

Cascades East Transit – Regional Public Transit Advisory Committee



Meeting Minutes

CET Regional Public Transit Advisory Committee (RPTAC)

February 21 from 1:30 – 3:30 at COIC offices (334 NE Hawthorne) in Bend

Attendees:

Kim Curley – Commute Options
Carol Fulkerson - COCA
Greg Sublet - Abilitree
Brooke Eldridge - Abilitree
Richard Ross – RPTAC Chair
Brian Douglass – Advocates for Disabled Americans, Inc.
Molly Taroli (on phone)

CET staff:

Michelle Rhoads
Derek Hofbauer
Jackson Lester

A quorum was not present at this meeting

CET Service Request – Brian Douglass

Mr. Douglass discussed how Advocates receive and process concerns about ADA issues. In early November 2017, Advocates received a concern from a person who believed that the CET call center was not meeting ADA requirements. Mr. Douglass contacted Ms. Rhoads of CET as a result of this concern. There was some resolution with adding service hours to the call center to 5 pm. Mr. Douglas believes that the call center should also be open on Sundays if Monday is a ride day. Mr. Douglas reviewed the ADA law which references paratransit telephone reservation services.

Ms. Rhoads noted that CET also conducted research regarding this complaint (including consulting with ADA community experts of the change to 5 pm) as a result. Ms. Rhoads is hopeful that CET's interpretation of the ADA law is correct that the deliverable is to make sure the next day ride service will get scheduled. Ms. Rhoads explained that after-hours customer service representatives check messages to schedule rides based on messages to ensure next day rides are scheduled. CET believes it is delivering the outcome that is described in the law. There is an open complaint with the Department of Justice and that process needs to be respected. Ms. Rhoads noted the agency will inform CET if it needs to do something different. CET's ADA service in Bend currently goes above and beyond ADA requirements by providing rides across the community and not just within the ¾ mile distance from Fixed Route. CET also offers dial-a-ride service on Sundays, as there is no fixed-route bus service on Sundays. To add extra

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hours to call center, it could potentially be at the expense of other service offerings due to finite resources.

Ms. Fulkerson asked a question for how the messages are scheduled. Ms. Rhoads noted there is a feedback loop that ensures people are getting rides scheduled based on the message left. ADA rides are the number one priority. Mr. Lester noted that we are all trying to achieve the same outcomes and that CET goes above and beyond to provide additional ADA services. Mr. Douglas said he still feels strongly that the call center should be open on Sundays.

Ms. Rhoads mentioned CET is open to working with Mr. Douglass and communities to ensure transit services are accessible. Ms. Rhoads informed the group that CET will be capturing this type of community input into the planning process in 2018 and 2019. Mr. Douglass said at this point the process needs to work from Washington D.C. and the Department of Justice will work with CET on this effort. Ms. Rhoads said it is important there is a process and CET will be willing participants to listen and learn. CET will bring information back to RPTAC to debrief from this review.

Chair Ross asked Mr. Douglass to talk about some of his experiences working on ADA issues. Mr. Douglass filed a complaint with U.S. Dept. of Justice in 2004 with the city. There were still some ADA concerns in the community, so ADA Inc. was formed to help move the process forward. He noted projects are on the organization's Facebook page. Third street canal is a current issue, as it needs a pedestrian pathway. The signal at 27th and Connors is another issue, as it needs to be signalized. There will be a 127 room hotel nearby and a new connection on Empire that merits attention. They are getting more input from the community to help identify solutions to the problems that exist. Community Huddle is another organization that will be attending those meetings.

Central Oregon Coalition for Access (COCA) – Carol Fulkerson

Carol Fulkerson formed COCA in 2004 as grass-roots volunteers. There was a public meeting where ADA advocates shared their voice on community accessibility topics. COCA holds monthly meetings for which CET staff attends. Ms. Fulkerson noted that CET has made great strides that had resulted in five years of public meetings to identify where money should be spent on ADA accessibility. COCA also works with other agencies and community partners. Networking is a great asset to their organization. There will always be advocacy work and that is why COCA does what they do. There is positive energy at meetings, which results in productive conversations around accessibility. Ms. Fulkerson noted there were two lawsuits that resulted in better ADA service. Only three bus stops were accessible for ADA during the initial fixed-route bus service in Bend. COCA needed user complaints so they scheduled a ride day that met at the senior center. Some drivers didn't know the correct process for boarding wheelchairs and safety was an issue. There has been considerable improvement in ADA compliance by CET.

CET staff are currently taking bus stop inventories to document bus stop amenities. Ms. Rhoads noted CET is going to install donated passenger shelters. Chair Ross noted CET needs to advertise their leadership and the strides CET has taken with ADA issues since CET began operating the system.

