

Linn County
Transportation Advisory Committee
June 19, 2018
Albany City Hall (Santiam Room)
MINUTES

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

Staff Present: Mark Volmert

Call to Order

Tim McQueary called the meeting of the Linn County Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) to order at 1:40.

Approval of Minutes of April 10, 2018

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

Public Comment Opportunity

No comments from the public.

Update on Regional Coordinated Plan Effort

Mark Volmert provided a brief summary of the recent efforts including the June 12 Strategic Assessment prepared by ODOT's consultant. Key observations were grouped into the following categories: (1) Needs/Desire for Regional Planning; (2) Providing Expanded Transit Service, Including Underserved/Unserved Areas; (3) Connectivity/Improving Service in Regional Corridors; (4) Knowledge/Availability of Information; (5) Short -Term Actions; and (6) Longer-Term Actions.

The consultant reported several options for continuing the conversation about regional projects and for ongoing coordination including: (1) Identify 1-2 short-term projects to implement; (2) Periodic Regional Convenings; and (3) Create a Subcommittee to CWACT charged with annually identifying regional transit project priorities.

Volmert noted that the issues and priority needs identified in the current regional chapter of the Coordinated Plan (initially approved in 2007 and re-confirmed in 2009 when the Coordinated Plan was updated) are largely valid in 2018.

Ken Bronson noted the importance of bike/ped programs, including safety education, and that a well designed bike/ped program helps address the “first half mile and the last half mile” of trips served by transit.

Linn-Benton Loop Update

Volmert provided an update on the Linn-Benton Loop. He reminded TAC members that about 70% of the Linn-Benton Loop’s riders are LBCC and OSU students. The current route (specifically the “Express” route) and schedule serves college students very well but do not provide realistic options for most members of the general public. Within a month of the passage of HB 2017 Volmert proposed an approximate doubling of the Linn-Benton Loop, funded equally by Linn County and Benton County HB 2017 resources, with an emphasis on serving the general public, particularly residents with low income. Benton County approved this proposal, in concept. The Linn-Benton Loop TAC and Governing Board, the AAMPO Board and the CAMPO Board have also approved this proposal in concept. The first step is to review/redesign the route and schedule to ensure realistic options for the general public while still serving the needs of college students. In October 2017 Volmert drafted an RFP for consultant services to develop a transit development plan. AAMPO agreed to fund 50% of the study but CAMPO declined to provide the other 50%. The Linn-Benton Loop Board thereafter requested a \$6,400 contribution from each partner. Every partner agreed to this contribution (Linn County’s contribution is funded by STF funds not used when the Senior Companion Program closed its doors). Unfortunately the process for obtaining a consultant has been very slow. DKS and Nelson\Nygaard will provide the service, under an umbrella agreement with ODOT. The starting date has been postponed several times and “late August” is the current estimate. Volmert indicated he has repeatedly expressed concerns with Linn-Benton Loop partners that the report may not be sufficiently complete by the time that HB 2017/STIF applications are due.

Update Regarding HB 2017/STIF and Discussion About Transit Opportunities Related to Increase Funding

Volmert provided a brief background on HB 2017/Statewide Transportation Improvement Funds (STIF).

HB 2017, the Oregon Transportation Bill approved in July 2017, includes a new 0.1% payroll tax for transit. 90% will be allocated, on a formula basis, to transit districts and counties (similar to the STF program) for transit planning, operations and capital. 5% will be allocated through a statewide discretionary grant program. 4% for intercommunity transit will be allocated through a statewide grant program. 1% will be allocated to ODOT for administrative expenses and technical assistance.

The new tax will start to be collected on July 1, 2018 and funds will start to be distributed to transit districts/counties (after the approval of their STIF plans) in early 2019. The estimated revenue for Linn County: \$665,000 in 2018-2019; \$1.5 million in 2019-2020; and \$1.7 million in 2020-2021. Funds will not be forwarded to Linn County until ODOT approves the Linn County STIF allocations/STIF Plan; but a delay in the approval of the STIF Plan will not impact the eventual distribution of all funds.

ODOT has developed extensive administrative rules for the STIF funds and the Oregon Transportation Commission is expected to approve the rules next week.

There are two application cycles available: November 1, 2018 and May 1, 2019. For most agencies the November 1 date simply does not provide sufficient time to address all requirements.

TAC members discussed potential transit opportunities with local programs.

Ken Bronson (Linn Shuttle and Sweet Home Dial-A-Bus):

Bronson indicated an allocation of approximately \$250,000 a year would enable the Linn Shuttle to expand from 7 runs a day to 10 runs a day, closing the gaps between runs. With service every 90 minutes between 6:30 am and 8:30 pm. Additionally, it would provide for Saturday service with 6 runs between Sweet Home and Albany, with an additional stop at Costco/WINCO. In coordination with increased Linn-Benton Loop service, this would help address Saturday transit needs in Albany since the Albany Transit System does not operate on Saturday.

