

Linn County  
Transportation Advisory Committee  
September 24, 2019  
Sunshine Industries Unlimited Conference Room  
1333 Clark Mill Road, Sweet Home Oregon  
MINUTES

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

Staff Present: Mark Volmert

Visitors: Brittany Donnell, Sunshine Industries Unlimited; Alisha Tarr, Chamberlin House; Jeff Walpole, Linn County DD Program; Jeff Sneddon, Linn County DD Program; Janet Hanson, Hanson AFH; Lorelei LaVoie, OMRS; Kendra Knebel, Liberty AFH; Jason Cliburn, Crossroads Residential Services; and Barry Hoffman, City of Albany (by telephone)

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: April 11, 2019 Meeting

Motion by Sandra Wess and seconded by Cris Kostol that the minutes of the April 11, 2019 meeting be approved as submitted. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment Opportunity

No comments from the public.

Discussion with Linn County Health Department staff and residential and vocational program managers regarding transportation for people with intellectual/developmental disabilities

Mark Volmert provided a brief introduction about the long-standing financial support by the TAC and the Linn County Board of Commissioners related to I/DD transportation services as well as the long-standing partnership of the Senior Citizens of Sweet Home and the City of Lebanon in providing I/DD transportation services. He

reported that ODOT staff has indicated that Linn County provides more support for I/DD transportation than any other county in Oregon. This support includes STF allocations to I/DD residential and vocational programs, as well as allocations to the Senior Citizens of Sweet Home and the City of Lebanon; the allocation of federal Section 5310 funds to I/DD residential and vocational programs, the Senior Citizens of Sweet Home and the City of Lebanon for vehicle preventive maintenance; and \$70,000-\$80,000 per year in STF funding for the Medicaid DD53 Local Match Program. Volmert also indicated he has served, at the request of the TAC and the Board of Commissioners, on several statewide committees and task forces regarding I/DD transportation.

Jeff Walpole indicated there are two primary I/DD vocational programs in Linn County: WVRC in Lebanon and Sunshine Industries Unlimited in Sweet Home. Some Linn County residents are served by Cornerstone Associates in Corvallis. Other residents of Linn County with intellectual/developmental disabilities are served through the Employment First program with community-based employment opportunities not linked to these vocational programs. He noted that many residents live at home or at a very small residential home and transportation is a particular challenge to some of them.

Sneddon noted the importance of transportation for residents with intellectual/developmental disabilities and “transportation is always on the agenda for meetings with providers”. Jeff Sneddon indicated there are approximately 1,000 people with intellectual/developmental disabilities in Linn County but he did not know how many are served by the county and how many are served by the brokerage program. He said some of the 18-21 year olds still attend school while some “are in transition”.

Walpole and Sneddon provided additional information. They clarified that “transportation is not included in the daily rate structure”. There is a small amount of transportation funding related to limited community access, but not for employment. The Oregon Department of Human Services provides, for some people, 46 cents per person/per mile for transportation. This is limited to trips (but when an I/DD client is in the vehicle—not when, for example, a residential provider makes a return trip without an I/DD client in the vehicle. They clarified that bus passes are eligible for reimbursement as well as taxi fares; but not Uber or Lyft transportation services. They noted that an increased rate structure (developed by the Burns and Associates study) was developed as a Policy Option Package for the 2019 session of the Legislative Assembly but funding was not approved. Sneddon said the county will soon be better able to plot the location of all I/DD clients served by the Linn County DD program.

Local I/DD program managers noted the importance of DHS funding the staff support required to provide transportation. They indicated additional wheelchair capacity is needed. Ken Bronson said there are four wheelchair clients on one of his routes and his vehicles have only two positions for wheelchair. Bronson configures the route (with different pick up and drop off times) to take two people at a time. Local program managers clarified that “transportation is bundled in the support rate” and the rate structure proposed by the Burns and Associates study would make the transportation cost and reimbursement more transparent.

Sneddon asked about the current capacity of the DD transportation programs managed by the Senior Citizens of Sweet Home and the City of Lebanon. Kindra Oliver said Lebanon has 10 people on its list and is currently able to provide rides to all of the people. Ken Bronson said the Senior Citizens of Sweet Home’s I/DD program serves about 50 people. A few people only ride one or two days a week. Generally there is limited space for additional riders.

