

Linn County
Transportation Advisory Committee
November 7, 2017
Albany City Hall (City Council Chambers)
MINUTES

Members Present: Tim McQueary; Ken Bronson; Kindra Oliver; and Sandra Wess

Staff Present: Mark Volmert

Visitors: Suzanne Driver, Volunteer Caregivers; and Jeff Walpole, Linn County DD Program

Call to Order

Tim McQueary called the meeting of the Linn County Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) to order at 12:00 Noon. Members of the committee and members of the audience introduced themselves.

Approval of Minutes of April 11, 2017

Motion by Sandra Wess 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 Transportation for People with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities

Mark Volmert provided a brief summary of the efforts during the past year including the discussion with Jeff Sneddon at the April 11 TAC meeting. He reminded TAC members the Oregon DHS (DD Program) staff refuses to directly talk with local programs that provide transportation for I/DD clients. Volmert, therefore, repeatedly asked Sneddon to arrange a meeting with DHS staff, Linn County DD Program staff, residential program and vocational program staff and transportation program managers. Thus far no meeting has been scheduled. He also reminded TAC members that at the April 11 meeting Sneddon indicated there was an option that would not require a local match. "DHS could fully fund transportation though the DD53

Comprehensive Services program if the Senior Citizens of Sweet Home and the City of Lebanon execute a Provider Enrollment Agreement with DHS (under the terms of an Individual Service Plan for each I/DD client)”. In a subsequent follow up email with Ken Bronson Sneddon reported that the rate DHS could fund would be about \$100 a month per client. The current DD53 Local Match program rate is \$13.39 per ride so the current payment, for a person who rides almost every date, is about \$500 a month.

Jeff Waldpole from the Linn County DD Program arrived at this point in the meeting. He said Sneddon has had discussions with DHS since June. He confirmed that the DHS rate under the Comprehensive Service program would be about \$98 a month.

TAC members discussed with Waldpole the long history of the TAC’s support of I/DD transportation including funds for the DD Local Match Program, preventive maintenance of about 25 vehicles and the purchase of vehicles for the Senior Citizens of Sweet Home’s I/DD transportation program. Members once again discussed the reduction of STF funding and the need to help provide an increasing number of “life changing rides” to seniors and people with other types of disabilities.

Walpole thanked the TAC members for their prior support and said “as a committee you have to decide who gets rides”.

Kindra Oliver asked Walpole if the Linn County DD program has any funds that could be used for the local match required by DHS. Walpole said he does not know. Oliver also noted, if the third party Local Match program ends, there would likely be significant additional work required by Linn County DD staff to arrange transportation.

Tim McQueary said TAC members want to know if there are any other funding avenues. Walpole again returned to the Individual Service Plan option and members once again indicated that the amount that DHS would pay is far less than the cost to provide the service.

Volmert noted that he has not heard anything from Sneddon for several months. Walpole replied “I hear you”.

ODOT’s “Regional Convening” of Stakeholders Related to the Central Willamette Valley Human Services-Public Transportation Plan

Volmert provided a brief report. Now that Linn County, Lincoln County, Benton County and the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians have each approved their

Coordinated Plan the next step is to develop a “regional chapter” that identifies needs and addresses the pursuit of opportunities for regional collaboration and the expansion of regional transportation services. He distributed copies of the 2007 regional chapter, developed by Linn County and ultimately approved by each of the three counties as part of their Coordinated Plan. He said the regional chapter, a decade later, “has held up very well”.

Volmert reported that ODOT, as the first step in the process, will convene a meeting tomorrow (November 8) of stakeholders from the three counties and the Confederated Tribes, as well as stakeholders from state agencies.

HB 2017 Public Transportation Funding and a Discussion with Local Public Transportation Programs About Conceptual/Preliminary Projects

Volmert provided background about public transportation funding that was included in the state’s transportation package (HB 2017). Generally referred to as the “State Transportation Improvement Fund” (STIF) it is a substantial investment in public transportation funded through a new one-tenth of one percent tax on employees. There are four elements: (1) 90% allocated by formula for public transportation; (2) 5% allocated to a statewide discretionary grant program (most likely through a competitive grant program); 4% allocated to “intercommunity transportation” (most likely through a competitive grant program); and 1% allocated to ODOT to provide technical assistance to rural transportation programs.

Similar to the STF program, the formula funds will be allocated to transit districts, counties and Native American tribes.

The tax will start to be collected in July 2018. Although ODOT indicates the money will become available in January 2019 Volmert said he thinks July 2019 is a more likely date.

When HB 2017 was sent to the Legislative Assembly for a vote the Legislative Revenue Office prepared a statewide revenue estimate of more than \$100 million a year; with an estimate provided for each district, county and tribe. The annual estimate for Linn County was published as more than \$2 million. Volmert said he thinks this estimate is far too high. It was evidently based on a calculation of total income tax revenue collected in the state, whereas collecting the employee tax through hundreds of thousands of employers (many of which are very small) will be a large challenge, particularly during the first few years.

