

Redmond Transit Stakeholder Meeting
May 22, 2013
2pm-4pm
Redmond City Hall

Attendees:

Joni Bramlett (ODOT)
Bill Duerden (City of Redmond, Public Works Director)
Katie Hammer (Redmond Area Park and Recreation District)
Therese Helton (DHS – Community Development)
Jim Kirkbride (St. Charles Redmond/Prineville)
Dean Lanouette (Redmond Urban Area Planning Commission)
Dennis Mulasky (Opportunity Foundation)
Chris Redgrave (COCC – Redmond)
Eric Sande (Redmond Chamber of Commerce)
Andrew Spreadborough (COIC)

Staff:

Scott Aycock, Karen Friend, and Tamara Geiger (Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council)
James Lewis (City of Redmond)

Introductions

The attendees introduced themselves and the organizations they represent. James opened the meeting and explained that Redmond was in the process of updating its Transit Master Plan (2009 TMP was never adopted) and would be looking at a variety of options to transition from Dial-A-Ride to fixed route service. He added that Scott Aycock and Karen Friend from COIC/CET were working closely with Nelson/Nygaard (NN) consultants to develop a Regional Transit Master Plan (RTMP). NN developed the draft service plans that the stakeholders would review and would become a part of the Redmond TMP and the RTMP. Scott added that the handout they emailed before the meeting had some errors that were corrected in the current edition of the handout. He encouraged everyone to recycle the old one and take a new version with corrected cost figures.

Scott reviewed COIC's role in transit service. He explained that COIC is a Council of Governments, which was created by the cities and counties to perform a wide variety of functions. Their role in transit began with assisting on planning, coordinating and pooling funding to help develop transit in the region. Federal dollars for general public transit were not coming into the region because transit services were all specialty – particularly for seniors. The Central Oregon Council on Aging offered the funds they used for senior buses to help develop a general public transit system. COIC did not anticipate operating transit but as time went on it became clear that they were in the best position. COIC formally opened Cascades East Transit (CET) in 2008 and Karen Friend is the Transportation Manager. He added that during the 2009 Redmond TMP process CET was very young and the system has developed greatly, especially in Redmond, over the past four years.

Current Service

Scott explained that CET was increasingly unable to serve the demand for transit service in Redmond with Dial A Ride and one brand new fixed route. For this reason, the short-term service plan for Redmond was to develop a humble fixed route service that would be cost neutral (including the mandatory complementary paratransit service within ¾ mile of stops and routes). Karen added that with a population of 26,000, Redmond had the same demand for rides that Bend had when it transitioned to fixed route (but with half the population). She added that when fixed-route service is added in a community, ridership often quadruples. Bill Duerden asked if the transition would affect the funding sources that would be available. Karen and Scott explained that no, all funding sources would remain the same. Scott also emphasized that transitioning to fixed-route was not mandatory, that there were pros and cons, and it was up to the community to decide whether they wanted fixed-route service.

Scott explained that the Redmond service plans were an important element of the Regional Transit Master Plan because CET needed service in different cities to work together so that people could move around conveniently and efficiently. He added that Redmond's service plan needed to fit Redmond's needs and would have to time to match up with Community Connector shuttles (almost all of them connect through Redmond) and Bend fixed-route. Also, COIC was looking toward developing long term stable local funding and Redmond would be important to securing that funding.

Currently, Redmond has three types of service:

1. Dial-A-Ride – Curb to curb service, requires a reservation a day in advance and software groups rides to most efficiently serve people. Currently overwhelmed by ride demand.
2. Local fixed route service (Route 12) – COCC wanted a more seamless connection between their Bend and Redmond campuses and Route 12 was developed to run on a fixed schedule to connect the Redmond library to the COCC/WorkSource, NeighborImpact, DHS, and the airport.
3. Community Connectors: Fixed schedule shuttles connect Madras-Redmond, Prineville-Redmond, Sisters-Redmond, and Bend-Redmond.

Scott and Karen went over the other services CET offers: DAR in all Cities except for fixed-route in Bend, Madras-Warm Springs shuttle that was not currently operational and depended on the tribes willingness to pay, and the special Mt. Bachelor and Ride the River services (self-funded, do not use any public money).

They explained that in March 2012, CET was forced to make major cuts because they had been experiencing revenue decline. They eliminated same-day rides (too expensive because couldn't use the service optimization software), they reduced the size of the DAR service areas to the UGB in October and they cut back on the number of buses on the road at any given time. Unfortunately, the reduction of service meant they had to turn down rides because they no longer had the capacity to serve the supply. Chris Redgrave added that he did not yet know how well Route 12 was being utilized since it hadn't been running long and began after most students had determined their spring schedules. Karen knew that it took some burden off of DAR. Scott added that Route 12 was provided through a partnership with COCC and the Partnership to End Poverty that was set to end on June 30, 2014. Chris seemed optimistic about the future of some sort of partnership maintaining that service beyond June 2014.

