG Senior/Disabilities Services	\$16,000
OMRS	\$5,000
Volunteer Caregivers	\$21,329
Sunshine Industries	\$5,000
Chamberlin House	\$5,000
Linn-Benton Loop	\$24,000
Albany Call-A-Ride	\$25,000
Benton County Dial-A-Bus	\$3,000
Contingency	\$24,546
Total	\$293,457

Prioritization of STF-Funded programs in the event STF allocation (published by ODOT in October) is decreased

Following a brief discussion the TAC postponed this item to the January 31 TAC meeting.

Amendment to Linn County TAC bylaws

Volmert reported that the Board of Commissioners at its January 29 meeting, approved the TAC’s recommended amendment to its bylaws. The amendment defines, for all purposes of the Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund, “areas with high percentage of low-income households” as “areas where the percentage of low-income households exceeds the Oregon statewide average of low-income households”.

Other Business

None

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:26.

Submitted by:

Mark Volmert