Bronson told TAC members that \$75,000-100,000 of annual STIF funding would enable the Sweet Home Dial-A-Bus' "Shopper" service to expand to five days a week, increase the number of hours of operation and provide summer service to Foster Lake.

As previously discussed, \$75,000 a year will be needed to provide the local match required for the DD53 Medicaid Local Match Program

Bronson noted he will need to funds for administrative costs, improve his website and provide additional public information/outreach.

Kindra Oliver (Lebanon Dial-A-Bus):

Oliver indicated that the deviated fixed route pilot project started operation in early May. ODOT grant fund are available through June 2019 but STIF funds will be needed to continue this important service (\$85,000-100,000 per year)

The Lebanon Transit Development Plan also identified needs/gaps that could be addressed by STIF funds. This include an expansion of service hours with better linkage to the Linn Shuttle. Saturday service has been identified as a need and could be a short-term or longer-term priority. Service outside the city (for example, Brownsville and Scio) has been discussed from time-to-time. A volunteer-based program is one potential method of providing service outside of the city limits.

Oliver also indicated the Lebanon Transit Development Plan also identified a fixed route bus system as a potential future opportunity. Oliver said she would cost out these potential services.

In response to a question Oliver said the City Council would probably be willing to help support an expansion of service. She said her existing vehicles “fairly well” meet here current operations and noted she has recently received approval of a grant request for two additional vehicles. Her future needs would depend on the level of service expansion.

Ted Frazier (Linn-Benton Loop, Albany Transit System, Albany Call-A-Ride):

Frazier indicated that the City of Albany operates the Linn-Benton Loop but there is a separate governing board that will determine the level of service. He noted Volmert’s prior report about the concept of approximately doubling the current level of service.

Albany recently approved a Transit Development Plan (in concert with AAMPO). This will serve as the basis for the determination of STIF funding requests. Volmert asked about the City Council’s discussions at work sessions and Frazier indicated most of the discussion at work sessions revolved around potential fare increases. Volmert noted the clear legislative intent of HB 2017 to provide transit service to resident with low income and ODOT has expressed a specific interest in lowering transit fares. Volmert is not aware of any program in the state that is currently considering a fare increase and said a fare increase by the Albany City Council would likely be a significant issue

that would need to be addressed by the five STIF reviewers (Linn County TAC, Linn County Board of Commissioners, ODOT staff, ODOT Public Transit Advisory Committee and the Oregon Transportation Commission).

Frazier said he expected an increase in ATS service to North Albany and Volmert said the Albany City Manager indicated Albany will request STIF funds from Benton County to help fund North Albany service.

Albany will likely focus its priority/funding at this time to increasing weekday service rather than extending service to Saturday. Frequency of service is viewed by most transit providers as the single highest opportunity to increase ridership. Focusing resources on improvements to weekday service, at this time, is considered to be a higher priority than Saturday service.

Frazier said the expansion of Albany Call-A-Ride service would be a priority for STIF funds.

Volmert concluded the discussion about STIF funds with a listing of general provisions that should be considered by all programs: (1) programs will need reasonable administrative funding to support expanded service; (2) websites should be improved and public information/outreach will be a key to addressing the legislative intention to provide service to residents with low income; (3) “no cost” transfers should be carefully considered; (4) a youth summer pass program would be helpful and address the March 2018 amended to HB 2017 which calls for “where practicable” a 1% allocation for the transit needs of high school students; and (5) improvements to communication with/between buses (this is a possible statewide grant opportunity).

Other Business

Volmert discussed the STIF schedule with TAC members. As he noted earlier in the meeting, the STIF allocation/plan requirements are extensive. He said they are still a “work in progress” with ODOT staff and it is unrealistic that local transit programs could address all of the application requirements and that the TAC and the Board of Commissioners could address all of their requirements by November. Benton County and Lincoln County will both likely use the May 1 application. After discussion the TAC members agreed.

Volmert reported on the proposed revisions of the TAC Bylaws (required by HB 2017/STIF in order to the existing TAC as the local advisory committee for HB 2017/STIF). He asked that TAC members forward their comments to him within three

weeks. Cris Kostol noted the importance, when new people are appointed, of having a person who rides a bus.

Frazier reported that Albany recently had its first Federal Transit Administration triennial review. There were thirteen minor findings, which is better than most programs for the first review.

The meeting adjourned at 3:45.

Submitted by:

Mark Volmert