Scott continued that when CET cut service in October 2012, they eliminated the poorly performing Community Connector shuttle trips. The Bend-RDM shuttle was the highest performing and none of those routes were eliminated (although some connecting to other cities were eliminated). Jim Kirkbride asked whether they knew how many trips were connecting to the hospital complex in Redmond. Scott responded that they could happily provide him with that information.

Action Item: Connect with Jim Kirkbride about the CET trips connecting to the hospital complex.

Scott went over the survey results. He demonstrated that most respondents requested more convenient and flexible service. The most commonly desired service improvements were: same day rides, fixed route service, and to not have to make a reservation. Also, 82% of respondents answered that they would (or maybe would) ride fixed route service. Also, most riders ride 2-5 days/week, many would not have been able to make the trip without CET service, and the most sited trip purposes were work and school. Scott added that at the public meeting COIC held in Redmond in July 2012, the group talked a lot about integrating programs that were subsidized for transportation. However, he added, this required changing some state laws and was not realistic.

Scott discussed the intercity and intra-community commuting behavior figures that were projected to 2030. He explained that they expected Redmond to have three times the amount of intra-community travel by 2030. Within Redmond and Bend-Redmond commutes were identified as places to direct resources based on future market potential.

The DAR map, while difficult to read, demonstrated the major destinations for DAR in Redmond. According to Karen, these places were the senior center, medical community, Opportunity Foundation, Mill and Thrift store, Redmond Proficiency Academy, Wal-Mart and the Library (Hub) to make connections to Community Connector shuttles. They added that none of the proposed fixed-routes cover the Opportunity Foundation site in the short term but it would be covered by the complementary paratransit DAR service (and the majority of OFCO clients require that service). There were some questions about the paratransit service and whether ADA lifts on the

fixed-route bus would count. Karen explained that providing complementary ADA paratransit service was a federal regulation and required equivalent service (e.g. same service hours). Also, they would not even be able to fill the demand of fixed-route and ADA paratransit with one bus. Joni added that even in Portland provide door-to-door paratransit service for people who can't use fixed route.

Short Term Service Plan

Scott and Karen explained that frequently bus service follows a progression from DAR to flex-route to fixed route service. In the 2009 version of the Redmond TMP they proposed flex route (similar to fixed route but with a policy about deviating ¼ or ½ mile and booking reservations to offer a certain amount of curbside service); however, the demand is so high in Redmond that COIC and NN proposed to skip flex and move straight into fixed route. Karen added that Redmond is providing the same number of rides that Bend was when they converted to fixed route. Currently Bend provides half a million rides per year. The increased convenience of the system caused ridership to increase exponentially.

Scott explained that the short term plan (the next 1-3 years) was cost neutral and they had a mid-term plan (3-10 years out) that added services and cost. The short term plan was for 3 fixed routes: Routes 12, 13, and 14. These three routes covered the majority of the transit activity centers and multi-family housing units. Dean Lanouette pointed out that none of the routes covered the new high school. Scott responded that there were a lot of places locating on the periphery of cities that were very difficult to cost-effectively serve with transit. He related that CET encouraged those entities, school districts and others to support transit if they wanted transit service. He added that over time transit service becomes core infrastructure and that people and businesses start locating based on the availability of transit service. Katie Hammer asked why the senior center was not on a route. Scott explained that it was only two blocks from a fixed route and seniors that were handicapped would use paratransit curbside service.

Scott directed everyone to the proposed schedule that showed when the in-town service would connect to the Community Connector shuttles. He explained that there were 40 minute headways on the routes except for the slow times of day (based on current DAR demand) when there was an 80 minute headway.

Action Item: Correct third line on Route 12 schedule (Figure 2). Should read AM instead of PM.

Mid Term Service Plan

Scott explained that improvements in the midterm would rely on increased local funding for transit. They proposed to build out routes 15 and 16. Route 12 would become a part of the Community Connector shuttle, making the connections between Bend-Redmond-COCC campuses even faster. He explained that this would run on a 40 minute headway all day. Chris Redgrave supported the change to make connecting with COCC more efficient. He also asked about providing later service for COCC since there are many classes that end after 6pm. He suggested service until 8pm. Scott responded that later service was an option, depending on funding availability. James added that it was hard to request an increase in City of Redmond funding to make sure residents of other cities could travel to/from Redmond for class. Karen added that right now 60% of RDM-Bend shuttle ridership originates in Redmond and 40% originates in Bend. They all recognized that there was a balancing point when considering local versus regional needs. Scott reiterated that COIC does not have access to any additional grants to leverage. This means that any increase in service will have to be paid for 100% locally. Karen added that it was the intent of the federal government for the system to be more and more locally funded as they build. She explained that they provide some capital dollars but budgets for systems like TriMet include just a tiny percentage of federal grants.

Action Item: Correct 'Figure 6 Operating Cost' error. Currently reads \$1,132,000 with the addition of Saturday service.

They added that the short term service change to fixed route was cost neutral but would be accompanied by some capital costs for stops, ADA pads, shelters, signs, etc. and that they have placeholder grants in the Enhance It process for those capital improvements and a couple of new buses. Scott added that finding funds to cover those kinds of costs was always easier than covering operating costs.

