

REGIONAL PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 20 FROM 1:30-3:30 PM

Advisory Committee Members

Annie Marland
Denise La Buda (alternate)
Jordan Ohlde
Bob Bryant
Kim Curley
Kelsey Rook
Cora Ives
Dr. George Conway
Zach Bass
James Halliday
Brian Potwin
Casey Bergh

Members of the Public

Louis Capozzi
Abul Hassan
Gavin Leslie
Theresa Conley

Staff

Andrea Breault
Derek Hofbauer
Ashley Mohni
Tammy Baney
Abul Hassan

Introductions

Public comment

No public comments

Review and approval of 8/25/21 meeting minutes

The committee unanimously approved the meeting minutes.

MTM-Transit updates Abul Hassan, MTM-Transit

- MTM recently began working as the Bend transportation service contractor on September 1.
- MTM is experiencing an extreme driver shortage, which has caused services in Bend to return to Saturday levels of service during the weekdays.
- Retraining the labor that MTM is bringing in is increasingly challenging. People are coming on-board and then decide that they do not want to pursue their career after they start training.
- MTM has hired 8 drivers since they began in September.
- \$1,500 sign on bonus running since July but did not have as much traction as MTM hoped.
- Dial-A-Ride service will be prioritized and that service has not been impacted by the driver shortage.
- CET/COIC and MTM both have \$18 per hour wages for starting employees.
- Could STIF be used to increase wages even more? Yes, there is potential.
- School districts have the same issue and there could be potential collaboration to help solve some of these issues.

Oregon Transportation Plan Update and ODOT Housing and Transit Study, Theresa Conley, ODOT

- Public engagement opportunities for ODOT's upcoming planning initiatives:
 - Oregon Transportation Plan Update
 - Sets long term vision and policy framework for the statewide transit system across all modes for the next 20-25 years.
 - This is the umbrella plan for many more detailed mode and topic plans.
 - The last update occurred in 2006 and this update allows ODOT to reset the focus of the plan based on current trends.
 - Key drivers of change include social equity, climate change, population and labor force changes, industry composition trends, emerging transportation technologies, resiliency and disaster planning.
 - Housing and Transit Study
 - This work will implement and better integrate ODOT plans.
 - This study should help local agencies
 - Survey should be available later this year

Mobility Hub planning initiatives and timelines, Andrea Breault, CET

- CET and City of Bend included language for mobility hubs in planning documents.
- Mobility Hubs funded in part through STIF Discretionary grants, which have the longest expiration date.
- Discussions with developers, engineers, and property owners to identify potential locations for future mobility hubs.

- Ms. Breault is working closely with Ms. Allison Platt at the City of Bend regarding community discussions.
- An RFP will be released in the coming months for a contractor to project manage this effort.
- Currently discussing opportunities for CET to create future mobility hub infrastructure at the new Deschutes County Library location.
- The Bend MPO is working collaboratively with CET on a Mobility Hub Feasibility Study that is slated to kick off in December following the RPTAC meeting.
- The feasibility study does not need to be completed before progress moves forward with mobility hubs.
- Hawthorne Station parking lot redesign is nearly complete and an invitation to bid will be sent out during the winter. This redesign will move all of the buses off the street and onto the parking lot.
- How will mobility hubs and the Hawthorne redesign improve connections for older adults? The redesign will improve pedestrian safety.
- Could express service help improve connections? This one-seat ride currently exists for Community Connectors on Saturdays; however, because of complications with schedules and vehicle funding, it will be more complicated for weekday service. Ms. Breault is working with her Operations Manager to explore this “express bus” option.
- It just takes a simple lease agreement for CET to utilize a property as a small mobility hub. With funding for a large hub and a smaller hub allocated, funding for additional hubs is 2-4 years out. It is important to think creatively about how to leverage existing bus stops effectively as potential hubs.
- Would the outcome of this work look differently if CET was as transit district? The current funding is categorized and with expiration dates, which makes it difficult to think creatively (lack of flexibility). With funding as a transit district, there would be a larger pot of general fund dollars available to allow for broader thinking.

