

Meeting Notes

Regional Public Transit Advisory Committee
May 21, 2013
1-3pm
CERC Redmond

Attendees:

Scott Aycock (COIC)
Molly Baker Ray (La Pine)
Joni Bramlett (ODOT)
Karen Friend (COIC)
Tamara Geiger (COIC)
Mike Lovely (Bend)
Jordan Ohlde (Bend)
Nikki Roemer (Bend)
Sarah Thompson (OSU Cascades)

Member Reports

Scott Aycock asked for member reports and updates. Molly Baker Ray announced that the Cascade Lakes 100 mile race was on August 2nd and 3rd. She explained that every year the Community Action Group (CAG) in La Pine receives \$100 for each volunteer they bring to work the race. At their board meeting on May 20 they decided to donate the proceeds to CET for service in La Pine. She explained that there was no limit on the number of volunteers and that volunteers signed up for different time slots. Nikki Roemer requested that Molly email the information out. Molly agreed and added that more information was available at cascadelakesrelay.com and through Robert, the President of CAG.

Jordan announced that he met the new ADA manager for the City of Bend at the Self Advocates as Leaders meeting. Scott asked how riders were dealing with the recent changes on Bend fixed-route 4/5/6. Jordan explained that it would take some time to get use to it but that people would. He also suggested having more opportunities for people to give feedback. Karen Friend suggested they hold regular open houses at Hawthorne Station to address rider concerns. Nikki suggested piggybacking on existing events, like Commute Options week. Karen and Scott explained that they would have a booth at Commute Options week and would discuss the idea of an every other month open house at Hawthorne.

Nikki announced that there was a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new bike share program in the ONDA building (50 SW Bond) on Friday, 5/24 at noon.

Sarah Thompson announced that she was still interested in building a facebook and twitter for CET. Scott explained that they had started an advertising campaign and the agency had created a facebook page. He added that he would ask them to give her administrator privileges.

Scott announced that effective May 20; he was the interim Community and Economic Development manager for COIC. This meant that he would no longer be staffing the PTAC committee but would remain involved with any local transit funding initiatives. Karen added that the interim Executive

Director of COIC, Andrew Spreadborough, was very committed to building and growing transit and she was excited to have an ED who would prioritize transit.

Draft Service Plan Review

Scott explained that the Draft Service Plan document and associated handouts laid out the basis for proposed service plans for the different communities. He added that Bend is not included in these plans because it is funded separately and its transit master plan is complete. However, he added that the regional system is somewhat built around the Bend fixed-route system because everything needed to be timed correctly for people to get around efficiently. The group agreed that the plans wouldn't make sense if they weren't convenient for riders. Karen added that the service plans have evolved based on feedback from public meetings and stakeholder meetings held in each community. Scott added that they were going to consider feedback from one more meeting for regional transit stakeholders (ex. NeighborImpact, St. Charles, COCC, etc). He and Karen asked for the RPTAC's suggestions for any additional regional group representatives who should be involved in the conversation.

Action Item: Scott to email out list of Regional Transit Stakeholders to the RPTAC for their input.

Scott added that CET was planning on conducting another survey about people's willingness to pay for transit in late summer. He added that the City of Bend was going to help fund the survey and was very supportive of the COIC/CET passing a ballot measure. Mike asked whether lottery funds could be tapped for transit. Karen explained that there are many competing interests but that lottery funds are used for the Connect Oregon program for transit and transportation infrastructure. She added; however, that they needed to forge ahead with local funding. She explained that she is a part of a strategic work group that has emphasized the need for local investment in transit.

Scott returned to the handout and explained that many of the proposed service changes were based on 2030 forecast travel demand and future market potential for inter- and intra-community trips. In response to questions, he added that the travel demand model had limitations based on when the data it used was collected. For example, old data showed Prineville's population declining (it was collected before Prineville began recovering and reinventing itself). Sarah Thompson added that the Prineville COCC campus was starting to offer more technology classes and getting grants to expand. Scott added that the plan would need to be updated frequently as services become less centralized in Bend.

Mike asked where and whether Park & Ride lots would be included in the plan. Scott explained that COIC was working with Klamath/Lake Counties and the Lower John Day Area to develop an ODOT Region 4 Park & Ride lot plan. He explained that CET was also considering adding stops on the Community Connector routes that are on the outskirts of town and could correspond with Park & Ride lots. He added that they couldn't add too many stops without the route being considered fixed-route service which would force CET to offer complementary dial-a-ride service along the entire corridor. Joni Bramlett explained that a good rule of thumb is 2-3 stops in town. Scott added that these additional stops could enhance local service and convenience for the intercommunity passenger at relatively no cost (some extra time and capital for new stops).

The group continued to review the Draft Service Plans. Scott explained the three time frames: short term (immediate, cost neutral changes or reduction of service), midterm (now-10 years from now, enhanced service that people are most likely going to want and support with local funding), and long term (10+ years, more conceptual general plan). He added that fixed-route service in Redmond was imminent.

Action Item: Change fixed route in RDM to feasible short term and change fixed-route to cost neutral in mid to long term in Prineville and Madras.

