

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

Meeting Date: September 20, 2022

Time: 4:00 P.M.

Place: Columbia County Transit, St. Helens, OR

Present: Marty Rowe, Dena Chesney, Karen MacKenzie, Pam Heimuller

Absent: Charlotte Hart,

Staff: John Dreeszen, Transit Director

Guests: Renee Mongillo (virtual), Tony Poulsen (virtual), Joe Turner

Call to Order (CCRTAC): Quorum was not met however the meeting was continued as an informal, informational discussion.

Approval of August 16, 2022 Meeting Minutes: The Committee will approve the August 16, 2022 meeting minutes at a later time.

Public Comments: The Committee paused for public comment and Joe Turner, a Columbia City resident, asked if there have been recent changes to scheduled Line 1 runs and if the bus stop signage is still up to date. Mr. Dreeszen answered that on time performance for Line 1 and timely updates of delays is always a priority. Bus stop signage will need to be addressed with ODOT as a few outdated CC Rider signs are still up in Northern Columbia County.

Renee Mongillo, a St Helens resident, also wanted to be briefed on any changes from the last committee meeting in May.

Grant & Budget Updates: Mr. Dreeszen wanted to remind the Committee of the several funding sources CC Rider depends on for operation. The two bulk funding sources originate from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT). In federal terms CC Rider is considered a Qualified Entity because it is a transit provider in the state of Oregon and its specialized formula funding comes from 5311 – Rural Transportation and 5310 – Over 65 transportation (previously referred to as Seniors and Disabled Persons). The last source of formula funding CC Rider receives is the State Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) that originated with the passing of the State Transit Payroll Tax.

Mr. Dreeszen shared that CC Rider has just been awarded a discretionary grant for vehicles for the current fiscal year, 22-23, and the following, 23-24.

Service Updates: Mr. Dreeszen reminded the Committee, and guests joining the meeting in person and virtually, that in May and June 2022 CC Rider held two hybrid Public Forums to collect public feedback regarding possible service reductions.

As an answer to Mrs. Mongillo's original inquiry regarding service changes Mr. Dreeszen explained that CC Rider's expenses are growing faster than its revenue and thus expenses need to be cut. CC Rider currently only has two lines of service, Line 1 to PDX and Dial-A-Ride, and through extensive conversations with the County Commissioners the one service that would tremendously effect individual's survival by being cut would be Dial-A-Ride.

Committee Member MacKenzie stressed that as a frequent Line 1 rider news of possible service reductions sent panic to riders. She reiterated that many riders depend heavily on Line 1 because it is their only means of transportation either around the county or to their place of employment in downtown Portland. Committee Member MacKenzie shared that since the announcement of the Public Hearing in September she has tried assuring Line 1 riders that proposed service reductions will be given with sufficient notice.

Mr. Dreeszen briefly reviewed the three original scenarios made in May 2022 regarding proposed service changes. The 1st scenario was to not make any changes to current service, however CC Rider would end up with a substantial deficit by 2025. The 2nd scenario was to cut Line 1-PDX to only 1 morning and 1 afternoon run which would extend out the financial longevity of CC Rider an additional 2-3 years. The 3rd scenario was to eliminate Line 1-PDX and only provide Dial-A-Ride service which would also extend an eventual deficit by an additional few years. Originally the selection of a proposed change would have become effective October 1, 2022, however Mr. Dreeszen has drafted a separate proposal following feedback from the two public forums.

Mr. Dreeszen shared that he is drafting a formal proposal that would eliminate Line 1-PDX in a gradual timeframe rather than October 1, 2022. Mr. Dreeszen did want to highlight that any change in service is only a temporary solution to the financial difficulties CC Rider will find itself in within the years to come.

Mrs. Mongillo suggested that any changes to Line 1 be postponed until after the new low income housing developments in St. Helens and Scappoose are complete. Mrs. Mongillo believes ridership will greatly increase following the influx of new residents. Mr. Dreeszen agrees that ridership could increase due to the new housing developments, however he wanted to remind the committee and its guests that fares in regards to ridership only generate a small amount of

revenue towards the overall cost of operation. Mr. Dreeszen shared that other neighboring transit districts are moving towards lowering fares or eliminating them all together. This is because these transit districts have a dependable funding source such as a local property or business tax.

Committee Member MacKenzie offered a new proposal for Line 1 as only going as far as Sauvie Island for riders to catch Tri-Met connections into PDX. Other committee members agreed that with this alternative, while a reduction of service, would still provide options for CC Rider users to get to a connection point to a broader transit district.

Committee Round Table: Committee Member MacKenzie asked how soon before CC Rider can be put on the local ballot to set up a Transit District. Mr. Dreeszen explained that the best route is to petition the County Commissioners and for them to vote to get it on the ballot. Mr. Dreeszen believes it will be a challenge as this county has historically voted against individual taxes to fund public transit. Mr. Dreeszen suggested that it would be in the best interest of the committee to focus on making a legislative change. Mr. Dreeszen explained that approximately the same amount of money that Tri-Met is receiving from Columbia County residents by means of the Payroll Transit Tax is the same amount that would be generated if Columbia County passed a property tax ballot measure.

Adjourn: The meeting adjourned approximately 5:23 P.M.