

Linn County  
Transportation Advisory Committee  
March 10, 2020  
Lebanon Senior Center  
Lebanon, 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 Maudlin, Sunshine Industries; Barry Hoffman, Albany Transit/Linn-Benton Loop; Lorelei LaVoie, Oregon Mennonite Residential Services; Brad Dillingham, Benton County Special/Rural Transportation Program; and Jeff Walpole, Linn County Developmental Disabilities Program

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.

Approval of Minutes of February 4, 2020 Meeting

Motion by Cris Kostol and seconded by Ted Frazier 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 2020-2021 STF application and review process, including Oregon Government Standards and Practices provisions

Mark Volmert briefly described the 2020-2021 application and review process which is very similar to the process 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 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.

Volmert reported that the 11 programs that currently receive STF funds submitted requests for 2020-2021 STF funding. On February 21 he submitted to each TAC member a written analysis of the applications. 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 reviewed the Oregon Government Standards and Practices provisions. There were no disclosures of conflicts of interest.

#### Presentations by STF-funded agencies regarding their 2020-2021 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.

Sunshine Industries (Brittany Maudlin): The application that was submitted requested \$6,000, \$1,000 more than 2019-2020, to support the current efforts of the program. Maudlin indicated that since the application was submitted the Board of Directors authorized the opening of a facility in Albany, with an estimated opening date of July 2020. The facility will support work crews in the Albany area and will also serve some people who will remain at the facility during the day. Initially the facility will be limited to new clients enrolled with Sunshine Industries and will, therefore, not impact the clients supported at the Sweet Home facility or its budget. Some of the possible new clients will be people displaced when Co-Opportunity closed and some clients will be recent high school graduates who reside in the Albany area. In the future some Albany residents that are currently served by the Sweet Home facility could possibly be transferred to the Albany facility. With additional expenses related to the new Albany facility Maudlin requests \$10,000 in 2020-2021 STF funding. TAC members noted that Sunshine Industries provides more than 33,000 annual rides.

Linn Shuttle (Ken Bronson): Requests \$98,000, the same amount as 2019-2020. Combined with STIF funding and federal Section 5310 and Section 5311 funds, the Linn Shuttle's hours have increased 41% in the past year and service miles have increased 38%. Daily round trips between Sweet Home-Lebanon-Albany have

increased from 7 to 10 with longer hours of service including evening service to LBCC. Saturday service was initiated last summer. This is in addition to the 5 round trip per day of the “Lebanon Express” connecting Lebanon with LBCC. Ridership in the second quarter of 2019 was 14% higher than 2018; and the 2018 second quarter ridership was about 10% higher than the previous year.

Sweet Home Dial-A-Bus (Ken Bronson): Requests the \$23,500 currently funded. This year’s ridership is 10-13% higher per quarter than 2018-2019. The Dial-A-Bus “shopper” (deviated fixed route service) has added a second bus with STIF funding which supports, among other people, high school students.

Albany Call-A-Ride (Ted Frazier): Requests the \$25,000 currently funded. Frazier reported the STF funds helps supports three programs: senior rides, medical/shopper special rides and ADA rides required by Albany Transit. The total ridership is about the same as last year. In response to questions about the substantial increase in expenses in the past few years Frazier noted (1) fewer volunteer/more paid drivers; (2) a transition to paid dispatchers; (3) a substantial increase in employee benefits, particularly PERS benefits; and (4) higher city overhead charges.

Linn-Benton Loop (Barry Hoffman): Requests the \$24,000 currently funded. He noted there are several Linn-Benton Loop funding partners. Ridership is similar to recent years. About two-thirds of the riders are LBCC or OSU students; and about 12-14% are seniors or people with disabilities. Evening service between Corvallis and LBCC, supported by STIF Linn County and Benton County STIF funds, started in February. Significant service expansion, supported by STIF funds and consistent with the recently developed Linn-Benton Loop Service Development Plan, will begin after two new buses are delivered (New Flyer buses will likely be delivered in spring/summer 2021). TAC members noted that AAMPO and CAMPO allocate equal amounts of money to the Linn-Benton Loop; and LBCC and OSU also contribute equal sums of money. Linn County, with its increase of STF funding in 2019-2020, currently allocates \$50,000 a year more than Benton County. TAC members indicated Linn County has for many years allocated far more money to the Linn-Benton Loop than Benton County. TAC members said it is “crystal clear” that Benton County needs to match Linn County’s total allocation of funds on an equal basis starting in 2021-2022.

