

**CASCADES EAST RIDE CENTER**  
Advisory Committee Meeting  
Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council  
Headquarters Building, 334 NE Hawthorne Avenue, Bend, Oregon

**Minutes**  
March 25, 2015

Members Present

1. Bend Cab Company: Ben Nichols
2. Central Oregon MediTran: Chuck Daugherty
3. Crook County Public Health: Muriel DeLaVergne-Brown
4. DHS-CAF (Central Oregon): Therese Helton
5. Loving Lift Transport: Harry Hall
6. Pacific Source Health Plans: Molly Mardesich, **Vice-Chair**
7. St. Charles Health System: Lesley Srikantaiah
8. St. Charles Health System: McKenzie Decker, **Chair**

Members Excused

- Consumer: Tashina Jordan  
DHS-APD (Bend): Karren Ruesing  
Oregon Health Authority: Sarah Wetherson

Members Absent

- Bridges Health/Mosaic Medical: Amy Michel  
Full Access (Bend): Sarah Moore

Guests Present

Jill Sipes, Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS) –Aging & People with Disabilities (APD)

Staff Present

Melanie Ybarra, CERC (Cascades East Ride Center)/COIC (Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council)  
Judy Watts, COIC Marketing  
Cameron Prow, TYPE-*Write II*

**A. Welcome and Introductions**

Chair Decker called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m. Ms. Sipes joined the meeting by phone.

**B. Adoption of Minutes**

Ms. DeLaVergne-Brown requested a correction in the spelling of her last name from “DeLaVergine-Brown” to “DeLaVergne-Brown.”

**Motion 1** (8/0/0): Ms. Helton moved to accept the January 28, 2015, minutes as amended. Ms. Mardesich seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

**C. Brokerage Reports**

Ms. Ybarra reviewed selected ride statistics for January and February 2015 compared to November and December 2014 and for November-December 2013/January-February 2014 in Deschutes, Crook, and Jefferson Counties. The statistics provided at today’s meeting have been corrected from those e-mailed to members.

Total Calls Received: CET (public transit) calls were removed from statistics on January 1, 2015, so only CERC calls are shown. The Ride Center received over 7,000 calls in January and 6,316 in February 2015. Average Wait Time has gone down since removing CET calls.

Total Medicaid Rides Provided in January and February 2015 have been in the 6,000 range which is approximately 2,000 rides higher than the same period a year ago. Stretcher transports were slightly higher, but most of this increase was with ambulatory rides. Wheelchair rides have remained consistent with last year’s numbers.

Shared Rides have been in the 600s, though January 2015 dropped to 520 due to scheduling challenges in the Ride Center.

Eligible Clients were in the 30,000 range in November and December 2013. They increased to 46,816 and 49,158 (January and February 2014) when OHP (Oregon Health Plan)-Basic clients were upgraded to OHP-Plus in January 2014.

Cancellations have always been high for a variety of reasons (found another ride, changed appointment to another time, decided not to go) and clients don't always tell the Ride Center what their reasons are. Transport providers don't like cancellations as same-day cancellations, which happen a lot, reduces their scheduled work that day. However, the state and federal perspectives are that cancellations are good as the client is notifying CERC in advance the scheduled ride is not needed. This does save the transport provider from sending a vehicle and driver when none is needed, but leaves a hole in their schedule for the day for which they receive no compensation. No-show rates are low. The ride to a doctor visit, and the return ride home from the doctor visit, are counted as two separate rides.

No Rides Found were higher than usual in November and December 2014, partly due to weather conditions (snow). These numbers have gone back down to their normal levels since the Ride Center added additional capacity with existing providers.

Provider Complaints: The report has been revised to provide a clearer picture of how each provider is doing. A "Total Rides Provided" column shows the number of rides provided by each individual provider, facilitating the addition of a % Total Monthly Rides Provided column and a % of Complaints Received for the Month column. These additional columns provide information on how individual providers are doing related to complaints received during the month.

For example, Checker Cab provided 20% (1,344) of the rides in January 2015 but had 51% (21) of the complaints. Most of these complaints were for late and missed pickups, which Checker Cab attributed to its new dispatcher. CERC is working with Checker Cab to improve service and reduce complaints. They did decrease in February 2015 to 19% of the rides provided and 18% of the complaints.

Ms. Mardesich questioned the source of "safety" complaints. Ms. Ybarra replied that a majority of safety complaints are for drivers going too fast, which is subjective. For example, one rider felt no one should ever drive over 55 miles per hour and filed multiple complaints about a driver doing the freeway speed limit of 65 mph on trips to OHSU (Oregon Health Sciences University). Safety complaints also include a driver driving recklessly, around corners too fast, using a cell phone, etc.

Veterans Rides Provided, Ride Match Rides Provided, and # of CERC Volunteers are statistics which have been added to the Rides Summary Report.

