

COLUMBIA COUNTY TRANSIT HYBRID PUBLIC FORUMS

Meeting Dates & Times: May 26, 2022 @ 6:00PM & June 9, 2022 @ 10AM

Place: Virtual (MyGoTo Meeting) & Columbia County Transit Center, St. Helens OR

Overview: Two hybrid public forums were held to collect public feedback and discuss possible service changes to Line 1 from St. Helens to Portland. Three in-person and 8 virtual participants created the combined number of participants for the public forums.

Public Questions: The most pressing question from forum participants centered on the proposed changes to Line 1 and what the reason for those changes are. One proposed scenario of changes outlined decreasing service to 1 Morning and 1 Afternoon run into Portland. Another scenario proposed CC Rider operating as a Dial-A-Ride only service. Either proposed scenarios would create a disruption in current service but would save on costs and delay an eventual deficit for the department. Either proposed service change(s) would be effective October 1, 2022 however that date is subject to change depending upon Board of Commissioners approval.

As the majority of riders utilize Line 1 to get from southern Columbia County to Portland, any change in service would be an obstacle to adjust to. Forum participants shared that this service is invaluable as Line 1 is the only local service in Columbia County that provides transportation into Portland, one of the major cities where many Columbia County residents are employed.

Another common question from participants was if it would be possible to begin ‘recouping’ the needed funds that would ultimately create a large deficit in 3-5 years. One participant suggested raising the rates of fares to assist in revenue. Unfortunately a raise in fares would never come close to preventing a deficit as fares make up a small portion of overall revenue.

The final common question involved the Oregon Transit Tax, how it effects Columbia County and if TriMet could partner with CC Rider. Some participants wanted to know what benefit this tax had and whether it would contribute to a surplus to counter the eventual deficit. Unfortunately the Oregon Transit tax benefits counties where individuals work as opposed to where they live. Roughly 70% of Columbia County residents work out of county, as is the wording of the Transit Tax does not create an advantage for the local Transit service.

Public Comments:

Overwhelmingly participants expressed anxiety and displeasure with two of the publicly posted scenarios. Forum participants stated that they have noticed ridership increasing over the last few weeks and they believe that it will only continue to increase with rising gas prices and lifting of COVID-19 restrictions. New housing developments and low-income apartments could also

create an increase in ridership, but that would only benefit local transit if new riders are employed in Columbia County.

Forum participants shared that a decrease in Line 1 Service could result in issues with their employers and the elimination of Line 1 could ultimately cause some riders to lose their jobs.

It was reiterated by many Forum participants that Line 1 is the only transportation option that is local and economical for many Columbia County residents that need to commute to Portland. One Forum participant described Line 1 as a ‘blood line’ to Portland with no comparable equivalent for residents.

Concluding Remarks

The consensus with both public forums suggested that although a reduction in Line 1 service would impact many, the complete elimination of the route would be a huge loss for the community. Similar to Dial-A-Ride, select Columbia County residents rely heavily on the remaining public transportation service the county has to offer. For those that utilize it, CC Rider is one of the few benefits Columbia County has that integrates the rural community to its larger neighbors.