They discussed Figure 5: Coverage of the System. They demonstrated that the three routes were able to cover 75% of current DAR trips within ¼ mile and 95% within ¾ mile (the ADA paratransit boundary). This means 5% of the people currently served by DAR will be outside of the boundary. James questioned whether those who

lived farther outside of town would expect service. Karen explained that they expect it when they have it and are very disgruntled when it is taken away.

Cost Estimates and Funding

The group discussed the cost estimates and funding options to support transit service in Redmond. Scott explained that CET's local funding sources had been diminishing and that they were looking toward a long term stable funding solution. The proposal to the City of Redmond was for \$40,000 for FY2014 and \$50,000 in FY15. James asked why the funding from COCC for Route 12 would end in June 2014. Chris explained that there were a few ways COCC could continue to fund that route: offer a bus pass alternative for all students (group pass), the Student Government could add a fee for everyone to automatically get the privilege to ride the bus, or the college itself may choose to apply General Fund dollars to benefit both students and staff.

Scott reviewed the funding mechanisms that were used by other systems: property tax measures (establishment of a transit district), a Utility Fee (established in Corvallis and made the system fare-less), and a sales tax (established in Ashland so that visitors also pay). He added that since Redmond was in compression, they could not add a property tax. Katie explained that if they created a permanent district then they would be able to "split the pie" with the other groups that use property taxes but a local option levy would not be funded. Joni added that one of the most comparable cities in ODOT Region 4 is Klamath Falls. They have a property tax that provides about \$1 million/year for service and the population they serve is 21,465 (Redmond's is 26,345). They were able to provide great transit service because of the tax.

They reviewed the current funding pie for Redmond DAR (costs \$644,000/year) including the cost per service hour of CET service at \$65. COIC staff anticipated the farebox recovery would increase with a dramatic increase in ridership after the change to fixed-route service. They explained that the cost per ride was: \$8-10 on DAR, \$3 on fixed route, and \$20 on paratransit. The fare was \$1.25 for DAR and so the additional \$8.75 was made up for with grant dollars. CET set a goal of 25% for their farebox recovery rate (currently its 10%).

James asked about the stakeholder support for the short term service plan. He explained that the City Council would want to hear their comments, feedback and support for the system on behalf of the entity they represent. Dean added that one goal was to reduce the vehicle traffic in and around the city, which the new fixed-route system should help with. Jim Kirkbride added that St. Charles is continuing to expand and it is likely that parking will reach its capacity. He could see them completely supporting the three fixed routes and ideally would prefer to see the midterm plan come on line as soon as possible. He added that they are working on service distribution and that Redmond would likely become a hub of service for MRI and some others. He was very interested in looking at the service distribution, how the patients were currently using transit service to access the hospital and at cost projections.

Scott asked for everyone's take on the service plans and suggestions for long term funding:

- Katie Hammer – She was supportive of the plan but had some concern about it properly serving the senior center and the swim center since they did not have enough parking. She agreed that taxes would probably have to be considered.
- Dennis Mulasky – He was in support and was happy that OFCO would continue to be served by paratransit DAR. He related that they had taken on a lot of transportation services themselves and the cost was very high.
- Therese Helton – She explained that DHS loves to have transportation, but has no money or funding suggestions.
- Karen Friend – She related that funding is ultimately the community's decision but that CET currently maintains too many funding sources and funding is unstable. She added that she hated denying rides and cutting service and hoped to get to a sustainable place. She felt that the service had proved itself as necessary and valuable.
- Joni Bramlett- The difference between Basin Transit in Klamath Falls and CET service is a tax base and the funding needed to come from the people.
- Chris Redgrave – He suggested later service and that Route 12 should become the Community Connector as soon as possible. He added that 120 minute headways are too long.
- Jim Kirkbride- He suggested that there was great potential for partners like the hospital to support the system.
- Andrew Spreadborough – He was encouraged by how far the system had come in a short time and encouraged the group to think longterm about funding.

- Dean Lanouette – He encouraged working with local businesses on creative advertising and that investing in transit is a pre-investment into attracting new businesses to the City. He added that it would be nice to have routes that serve the industrial areas to show businesses that Redmond was ready to serve them with transit if they locate there.
- James Lewis: He was encouraged by the plan and felt that the economy was on the rebound. He agreed that they needed a stable funding source, and that they would need to ‘sell’ transit politically as a basic service like police, fire, etc. Also if more people started using transit they could reduce the trips in certain areas and reduce the need for infrastructure improvements. Those are hard dollars that could be saved. They could work on calculating the money saved as a part of the Redmond TSP. Also, since so many of the services to the Redmond hub were coming from other cities, a regional taxing district would make the most sense.

Next Steps

Scott explained that the next step was to hold a regional transit stakeholder meeting including the leaders of community groups and organizations that work throughout the Central Oregon. In Redmond, they were planning to finalize the draft service plans and hand them off to city staff to go through their internal process, and bring them to the planning commission and council. He added that COIC would wait to adopt the Regional Transit Master Plan until the Redmond Transit Plan was completed.