Chair Decker asked when the ride program for veterans would "sunset" and how it was funded. Ms. Ybarra noted this program helps veterans get to medical appointments or to the van that transports them to the Veterans' Affairs center in Portland. The program is

dependent on a grant from the Oregon Department of Transportation and no end date is known at this time.

Program Compliment: Ms. Ybarra said CERC received a Medicaid Transportation Program compliment in February 2015 from a client who appreciated the value of having this service available. These types of program compliments are rare.

#### **D. Follow-Up from Prior Meeting**

1. No-Show Cards

Ms. Ybarra presented a sample door-hanger which providers can pick up at the Ride Center. Due to HIPAA regulations, the client's name cannot appear on the card, but drivers can use this card to encourage no-show clients to report why they missed their rides, which will hopefully discourage no-shows.

2. Return Envelopes

Ms. Ybarra presented a postage-paid return envelope (available at her office in the Ride Center) which clients can use when requesting travel reimbursement.

3. Ride Match Service

Ms. Ybarra reviewed Ride Match services. CERC received a grant for volunteer drivers to transport people who aren't Medicaid clients, and don't have any transportation resource available, to help meet their personal needs such as a ride to a disability evaluation appointment or to DHS, medical visits, grocery shopping, and other needs. She presented a flyer designed by Ms. Watts, the application, and summarized the program, rider criteria, how it works, instructions to request a ride, and the application process. She reminded members that the first priority for volunteer drivers is to provide Medicaid-eligible rides.

Members suggested recruiting volunteer drivers through posting information on the Ride Center's website, DHS bulletin boards, area chambers of commerce, [www.JustServe.org](http://www.JustServe.org), and [www.volunteerconnectnow.org](http://www.volunteerconnectnow.org).

#### **E. Brokerage Update**

1. OBSS Update – IT Support

Ms. Ybarra discussed the potential challenge CERC may face for IT (Information Technology) support of the Oregon Brokerage Scheduling System now that Tri-Met is no longer a brokerage. This situation has been going on for the last six months. On March 24, 2015, OHA notified Brokerages it had found someone to manage OBSS and was still working out how this will actually work. Independent from this, COIC has hired an IT person to maintain OBSS for the Ride Center. He has been able to make some system adjustments that CERC has wanted for a long time, and there are many more for him to work on.

2. Volunteer Driver Program Update

Ms. Ybarra said CERC's Volunteer Coordinator has been very active in attempting to recruit more volunteer drivers, attending service meetings and handing out applications, but has seen little success from his efforts. Volunteer drivers may choose reimbursement at the medical rate of 25¢ per mile or the business rate of 56¢ per mile.

Mr. Maiorano's prior experience as a fireman, EMT (Emergency Medical Technician), and volunteer coordinator has been helpful. His enthusiasm for this position is welcome, though his penchant for pranks has been less popular at the Ride Center than at his previous employment with a fire department.

3. New Provider – Updated After-Hours' Coverage

Ms. Ybarra discussed the challenge of managing capacity (existing providers vs. new providers) to assure current providers have enough rides to remain economically viable.

CERC recently brought on several new transportation providers and expanded services with some of its existing providers. The Ride Center now has two secure transport providers, one of which has a vehicle and team stationed in Bend. One of the new providers had approached her about providing wheelchair and ambulatory transports on an on-call basis. She will monitor statistics to see if same-day capacity denials decrease over the next few months with this added availability. Also under consideration is the addition of a small cab company, which would free up volunteer drivers for use with the Ride Match program. She has received a lot of interest lately from people (experienced and not, one from New Hampshire) who want to become Medicaid transportation providers.

Ms. DeLaVergne-Brown suggested the increased awareness of transportation needs might be due to conferences attended by community advisory councils.

Mr. Hall expressed concern about adding new providers when ride requests he's receiving are decreasing. He received 87 ride requests in January and 88 requests in February 2015. Currently, he is receiving only one wheelchair ride request and one ambulatory ride request per day. He reported scheduling challenges caused by being asked to provide rides to Bend (Deschutes County) and Madras (Jefferson County) at the same time. He feels returning the rides he can't provide results in a decrease in the number of ride requests he receives.

Mr. Hall also expressed concern about unused capacity and how rides are scheduled. When he gives back rides he cannot handle, he doesn't receive any more requests that day.

Mr. Nichols said the ride requests he is receiving have also been decreasing.

Mr. Daugherty said his ride numbers have been steady.

Ms. Ybarra explained how CERC schedules rides in response to requests from clients and facilities. The Ride Center is not allowed to manage workloads for a provider, since doing so would violate the contractual relationship between CERC and the provider, an independent contractor. She will research how the Ride Center is scheduling rides to Bend Cab and Loving Lift. She will also discuss the situation with the new IT person to see if there is a way to improve coordination without violating CERC's contractual relationships.

Members discussed challenges with the existing system of coordinating ride requests.