Lebanon Dial-A-Bus (Kindra Oliver): Requests the \$43,082 currently funded. Lebanon’s pilot deviated fixed route program, initiated in May 2018, continues to provide important rides using STIF funds. Last October the Dial-A-Bus program, with STIF support, expanded its service hours from 4:00pm to 6:00pm and now operate 3 miles outside the city limits. Oliver reported 29,000 annual rides (an increase of 31%)

and 5,700 service miles (an increase of 24%). In the coming months Lebanon will continue to review a possible future expansion of the area of service outside the city limits.

Volunteer Caregivers (Suzanne Driver): Requests \$31,240, an increase from the current allocation of \$21,329. Driver indicated a large increase of ride requests. Volunteer Caregivers tries to match up requests with the most appropriate transportation provider; with Volunteer Caregivers allocating their limited resources to unique rides (particularly long distance rides) that other programs cannot provide. Driver noted increased expenses including insurance, rent and minimum wage requirements. Additionally, there will be less support from foundations in 2020-2021.

OCWCOG Senior and Disability Services (Mark Volmert for Randi Moore: Requests the \$16,000 currently funded. Volmert indicated the funds are used to purchase bus tickets for low income residents (about 50% of the STF allocation) and to provide gas vouchers (about 50% 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. Volmert noted that OCWCOG is currently updating its Area Agency on Aging Plan and, for the first time, is including transportation providers in the plan development effort.

Oregon Mennonite Residential Services (Loralei LaVoie): Requests the \$5,000 currently funded. The current annual ridership of about 3,000 is similar to the prior year. LaVoie indicated the current limited vocational opportunities in Albany has impacted OMRS with more clients remaining at home. She was excited to hear about Sunshine Industries' plan to open a facility in Albany. In response to a question, LaVoie indicated Yamhill County now provides some STF support for the several OMRS group homes located in Yamhill County. Volmert suggested that OMRS pursue possible Section 5310 preventive maintenance funds from Yamhill County.

Chamberlin House (Mark Volmert for Judie Foster-Lupkin): Requests the \$5,000 currently funded. The annual ridership of about 12,000 is similar to last year. Volmert distributed a letter from Chamberlin that summarized its current program. 38 clients, with a variety of support needs, are served by Chamberlin which maintains a fleet of 11 vehicles. Two new group houses were built in 2019 and one older house was closed. With an increase in its combined services Chamberlin expects to reduce transportation needs/expenses.

Benton County (Brad Dillingham): The application that was submitted requested \$19,263, an increase of \$16,263 from the current allocation. Dillingham noted that he started working in October and, with limited background about the Corvallis-to-Albany service, he requested full funding for rides provided to Linn County residents. He has since received additional information from Volmert and Albany staff and has re-evaluated Benton County’s STF request. TAC members clarified that the program provides about 100 rides a month to 16 separate individuals. TAC member also noted that Volunteer Caregivers provides about 50 rides per month for Linn County residents who need to travel to Corvallis. In response to a question Dillingham indicated the current \$3,000 allocation would be justified. TAC members indicated the TAC has worked with Benton County on transportation partnership efforts for decades; and looks forward to a comprehensive and equal funding concept in 2021-2023 that includes all Linn County and Benton County funding sources for the Linn-Benton Loop, Albany Call-A-Ride service in North Albany and the Corvallis-Albany service.