The group discussed how lack of convenience was the most common complaint with current dial-a-ride service and how the service plans would address it. The top three most requested changes (in surveys) were: same day rides, no reservations required and fixed-route service. Karen explained that Redmond would be transitioning to fixed-route and that they had worked on a modest flex-route system for Madras and Prineville to improve convenience. She explained that flex route is a hybrid between dial-a-ride and fixed-route.

The group asked about the Redmond Transit Hub (the library) and whether it would be getting improvements to make it more equipped for fixed-route service (like Hawthorne Station in Bend). Scott explained that they had approved grant funding but needed to get through a NEPA process (because the library is in a historic district) before they would receive the money. Joni asked whether the location could handle all of the vehicles. Karen answered yes, but that there were still issues with amenities (in particular, no restroom access after the library closed). Karen added that they would discuss with City of Redmond staff whether there was a better location for the transit center since the grant money won't cover major improvements (no restroom). Scott explained that the money would be used for sidewalks, shelters, bike corrals, signs, poles, trashcans, cameras and benches. Also that they would make the Bend Route 2 extension stops ADA compliant. Karen added that they may look at the next round of Connect Oregon for a purpose built solution for a transit hub in Redmond.

Jordan asked whether the Bend-RDM Community Connector always had a long break in the middle of the day. Karen explained that the midday shuttles had the lowest ridership and had never appeared as a priority. Scott added that additional midday runs were in the midterm service plans (3-10 years out). Scott suggested including the phone survey data in the next PowerPoint to show some additional community priorities.

Action Item: Add phone survey data to next presentation.

Other proposed service changes:

- Change Sisters-Redmond shuttle to Sisters-Bend. Sisters' community expressed their desire for more tourist-oriented service. Connection through RDM was barrier to riding.
- Road realignment at the Cascade Village Shopping Center in Bend could create a Park & Ride lot.
- Southbound Redmond-Bend Community Connector could have a stop at Cascade Village Shopping Center in the short term.
- Prineville-Redmond shuttle stop may move from the Les Schwab Park & Ride (difficult and unsafe location) to either Erickson's Sentry market and/or the old Ochoco Lumber mill site (set to become St. Charles).
- Extend Culver/Metolius-Madras Community Connector to the hospital/Safeway in Madras.
- Add a Bend-La Pine Community Connector shuttle stop at Wal-Mart.

Nikki asked about the changes that are designated "if time permits." Karen explained that these changes are considered based on connecting with the current schedule. For example, adding a stop at Wal-Mart would add time to the route and CET still needed to make sure it would be able to connect appropriately to the fixed-route system in Bend.

Redmond Service Plan

The group briefly reviewed the three proposed fixed-routes for Redmond. Karen explained that Route 12 was already in service (although long term funding is not in place) but this route was more of a “grouped demand response on a schedule.” She explained that it had been a means to group rides. She and Scott also reviewed the proposed Routes 13 and 14. They were unable to locate the data showing how many of the current DAR trips would be covered within ¼ or ½ mile of the proposed fixed-route. Looking at the map, they also demonstrated that the majority of multi-family housing complexes were covered by the three routes.

Action Item: Send the RPTAC the table showing the percentage of DAR trips that were within a ¼ and ½ mile radius of the proposed fixed-routes.

Madras and Prineville Service Plans

Scott and Karen explained that they had two options when approaching Madras and Prineville service plans: continue with DAR service or create a modest cost-neutral flex-route service. The flex-route service has designated stops and times but “flexes” to serve anyone who lives within a certain radius. Scott explained that there were designated times and the bus would hold at time points in order to stay “on schedule.” Also, it would have a capacity for “flexing” so that it would arrive at the correct time points. Nikki asked why choose flex route over a fixed route? Karen explained that offering fixed route requires equal complementary paratransit (e.g. one fixed route bus requires one paratransit bus). She explained that with flex route they are able to offer both services with just one vehicle. Karen added that they hope the flex route will alleviate the convenience burdens that were barriers for riders.

Scott explained that neither the Madras Aquatic Center nor Madras COCC was served by the flex-route because they were located in very inconvenient locations outside of town. He added that if they wanted service in the future, they could enter into an agreement and help pay for the higher cost. Mike added that Brightwood and Keith Manufacturing also were not covered. Karen explained that the flex-route served 96% of the current ridership. If those employers wanted service in the future then they could invest in the system. Joni also suggested that employers meet with Commute Options to discuss vanpool opportunities.

The proposed Prineville flex route did not have the same amazing coverage, but still had 83% of current DAR trips within ¼ mile of the proposed model. Karen explained that they would decide how much the system would flex – could choose ¼ mile or ½ mile (or a different amount). Molly suggested that a ½ mile flex could cover more employers. Karen responded that flexing a greater distance decreases the number of times the system can flex. Mike suggested adding the fairgrounds to the map.

Action Item: Change Service Plan Diagrams, error on Madras and Prineville.

Action Item: Add Crook County fairgrounds to the map of Prineville.

The group began to run out of time and so discussed holding a special PTAC meeting in June to comment on the service plans after they had reviewed them. Scott added that they would be invited to the regional stakeholder meeting and would be able to comment there as well. The group decided to hold a special meeting, Wednesday June 26th, 1:30-3:30pm at CERC Redmond.