

Meeting Notes

Regional Public Transit Advisory Committee

July 15, 2014

1:30pm-3:30pm

La Pine Parks and Recreation, 16405 1st Street La Pine

Attendees: Molly Baker Ray (La Pine), Nikki Roemmer (Bend), Scott Cooper (Redmond/Prineville), Jordan Ohlde (Bend Self Advocate)

Staff: Karen Friend (COIC), Tami Geiger (COIC)

Public Attendees: Joni Bramlett (ODOT Rail and Transit Division), Randy Moore (COIC/CET Driver), Cory Misley (City of La Pine), Rick Allen (City of La Pine), Kim Curley (Commute Options), Cheryl Horton (Citizen)

Scott Cooper called the meeting to order at 1:35p. He noted that the RPTAC did not have a quorum.

1. General Public Comment

There were no general public comments.

2. RPTAC Business

- **May 13 2014 Meeting Minutes**

The minutes were not approved because the RPTAC lacked a quorum.

- **Outcome of CET Fare Proposal**

Karen Friend announced that the CET Fare Proposal as presented by the RPTAC was approved by the COIC Board and went into effect on July 1st. COIC/CET has not received any negative feedback on the change. She added that they will be printing new single-page route guides and fare schedules in the next couple of weeks. She explained that they used to print a rider guide with all of the routes, but CET received feedback that they were not necessary. Rather, riders only wanted to see the routes they ride. Scott congratulated the RPTAC for bringing a proposal to the COIC Board that was accepted.

- **Route 12 - Airporter Update**

Karen explained that the Route 12 Airporter was offered through a partnership between COIC/CET, COCC and the Partnership to End Poverty that began in April 2013 and ended June 30 2014. She explained that the project was a fixed route between the Redmond transit center and the airport/COCC area in Redmond. However, the route was not successful because it was not supported by a full fixed-route system. Redmond residents formerly traveled to the COCC campus via door-to-door Dial-A-Ride service, but with the one fixed-route they were funneled to the Hub and had to transfer. It was seen as a loss of service, rather than a gain. As a result, it was underutilized. Cost was \$35/ride and left CET/COIC without data to recommend continuing funding. She explained that they presented the facts to the funding partners and they chose to stop funding the program.

Nikki Roemmer suggested pursuing a partnership with the tourism bureau to get people to use it as an Airport shuttle. Karen explained that CET's hours don't match when the majority of flights. The key to a

successful route was the supporting fixed route system around it, and CET/COIC is in ongoing conversation with the City of Redmond to try to implement fixed-route.

Action Item: Update on Redmond Fixed-Route for September meeting.

Scott asked what was the remaining connectivity to the airport? Karen answered it was reservation based Dial-A-Ride. Scott asked why there was an additional cost when the route was just a deviation of the existing Bend-Redmond route. Karen clarified that the deviation plan was a part of future service plans that would require a pulse change in Bend. It would mess up all of the connections and could not be implemented without changing the whole system. This was a separate bus/run. Nikki added that she wanted to keep pushing the desire for people to be able to come to Bend/Central Oregon without renting a car. Karen added that expanded hours (which would allow for better service to the airport) were one of the first changes CET was looking for with new service plans. Kim Curley commented that she received calls asking for bike-friendly transportation from Portland to come over the mountain.

Scott asked about the difference in noticing/including the RPTAC in service decision-making when service is a “pilot” versus a non-pilot. Karen responded that there wasn’t an option to continue the service, because the partners decided not to fund it anymore. Nikki pointed out that one option would have been to pursue other potential partners. Karen felt it was unlikely other partners would be interested with the high cost per ride. Scott asked what the outreach and promotion had been for the route. Karen explained that the promotion went through COCC. Nikki suggested that there should have been promotion with the airport. Karen agreed, but also shared that there had been conflict with the private taxi companies offering service to and from the airport not wanting transit to take away their customers. Also, the airport had not been willing to advertise CET.

Action Item: Share with Scott Aycock and Andrew Spreadborough at COIC that Scott Cooper, Kim Curley, and Joni Bramlett would like to be invited to future talks with the City of Redmond about expanding partnership, funding, and service.