Public hearing regarding 2020-2021 STF fund allocations

Following the presentation about the programs, Tim McQueary opened the public hearing. Barry Hoffman discussed Albany Call-A-Ride service and Albany Transit System service. There are three categories of Call-A-Ride riders: (1) people who are required by ADA regulations to be served; (2) people currently served; and (3) a larger population of people who could be served. The large increase of people who need dialysis treatment in North Albany several times a week was noted as an example. Frazier indicated the planned substantial increase of ATS service (particularly with passenger training) could help reduce for some people the need to use Call-A-Ride.

McQueary closed the public hearing.

Discussion and recommendations by TAC regarding STF funds

TAC members discussed the funding requests including the amended requests, the total amount of available funds and the contingency fund (2019-2020 and 2020-2021).

Following a discussion, motion by Cindi Robeck and seconded by Cris Kostol that the TAC recommend to the Board of Commissioners the following allocations of 2020-2021 STF funds. 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	\$31,240
Sunshine Industries	\$10,000
Chamberlin House	\$5,000
Linn-Benton Loop	\$24,000
Albany Call-A-Ride	\$25,000
Benton County Dial-A-Bus	\$3,000
Contingency	\$9,636
Total	\$296,086

Update from City of Albany regarding STIF-funded transportation programs

Barry Hoffman reported that the expanded ATS service (as well as most of the expanded Linn-Benton Loop service) requires two additional ATS buses (and two additional Linn-Benton Loop buses). The effort to purchase buses is more complex than it was in the past. The FTA no longer allows “piggy backing”, with small transit simply purchasing buses through the FTA’s contracts with large transit districts. The ODOT state price agreement for vehicles expired last summer and the recently approved agreement does not include Gillig buses. The Washington State price agreement, which has been an excellent option in the past, expired last fall and a new agreement will not be approved for several more months. Albany has accordingly decided to acquire New Flyer buses, rather than Gillig buses, and expects to order them in April. Hoffman hopes to have the buses delivered in April 2021.

The second item that is required to expand ATS service is the expansion of the Albany Transit Development Plan into a specific implementation plan. A refinement of specific routes and bus stops, the development of specific schedules (including efforts to link up the schedules with other transportation programs) and the accompanying community outreach effort. Hoffman reported the city will “probably hire a consultant” for this effort. He estimated the implementation planning effort would likely take about six months. Volmert indicated the selection of a consultant, particularly if an RFP process is required, could take at least a few months. If buses may be delivered in late spring 2021 the schedule will require the city to move forward in a timely manner with the selection process for a contractor. Tim McQueary asked about the support of the Albany City Council and Hoffman said “the City Council is on board”.

Following additional TAC discussion, members asked Volmert to attend the March 12 AAMPO TAC meeting to discuss the ATS status/effort/schedule to expand service.

Proposed consolidation of STF and STIF programs

Volmert provided a brief follow up to the February 4 TAC discussion about the proposed consolidation of the STF and STIF programs. HB 4036 was introduced, as a “pre-session filing of the Joint Transportation Committee”, to address a long list of HB 2017 “clean up” items. In the Committee Administrator’s summary of the bill the consolidation of the STF and STIF programs was noted in one sentence. The bill contained few specifics about the consolidation and ODOT staff has indicated the details would be hammered out in Oregon Administrative Rules. Volmert noted the lack of ODOT’s communication. The proposed consolidation of the programs would impact every public transportation agency (including the urban transportation providers and 35 programs which receive Section 5311 funds) and a long list of non-profit agencies in the state. ODOT staff did not provide a word about the scheduled legislative committee hearings or even drop an email to program managers that indicated the number of the bill. Following the “walk out” by some legislators, the 2020 legislative session adjourned *Sine Die* on March 8. Upon adjournment HB 4036 remained, without a floor vote, in the Joint Ways and Means Committee. It is possible that the Legislative Assembly could be called back into session. Whether that happens and, if it does, whether or not a long list of items in the Joint Ways and Means Committee would be moved forward to a floor vote are unanswered questions at this time.

Other Business

None

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:57.

Submitted by:

Mark Volmert