Cris Kostol asked about the Linn County residents with intellectual/developmental disabilities who are currently served by local public transportation programs. The residential and vocational providers at the meeting indicated most of their clients are unable to access public transportation. Crossroads in Lebanon serves five clients and one rides the Linn Shuttle to Albany. Liberty AFH is licensed for five people and currently has three clients who do not use public transportation. Chamberlin operates seven group homes and an apartment complex. The residents, including the five who travel to Cornerstone in Corvallis, do not use public transportation. OMRS has many clients who are medically fragile or have behavioral issues and are, therefore, unable to use public transportation. Sunshine Industries Unlimited has successfully used a “hub and spoke” system; with the Senior Citizens of Sweet Home’s I/DD transportation program generally bringing people from their residences to the Sunshine Industries Unlimited facility and then Sunshine Industries Unlimited transports them to employment sites.

Volmert described funding for the Medicaid DD53 Local Match Program. Since Oregon DHS does not provide the required local match the Linn County Special/Rural Transportation Program, for more than a decade has allocated \$70,000-80,000 a year of STF funds. The STF funding has been significantly reduced in recent years and there is an ever-increasing need to support the transportation needs of seniors as well as people with other types of disabilities. Fortunately the Linn County Special/Rural Transportation Program has been able to secure new funding from the Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) program for the local match.

TAC members and guests discussed the coordination between the TAC and the Linn County Development Disabilities Advisory Board. Volmert indicated he and the TAC Chair have requested, on several occasions in the past few years, a meeting between the TAC and the DDAB (with the first step being a meeting with the Chairs and Vice Chairs) to discuss the transportation needs of I/DD clients, available resources and coordination.

Sneddon and Walpole indicated: (1) the DDAB is essentially “defunct”; (2) the DDAB has met only once in the past year; (3) meetings are difficult to schedule because of a lack of a quorum (with numerous current vacancies); (4) the current DDAB bylaws are “arcane” and are very difficult to amend; and (5) the DDAB serves primarily as a forum for discussions with I/DD program providers. Sneddon said he was currently updating the bylaws and will discuss the proposed amendments at the next meeting with program providers.

### STIF Program Update

Volmert provided an update on the STIF program. Following reviews of the STIF Plans by ODOT staff, the ODOT Public Transportation Advisory Committee’s STIF Review Subcommittee and the Public Transportation Advisory Committee, last week the Oregon Transportation Committee approved about 20 STIF Plans (including the Linn County STIF Plan).

STIF funds for the third and fourth quarters of 2018-2019 and the first and second quarters of 2019-2020 will be forwarded to counties and transportation districts in late October. Linn County will receive approximately \$1,500,000.

Volmert is working with the Linn County Attorney’s Office to develop agreements with local transportation providers.

He reminded TAC members that STIF funding is dependent on the actual revenue received from the new one-tenth of one percent employee payroll tax. The state will calculate, on an annual basis, the allocation formula to each county/transit district (based on the payroll tax received in each jurisdiction in the prior year). This formula will be applied to the actual revenue received on a statewide basis which means the amount received by Linn County will vary from quarter to quarter. The revenue received thus far is a little more than the revised ODOT estimate that the TAC and the Board of Commissioners used for the 2019-2021 STIF allocation.

Volmert indicated, however, that the Legislative Assembly allocated \$10 million from the 2019-2021 STIF revenue to the STF program. This replaces the previous \$10 million allocation from the state's General Fund. The STIF program revenue should, however, still be a little more than ODOT's revised estimate.

The "good news" is that, with the STIF funding, the 2019-2021 STF program is funded at approximately the 2017-2019 level. If the General Fund had not be backfilled with STIF money the STF program would have received a cut of about 40% in 2019-2021.

The "not so good/unknown news" is the potential impact on administration of the STF program. The Legislative Assembly requested ODOT to "merge the STIF and STF programs". The STF program currently has relatively simple requirements from ODOT. This enables Linn County to allocate STF funds to local programs with relatively simple reporting requirements. With a merged STIF and STF program the application and reporting requirements could significantly increase. The cost of this effort could result in some local programs, with reluctance, deciding not to apply for much-needed STF funds.

#### STIF Updates from Local Programs:

Ken Bronson reported the Linn Shuttle, on July 6, initiated Saturday service (6 round trips between Sweet Home-Lebanon-Albany with a stop at Costco/WINCO). On August 12 the Sweet Home (deviated fixed route) Shopper was expanded from 4 daily route to 8; with service starting at 6:00am (previous was 9:00am) and ending at 8:40pm (previous was 4:00pm). On September 4 the Sweet Home Dial-A-Bus' service hours were expanded and the Dial-A-Bus now operates on Saturday between 9:00am and 4:00pm. On September 23 the Linn Shuttle's Monday-Friday service was expanded from 7 daily round trips to 10 (providing among other benefits evening service to LBCC).