COIC Travel Training Program – Derek Hofbauer, Molly Taroli, Greg Sublet, Brook Eldridge

Mr. Hofbauer provided an overview of the Travel Training program. Ms. Taroli noted that PacificSource received a grant based on Quality Incentive Metrics (QIM) dollars and were able to use that funding to put resources back in the community. PacificSource is trying to improve access to health care. The intent

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of the program is to increase Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) utilization and inform members of this benefit. Travel Training was one area where the funding can help increase NEMT utilization. Curriculum was based on how participants can use the fixed route transit to make trips to medical appointments, which helps teach independence. Based on pre- and post-surveys, 60% of travel training participants said they felt safer and more confident using public transit. Another 60% said they will continue to ride transit. All participants (100%) said they had increased knowledge and understanding of the transit system. Abilitree staff used games as reinforcement to identifying bus stops. Incentives were also utilized to help spur participation.

One big lesson is that knowledge is power and the exposure of this program helps promote travel independence. Cohort one—which consisted of adults with developmental disabilities—was a big success story. One client was non-verbal and learned how to use an ipad to communicate with the bus driver. Four participants learned how to get to work riding the bus and one started using the bus for leisure trips. One learned how to get to the hospital to visit his mother and then get back home. This program gives participants a huge boost in independence. Ms. Curley asked specifically about the training. Ms. Eldridge noted each staff person had a participant for which to train and staff created pictures for everyone. Ms. Fulkerson asked how the individuals were selected. Mr. Sublet mentioned they talked with case managers and took recommendations. A class of students at Bend High School was selected by the special education teacher. The Mountain View school is next up and the Marshall school could benefit as well. Ms. Eldridge noted the CET bus drivers are fantastic to work with during the trainings.

Chair Ross indicated there is a nexus between housing and transportation, which dovetailed into the next agenda topic. Ms. Fulkerson added that a lot of people switched from paratransit to fixed route service after CET made bus stops more accessible.

Commute Options Partnerships – Kim Curley

Ms. Curley discussed Commute Options partnerships and programs. Ms. Curley identified a need for more people to walk and bike to the bus stop and noted that one-third of Oregonians can't or don't drive. The Safe Routes To School (SRTS) program teaches kids how to bike walk and roll to school. Commute Options staff taught students how to ride the bus as well. Many parents don't think their kids are safe walking and biking. Commute Options is launching a Friendly Driver program to teach people who drive for a living (e.g. freight, delivery, and bus drivers) best practices for sharing the road with people who walk and bike. Commute Options is soliciting groups of drivers this spring and summer. Slowing down and paying attention are key elements to safe driving. Ms. Curley indicated the Commute Options Partner program is also available and that COIC staff participate. At 45 days, participants can earn a \$20 gift card when they make and log trips using transportation options. The Drive Less Connect rideshare platform offers an ADA request for carpooling. Ms. Curley mentioned the Central Oregon Health Council is offering grants to community partners and noted that Commute Options is applying for walking school bus funding.

Transit Development Plan – Richard Ross (Chair)

Chair Ross talked about the Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF), which will help fund public transportation services using a payroll tax. On an annual basis, Deschutes, Crook, and Jefferson counties (plus the Warm Springs Tribe) will be collecting approximately 5 million dollars per year to fund

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transit. This is new money that isn't coming from special projects or special grant opportunities. Chair Ross noted that upcoming revisions of regional plans need to be taken seriously. CET has accomplished a number of projects from the previous plan such as fixed-route transit service. Chair Ross also noted there are issues with state roadways and that improvements made to the road system (the funding is coming through a new gas tax) will likely translate into better transit use. Chair Ross noted there is a need to develop a new plan that has good citizen engagement and asked the group what needs to be done within the process to better engage the public.

Mr. Lester noted there are 190,000 people in Central Oregon and many people will not use transit. There needs to be a balance of outreach and engagement with everyone, but it is important to talk with those people who are dependent on the system. Ms. Fulkerson mentioned how COCA achieves success with committees—the group solicits other peoples' opinions, which encourages them to attend meetings. They hold their regular meetings and steering committees during the same day, which helps with transportation logistics. Committee members need to feel some sense of ownership of what is on the agenda. COCA is just present in Deschutes County but the group wants to expand to involve Prineville and LaPine citizens. Ms. Curley noted that Redmond is a more central location to host meetings. Mr. Lester mentioned that CET needs to balance meetings with work schedules. Mr. Ross noted the decision-making process is important, as are innovative approaches to open houses. There is a need to provide a variety of methods to solicit input into the process and keep a committee moving towards a series of decisions. Chair Ross also noted there is sometimes too much reacting to things rather than building a plan. Ms. Fulkerson noted that promoting attendance at general meetings involved the steering committee going to City Hall or the Mayor to ask who is coming to the meeting to represent their agency. It then becomes a top-down directive. CET should have a similar directive and it is the same issue with major employers. It is important to ask the CEO or top manager who can represent their organization.

Mr. Hofbauer described the Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) advisory committee structure requirements. Ms. Rhoads noted that a collaborative effort is needed to help the committee evolve. Chair Ross noted that the plan effort is important for local people to envision what enhancements are needed for transit throughout local communities, especially since Central Oregon is such a large region. A question was asked for how best the committee can receive good engagement outside of Bend. Ms. Rhoads noted there needs to be some efficiency in the process.

Mr. Lester discussed potential future partnerships between Transportation Network Companies (TNCs), paratransit services, and fixed-route transit. He also noted the importance of understanding community values during the planning process.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:40 pm.