

**COLUMBIA COUNTY CITIZEN TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND
STATEWIDE TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT FUND COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES**

Meeting Date: March 19, 2019

Time: 6:30 P.M.

Place: CCR Transit Center, St. Helens, OR

Present: Sharon Evinger; Bill Eagle; Claudia Eagle; Genell Grow; Charlotte Hart

Absent: Henry Heimuller; Blanche Katz, Dena Chesney

Staff: Todd Wood, Transit Administrator; John Dreeszen, Transit Coordinator

Guests: Alta Lynch; Ralph Culpepper; Carol Brandt; Mike McLellan

Call to Order (CCRTAC): Committee Member B. Eagle called the meeting to order at 6:30 P.M. as a quorum had been met Chair Evinger was running late.

Public Comments: Public comments were requested and none were received.

Approval of February 19, 2019 Minutes: Committee approved the February 19, 2019 minutes unanimously.

Ridership Update: Todd Wood presented the data on ridership for the last month compared to the same time last year. Mr. Wood noted some changes in ridership due to service cuts and inclement weather. In regards to Line 6, Mr. Wood stated the ridership data has been incorrectly recorded dating back to at least 2017, and that additional changes are necessary in order to make the line feasible. Staff has asked the County Commissioners for permission to reinstate the previous schedule for Line 6, with the addition of a stop in Banks. Mr. Wood stated he would update the committee once more information is available. Committee Member B. Eagle asked how the connection with Sunset Empire is working in the North County. Mr. Wood stated it has been working well after some schedule adjustments to meet the connection with Sunset Empire. The committee spent some time reviewing the ridership data.

Grant Updates: John Dreeszen gave an update on the status of various grants, including the closure of some historic grants, along with the status of reimbursement requests and the amount remaining to be drawn from others. Mr. Dreeszen noted that expenses are tracking higher than grant revenues, though the rate at which the deficit is increasing has slowed. Mr. Dreeszen noted staff is awaiting responses on discretionary and STIF funding from ODOT. Mr. Wood then informed the committee on the process of approval for the discretionary grant funds that will help pay for a new GPS system, along with four North County trips. Mr. Wood also updated the committee on a new mid-day trip to Sauvie Island being funded by Tri-Met.

Contractor Update: Mr. Wood gave an update on the status of the RFP, noting the only bid received was from the current contractor, MTRWestern, and the bid came in lower than “worst case scenario” projections. Mr. Wood informed the committee that driver turnover with the contractor has been high for various reasons, including route cuts and low wages, but the wage issue will be addressed in the new contract and the system should see some additions in the near future.

Public Funding: Mr. Wood stated the commissioners are moving forward with an attempt to fund the transit system via a tax measure on the November ballot. Absent funding, Mr. Wood noted the system will have to make further cuts to service as expenses will continue to rise. The ballot measure will impose a service district with a permanent tax that would be similar to other surrounding agencies. Mr. Wood has sent letters to all the cities in the county requesting their support, and is in the process of coordinating with each to present the proposed measure.

NEW BUSINESS

Upcoming Parades/Fairs: Chair Evinger reiterated the need to be prepared to have a presence at the various events in the county throughout the year. The committee discussed the dates of different events. Mr. Wood noted three buses will be commissioned for the Megga Egg Hunt at the fairgrounds, as well as two buses for the Veterans Day event in Columbia City. Chair Evinger asked the committee to submit ideas for a presence at these events so staff can compile them for the committee. There was a lengthy discussion around what sort of informational materials related to the tax measure to prepare and bring to various events.

Schedule Brochure Feedback: Chair Evinger asked for some of the brochure language to be changed to make it more clear. The committee also asked that the brochures indicate the effective date so the public can easily tell if they have a current copy.

Options for Special Needs: Chair Evinger stated there was an issue with the policy of only one deviation per route on the Flex Line. She said she had called to schedule a deviation three weeks in advance and was told that it had already been scheduled that far out. She noted there could be others in the area who are not able walk to an actual stop and questioned why one person is able to use that deviation every day. Mr. Wood stated staff is looking in to adding more stops to the Flex Route in Scappoose and St. Helens to avoid this issue, however funding remains a problem. Mr. Wood stated he would look in to the specific example provided. Chair Evinger asked that staff inquire with the public to garner ideas regarding what stops would be most useful.

New Signs: Mr. Wood presented the committee with the newly received bus stop signage, along with some information on coordinating with the cities for their installation. Committee Member B. Eagle ecstatically approved of the signage, as did the rest of the committee.

STIF COMMITTEE

Projects: Mr. Wood reminded the committee of the projects the STIF may potentially be used for, and which ones would fit within the anticipated budget. Mr. Wood noted the State's original projection for collection of STIF funds is not turning out, and will be lower than anticipated. Mr. Wood reiterated the requirements that are imposed by utilizing the funds and, in order to meet those requirements, he proposed reducing fares for low income individuals. Chair Evinger suggested including low income individuals in a program similar to the Honored Citizens program.

New Project: Mr. Wood proposed some of the funds be used to expand Vernonia service.

STIF Only Meeting April 2 or 9: The committee agreed to hold the STIF only meeting on April 2, tentatively set for 2:00 pm.

Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 P.M.