Kindra Oliver reminded TAC members that the Lebanon Transit Development Plan serves as the blueprint for transportation service. The deviated fixed route service, previously funded through an ODOT STF discretionary grant, continues to provide stops at seven locations in the city between 7:00am and 4:00pm; and will be expanded to 6:00pm. The service area of the Lebanon Dial-A-Bus will be expanded beyond the city limits and Lebanon is currently looking at which geographic pockets should be served (the city is looking at an approximate three mile radius). Lebanon will add Saturday service and this will link up with the Linn Shuttle's new Saturday service.

Barry Hoffman reported the Linn-Benton Loop plans to extend evening hours, starting in January, between Corvallis and LBCC. The remaining Linn-Benton Loop expansion of service will require two additional buses. The buses have not yet been ordered and delivery will be an estimated 12-15 months after the buses are ordered.

Albany Transit System service will be approximately doubled, using the Albany Transit Development Plan as a blueprint, but two new buses will be needed. The buses have not yet been ordered and delivery will be an estimated 12-15 months after the buses are ordered.

### Report on ODOT Triennial Compliance Review of Linn County Special/Rural Transportation Program

Volmert reported that ODOT's nationally recognized compliance contractor (and ODOT staff) reviewed the Linn County Special/Rural Transportation Program on July 30.

The compliance review included federal and state funds and addressed program management, financial management, procurement (limited to purchase service for operations), Civil Rights and ADA.

In its overview the compliance contractor indicated "The County's contracted Special/Rural Transportation Coordinator has done a commendable job of administering Sections 5310 and 5311 monies. This contractor has been instrumental in fostering good partnerships and providing technical assistance as needed to all three transportation providers receiving funds from the County. This contractor has an in-depth knowledge and understanding of ODOT grants, policies, and procedures".

The compliance contractor indicated Linn County's Management Policies and Procedures for the Special/Rural Transportation Program were among the very best procedures it had reviewed in the United States. The contractor also indicated the application documents (including the guidebook and procedures) for Linn County's STF and Section 5310 grant programs were exceptional. The contractor will share the documents (as a model to consider) with other programs in Oregon when they are reviewed.

The only "issue" the compliance contractor found was the need to provide a Spanish translation of the Linn County Title VI Civil Rights notice, complaint form and instructions for filing a complaint. The Spanish translation has been made and placed on the Special/Rural Transportation Program's section of the Linn County website.

### Report on Linn County Special Transportation Fund Program Management

Volmert indicated he submitted a proposal to Linn County in response to its request for proposal for Special Transportation Program Management services. A company from Texas also submitted a proposal. The County’s review team has recommended that Linn County award the contract to Mark Volmert Consulting.

### Merger of STIF and STF Programs

Volmert reported, as he noted during his STIF program update, the Legislative Assembly has asked ODOT to merge the STF and STIF programs. This is “a work in progress”. Volmert indicated he has expressed his serious concerns with ODOT about the impact this would likely have on small non-profit organizations.

### Potential funding for vehicles

Volmert reported that ODOT will soon announce a funding opportunity, related to federal Section 5310 and Section 5339 funds, for vehicles and for transit facilities.

The Section 5310 funding relates to the Federal Transit Administration’s funding to rural programs in Oregon. The biennial Section 5310 funding, which the TAC and Board of Commissioners allocated in March 2019 related to federal highway funds that the Oregon Transportation Commission transfers to the Section 5310 program. The Federal Transit Administration’s allocation to Oregon was not included in the March formula funding package; and is set aside for a statewide discretionary grant program.

The Section 5339 funding, as in prior biennia, is allocated by ODOT through a statewide discretionary grant program.

### Other Business

Volmert noted that the Senior Citizens of Sweet Home will soon install three bus shelters in Sweet Home and one in Lebanon using 2016 STF Discretionary Grant funds. This has been a very lengthy effort and Ken Bronson has jumped countless hurdles to accomplish this task.

Cris Kostol asked if consideration could be given, in the future, to support the transportation needs of adult foster home clients on a countywide basis.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:59 p.m.

Submitted by:

Mark Volmert