ODOT has established a statewide advisory committee to help develop Administrative Rules necessary to implement the transit element of HB 2017. This is a complex rule making effort that will involve, among other items, the allocation method to districts/counties/tribes; the sub-allocation of funds to local transit programs; the establishment of local advisory committees required by HB 2017; clarification about the eligibility of programs/projects; planning requirements; and fiscal/project reporting requirements.

Volmert reported that the general intent of HB 2017 is to expand transit service, particularly to low income households; and not “fill behind” current funding from local governments/programs. HB 2017 funds will, apparently, be limited to “public transportation”. “Client only” service will evidently not be eligible. Albany’s Call-A-Ride service for ADA required rides, at this time, appears to be eligible but non-ADA rides will perhaps not be eligible.

Volmert indicated he suggested, to the advisory committee, that districts/ counties/ tribes be given the option to use their existing advisory committees (expanded to meet the requirements of HB 2017) rather than appoint a separate committee. He noted that in Linn County’s case, next fall/winter we will likely be reviewing HB 2017 requests, Section 5310 requests and STF requests. We need to balance/coordinate these efforts and (if the BOC agrees) this effort can be best accomplished by having a single (and somewhat expanded) TAC.

Volmert also reported there is a concern that some existing transportation funding could be reduced. There is a discussion, by some legislators, that the state’s current general fund allocation for the STF program could be eliminated as well as, perhaps, the current transfer of federal highway funds to the Section 5310 transit program.

Kindra Oliver briefly discussed Lebanon’s preliminary thoughts about HB 2017 resources. The (pilot project) deviated fixed route service that will soon start could be funded by HB 2017 money after the discretionary grant funds are spent. There are suggestions in Lebanon’s Transportation Development Plan that could be funded including transit to areas that will not be served by the (pilot project) deviated fixed route and an expansion of service to households with low income. Potentially a “shopper shuttle” service and perhaps service outside of the city limits. Oliver said a volunteer driver program may be an option. Sandra Wess noted the importance of integrating the I/DD service into the city’s transit plans.

Ken Bronson briefly discussed the Senior Citizens of Sweet Home’s preliminary thoughts about HB 2017 resources.

More frequent service is a high priority. If Albany initiates Saturday service it would be a priority for the Linn Shuttle to provide Saturday service. Conceptually some Saturday Linn Shuttle service could be linked to Saturday service provided by the City of Albany, the City of Lebanon and the Sweet Home Dial-A-Bus. Bronson noted the need to develop an integrated fare system to facilitate transfers between transit systems.

Ted Frazier and Barry Hoffman were invited to discuss Albany's preliminary thoughts but they were unable to attend the meeting.

Update on Linn-Benton Loop

Volmert reported his efforts to substantially expand the Linn-Benton Loop's service which had been a high priority for the region for more than a decade. With the passage of HB 2017 he proposed (after talking with the TAC Chair and Vice Chair and the Chair of the Board of Commissioners) an approximate doubling of the current service. This would cost an estimated \$600,000 a year and Volmert secured conceptually approval of Benton County to match the allocation from Linn County. The "working concept" is an annual allocation from each county in the range of \$300,000. As this proposal moves forward the actual service level may be somewhat larger or smaller (and the total annual allocation could perhaps be in the range of \$500,000-\$700,000).

Volmert presented this concept to the L-B Loop TAC in August and received conceptual support. The concept was then submitted to the L-B Loop Governing Board which strongly supported the potential increase in service.

The L-B Loop TAC will discuss this matter later this afternoon (November 7).

The next step is to develop a service expansion plan, using the general guidance of HB 2017 in order that the service could be funded with HB 2017 money. The current route/schedule serves OSU and LBCC relatively well; but it does not meet the needs of the general public (which is why the general public accounts for only about 30% of the current ridership). The current route/schedule has essentially not been changed in nearly two decades so a complete review/revision is needed.

Volmert has proposed that AAMPO and CAMPO each contribute about \$30,000 to hire a consultant to develop a plan. ODOT strongly encouraged/supported the hiring of a consultant that has significant route/schedule experience. AAMPO has about \$30,000 in its 2017-2018 budget (carried forward from 2016-2017 and earmarked for a less-

than-specific L-B Loop service development plan). The concept is for CAMPO to allocate a similar sum from either its 2017-2018 contingency account or from its 2018-2019 budget.

Volmert has developed, with review by Benton County and Corvallis, a draft scope of work for consultant services which will be discussed at the L-B Loop TAC meeting.

Other Matters

Volmert reported that the Senior Companion Program will close its doors on December 1 and Suzette Boydston will retire. The program has operated under the umbrella, and with substantial fiscal support, of Samaritan Health Services. SHS is reportedly looking at options for a possible partner but it is very unlikely that another program will step in to replace SHS.

A question was raised about the Ride Line Non-Emergent Medical Transportation program. There was a report about a “two tiered program” with some people qualified to receive all medical-related rides and some other people not qualified to receive rides for all medical services. Volmert said he served on the Transportation Brokerage Advisory Committee for twelve years before recently resigning and he was not aware of a “two tiered program” and will check into this item.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 1:59.

Submitted by:

Mark Volmert