4. CERC Advisory Committee Changes  
Chair Decker announced she was resigning due to her leaving Central Oregon to work at a Willamette Valley hospital. Her last day at St. Charles Health System will be on May 1, 2015. Ms. Srikantaiah will become the new St. Charles representative.

Following discussion, Vice-Chair Mardesich volunteered to become the new chair, but requested that Chair Decker continue in that role for the rest of this meeting.

Chair Decker summarized the duties of the Vice-Chair.

Ms. Mardesich nominated Ms. Srikantaiah to serve as Vice-Chair. Ms. Srikantaiah agreed to serve. Mr. Daugherty, Ms. DeLaVergne-Brown, Ms. Decker, Mr. Hall, Ms. Helton, Ms. Mardesich, Mr. Nichols, and Ms. Srikantaiah voted unanimously in favor of Ms. Srikantaiah as Vice-Chair for the rest of 2015.

## **F. Service and Policy Challenges**

1. Handicapped Parking Permits for Volunteer Drivers

Ms. Ybarra reported CERC's Volunteer Coordinator (Eric Maiorano) was successful in obtaining handicapped parking permits for CERC's volunteer drivers. This new amenity makes it easier for some passengers to get in and out of medical facilities.

Chair Decker asked how drivers will be monitored to assure they are using these permits only when transporting CERC clients who need this level of service. Mr. Hall commented that Bend Police Department monitors all handicapped spaces and fines are \$500. Ms. Ybarra said the Ride Center will write procedures for the volunteers that will address how and when these permits may be utilized. She asked members to report if they see any inappropriate use of handicapped permits by CERC volunteer drivers. She identified a situation where some flexibility was needed in parking permit enforcement.

## **G. Other Business**

1. CERC Logo

Ms. Watts said she has been reviewing all materials, including the website and brochures, to see what needs to be updated. She presented the current logo and asked if members wanted to change it to something that better represents the services that CERC provides. Members suggested adding wheelchair and bus icons or using a spoked wheel with each spoke representing a different service. Following discussion, Ms. Watts agreed to research this topic further and provide sample logo ideas at a future meeting.

2. Fax Form to Request Medicaid Rides

Ms. Ybarra presented a Fax Ride Request form which can be used to request Medicaid rides. This form is not available on CERC's website, since her target user is nursing facilities and care homes. The ride request form must be faxed to CERC at least 48 hours before the ride is needed and confirmation will be faxed back.

3. Roundtable Reports

\* **Bend Cab Company:** Mr. Nichols reported nothing new.

\* **Bridges Health/Mosaic Medical:** No report.

- \* **Central Oregon MediTran:** Mr. Daugherty reported difficulty in billing rides through OBSS. Due to the need to check MapQuest for mileage, he is having to relog into OBSS frequently which is time-consuming. A 10-minute window before OBSS logs him out would be appreciated. It was asked why transportation providers have to log in their mileage when CERC is already calculating the mileage for each trip. Ms. Ybarra explained the current process was set up to provide checks and balances for the system. She will follow-up with COIC's IT person about the time-out interval.
- \* **Consumer:** No report.
- \* **Crook County Public Health:** Ms. DeLaVergne-Brown described her department's efforts to help HIV-positive clients in Crook, Deschutes, and Jefferson Counties get needed social, health, and transportation services. To stretch support service dollars from a federal program, she has been encouraging clients to utilize the public transit system, which is more cost effective than reimbursing them for driving their own vehicles.
- \* **DHS-APD:** No report.
- \* **DHS-CAF:** Ms. Helton reported nothing new.
- \* **Full Access:** No report.
- \* **Loving Lift:** Mr. Hall reported he is adding a new wheelchair van.
- \* **Oregon Health Authority:** No report.
- \* **Pacific Source Health Plans:** Ms. Mardesich requested suggestions on how to work with clients who won't provide reasons for their ride requests. Her attempts to reach out to one person who has been particularly difficult to work with have been unsuccessful; the last phone number she had for him has been disconnected. Ms. Ybarra said she would provide a newer phone number. She reminded members that the state requires the Ride Center to verify that clients are going to OHP eligible services before it can arrange the rides. Ms. DeLaVergne-Brown said she would research how specific a "reason" needs to be and other ways to ask this question to avoid compromising clients' confidentiality concerns. She noted that all staff providing medical services to clients must have HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) training every year. Ms. Ybarra said CERC is developing HIPAA training for staff and contract providers. The provider training will become part of the driver training program.
- \* **St. Charles Health System:** Ms. Decker said she has been working to educate social service and health providers about transportation options for Medicaid clients. Ms. Srikantiah stated that CERC was easy to use.
- \* **Veterans:** No representative – no report.

## H. Adjournment

The next meeting is scheduled for 1 p.m., Wednesday, May 27, 2015.

With no further business, Chair Decker adjourned the meeting at 2:43 p.m.