

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

Meeting Date: March 15, 2022

Time: 4:00 P.M.

Place: Columbia County Transit, St. Helens, OR

Present: Bill Eagle; Blanche Katz, Claudia Eagle, Dena Chesney, Marty Rowe

Absent: Scott Burge; Charlotte Hart

Staff: John Dreeszen, Transit Director

Guests: None

Call to Order (CCRTAC): Chair B. Eagle called the meeting to order at 4:00 P.M.

Approval of January 18, 2021 Meeting Minutes: The Committee approved the January 18, 2022 meeting minutes unanimously.

Public Comments: The Committee paused for public comment and none was offered.

Service Updates: Mr. Dreeszen shared that Line 1 service has been growing slowly over the last few months and CC Rider is anxiously awaiting to see additional ridership changes in correlation with the lifting of general mask mandates and rising cost of gas. Ridership for Line 1 is still relatively low compared to ridership pre-pandemic. Comparably, Dial-R-Ride service is bursting at the seams. Currently drivers are completing approximately 50 rides a day in comparison to just 2-3 years ago when 30-35 rides a day was the average. With the uptick in Dial-A-Ride, dispatchers are needing to strongly enforce that rides be made five business days in advance as there is little availability throughout the week. There is a possibility of putting a daily limit of 2-3 destinations per rider, however implementing that may require additional action. Given the growing popularity of Dial-A-Ride, Mr. Dreeszen is looking into bringing back the Flex Run specifically for the countless individuals that have reoccurring Dial-A-Ride subscriptions to get to work. Chair B. Eagle stressed that reinstating the Flex Run would garner public support for the local transportation system.

Additionally Mr. Dreeszen has received notice that Portland Community College (PCC) will return to full in-person services come summer 2022. However, reintroducing the Willow Creek

service would not be advantageous as historically that route was used less by PCC students and more by Multnomah county residents to get to Hillsboro. Due to the mileage it was the most expensive route for CC Rider to operate with only a 40% reimbursement from PCC. If CC Rider moves in the direction of bringing the Flex Route back, it may incorporate stops along the previous Willow Creek Route with the intent that it will service Columbia County residents who attend PCC.

Grant & Budget Updates: Mr. Dreeszen shared that the annual county budget process has started and is not anticipating any issues. The last few years CC Rider has gotten more funding from the Economic Development Fund however the consensus within the County Budget Committee is that CC Rider should not be dependent on these funds in the future. Chair B. Eagle inquired if CCRTAC could lend support during the Budget Committee Meeting and formal Hearing, Mr. Dreeszen would check to see if that is a possibility. Chair B. Eagle stressed once again the importance of public transportation in relation with economic development in Columbia County and wants the County Commissioners to see the value in investing in it. Mr. Dreeszen explained that Columbia County does see the importance in public transportation and shows this through direct funding from its Economic Development Fund.

Mr. Dreeszen shared that he has submitted an application to replace three 16 passenger buses. CC Rider is still waiting to receive a previous order of buses that was placed approximately 15 months ago, but the hope is that once those buses arrive, a few other vehicles can be retired.

Mr. Dreeszen reminded the committee that a Request For Proposal has been issued. The current contract with MTR Western comes to an end on June 30, 2022 unless it is extended. Following informal talks with MTR Western, a significant rate increase would be the reality of a new contract. Mr. Dreeszen submitted a budget analysis that outlines the cost comparison between entering into a new contract with MTR Western or bringing drivers and dispatchers “in-house”.

Committee Round Table: Committee Member Rowe and Chesney voiced support of bringing back the Flex Route. Committee Member Chesney in particular shared that she has to schedule her rides up to three weeks in advance and is sometimes picked up nearly two hours ahead of her scheduled appointments. The reintroduction of the Flex Route would alleviate Dial-A-Ride from such heavy usage.

Chair B. Eagle wanted to remind the committee that his and Committee Member Eagle’s terms are ending in June. The county has issued news releases regarding the need to fill vacancies on various committees and Mr. Dreeszen has announced the need for new committee members for CCRTAC on KOHI Radio.

Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 4:55 P.M.