Veteran’s Health Care Transportation Service update, Ashley Mohni,CET

- Large gaps in transportation currently exist in Central Oregon for veterans to access healthcare services, especially those who live in rural areas. In order to reach doctor’s appointments, VA clinics, pharmacies, and other important healthcare destinations, many veterans must often rely on rides from family members and friends. For veterans who experience disabilities and require a mobility device, travelling can be especially difficult.
- While the current public transportation system covers a large portion of the region, many veterans living in rural areas are unable to access viable, ADA-compliant travel options—creating barriers to their access to essential medical services and leaving their families without affordable, reliable transportation choices.
- Compared to both the national and state averages, Central Oregon has a high percentage of veterans living in the region
- COVID-19 challenges to engagement initially, but lots of events already scheduled for fall
 - La Pine Veteran Resource Fair (October 22)
 - Jefferson County Veteran’s Day Cook Out (November 11)
 - Crook County Veteran Appreciation Dinner (November 17)
- This service is more flexible than the previous service, which only provided rides to VA-sanctioned appointments. The current service provides veterans with access to any healthcare-

related destinations, including but not limited to, physical and mental health services, pharmacies, dental care, vision/hearing specialists, physical therapy, and more.

- The vast majority of rides are for those in underserved rural areas of Central Oregon that cross county lines to access medical services.
- COVID-19 has increased provider costs for the service, which costs an estimated \$12,000 per month to operate—around \$70 per ride.
- Passage of HB 2139 creates a sustainable funding source through the Rural Veteran’s Transportation Program that allocates \$650,000 a year to transit service for veterans (the initial discretionary funding allocation was \$500,000). There will be a quick turnaround with this solicitation with the goal of funds to be disbursed by January 1, 2022 when HB2139 formally goes into effect.
- Another potential funding opportunity: ODVA’s Veteran Services Grant, which allocates nearly \$1 million in funds to support expanded and enhanced services for veterans (transit is an eligible project due on November 17); however, this funding source is more focused on service providers such as Veterans Service Offices.

ODOT STIF/STF Consolidation Rulemaking next steps, Derek Hofbauer, CET

- Oregon Transportation Commission endorsed the STF/STIF Consolidation Plan in November 2019
- Mr. Hofbauer and Ms. Baney both participated on the Rules Advisory Committee that met six times during the spring, summer, and fall of 2022.
- The RAC advised ODOT on revisions to rules needed to implement a consolidated STIF program to ensure a smooth transition to one state funded public transportation program
- RAC provided recommendations for developing equitable sub-allocation methods and to ensure historic STF funds would continue to support transit services geared toward older adults and individuals with disabilities
- Consolidation efforts will not drastically affect funding allocations for transit services in Central Oregon
- ODOT will develop guidance for program implementation to support Qualified Entities, public transportation service providers, and nonprofits.
- Merging of COIC’s STIF and STF committees will occur summer 2022.
- New STIF criteria has made it possible for nonprofit and for-profit transportation providers to apply for funding
- Projects that help people connect to transit also have the potential to get funded, such as bikeshare.

Committee member roundtable, All

- Ms. Curley shared that Deschutes County’s STIF Plan includes a vanpool subsidy program and it has been difficult to promote shared rides during COVID. Two this summer went from Redmond to Black Butte Ranch to the Deschutes National Forest Office in Deschutes County to Crescent. C
- Ms. LaBuda shared that transportation will become increasingly challenging for older adults during winter. What can be done in the volunteer space to help expand what STARS is doing outside of Sisters to help older adults.
- Ms. Marland shared that STARS is very successful and serves all of Sisters Country. It started in March of 2020 with a strong safety protocol and providing rides to COVID-vaccines. They are always looking for grants to support dispatch capacity.

- Mr. Potwin shared that Commute Options is recruiting board members and they just wrapped up the international walk and roll initiative.
- Mr. Ohlde shared that he is using his wheelchair to get to work because the Saturday schedule does provide the frequency he needs. He is looking for community members to join the Central Oregon Coalition for Access Steering Committee.
- Mr. Bergh shared that there was recently a big increase in students on campus. The Mobility Lab is ramping up to push out micro-mobility options, including electric bikes.
- Chair Bryant added that we can't achieve affordable housing without transportation options. While there is a lot of development in Central Oregon, the number of homes that are rental units and second homes is impacting neighborhoods and available housing.
- Mr. Capozzi shared that there may be substantial activity on bikeshare by summer. Many bikes may be donated by Portland, which will increase the number of available bikes.
- Mr. Leslie shared that there are new players in Bend that will help prove the value of micro-mobility. People are only willing to walk 5 minutes to a bus stop, so the Mobility Lab can geofence bus stops to determine the viability of micro-mobility options.
- Ms. Conley shared that a potential opportunity to support the recruitment for drivers is to work with the Department of Corrections for non-violent offenders to be trained for their CDL.

Adjourn