Scott expressed his concern that cutting service and the high cost per ride indicated that CET did not have enough people to ride the current service. This would make it difficult to sell expanding service. Karen stated that the problem was the route needed to be a part of the system and it couldn’t work as a standalone. Scott stated his disappointment that the decision was made to stop the service without bringing it to the RPTAC for consultation. Nikki and Scott requested in the future that the RPTAC would be informed in advance to talk about the change and provide any potential suggestions for success. Nikki asked for the ridership numbers. Karen explained that there were generally one or two riders on each run. It was a considerable investment, offering about 4 hours of service per day.

- **New bus wraps**

Karen announced that the 21 buses that needed CET wraps would be wrapped within the next month using left over funds in the Bend budget. There will be two blue buses remaining, but they each have about 200,000 miles on them and it wouldn’t be an appropriate use of funds to paint.

- **Update on RPTAC Recruitment**

Tami Geiger shared that she had followed through with every Action Item for RPTAC membership recruitment from the last meeting. They had yet to receive any applications, but it was posted on the COIC and CET websites, facebook, and emailed to Sue Barker and Seth Johnson as requested. Seth had responded that he did have time to make the commitment at this point. The RPTAC suggested additional targeted outreach. Tami also shared that Sara Thompson had emailed and requested to leave

the board because she was unable to fill the time commitment. This leaves the RPTAC with two openings in Bend. Kim Curley expressed interest in applying.

Action Item: Tami to call Cities of Metolius and Culver and ask for potential suggestions; follow up with Sara and see if another person from OSU Cascades would be interested in participating; and contact St. Charles for an interested member.

Action Item: Kim Curley to ask Michelle, an active citizen who rides CET to BPAC meetings, if she would be interested. Also, to post board openings on the Volunteer Connect website.

The RPTAC had a conversation about St. Charles and their interest in engaging transit and other transportation options programs. Kim and Karen shared that they were working on a committee to help St. Charles deal with a parking shortage. They explained that the short term solution was to shuffle cars in the existing parking lots and enforce new rules, but they were hoping in the future to work on enhanced transit service and promotion of transportation options.

3. New Programs - Progress to Date

- **Volunteer Program**

Karen shared that CET/COIC had development materials for the volunteer program, including a policy (approved by the COIC board), packet, training materials, application, and background check. They were in the process of hiring a Volunteer Coordinator to develop additional materials, outreach to new volunteers, and transfer the existing DHS volunteers to the new system.

Scott asked if a volunteer could be the volunteer coordinator. Karen explained that the position was full time and a big job. It includes volunteer recruitment, screening, trainings, checking up, and applying for future funding (current funding is only for one year). Kim added that the volunteer program was pretty complicated, and there would be different levels of reimbursement for volunteers. Karen explained that the existing DHS volunteers, who only serve Medicaid or child welfare clients, are reimbursed the business rate of \$.56/mile. Those volunteers provide about 2,000 rides/month for the brokerage. CET recognized that they would lose those volunteers if they stopped offering the business rate, so have decided to offer volunteers three options: business rate reimbursement (\$.56/mile), volunteer rate reimbursement (\$.20/mile) or no reimbursement.

4. Outreach and Engagement

- **July 17th Transit Vision Event**
- **Outreach and Engagement Position - New Hire**

Tami presented COIC's Outreach and Engagement plan. She explained that a three-year initiative to improve public awareness and support of transit was starting this week with two transit visioning events. Todd Littman from Victoria BC would give a presentation to the public on Thursday evening, July 17th, 7p-9p at OSU Cascades to encourage public input on a vision for transit. This event will be followed up with a work session on Friday, July 18th, 10a-3p at the OSU Graduate Research Center.

Scott asked if this was just another opportunity for the public to request extended hours, weekend service, and the litany of other things they have requested in the past. Karen answered that the event was being held in response to the CET Funding Committee's findings and a statistically significant survey that concluded CET needed outreach and engagement to build awareness. Scott suggested that COIC/CET needed a strategic plan with dates and deadlines (ex. we will receive \$x funding by 'x' date). Karen answered that the COIC Board was working on a strategic plan for the entire organization. Scott suggested the organization plan had a separate, parallel process for CET with goals and benchmarks.

Rick Allen commented that COIC lacked a power base of leaders on the Board. He saw many more power brokers at the TRIP 97 meeting because those powers decided TRIP 97 was a priority. He believed transit would continue to suffer in Central Oregon until it, or COIC, elevated to a significant level of power. Scott agreed, but added that it was not elevating because there was no consequence to not providing funding. Rather, COIC always figured out how to keep service going. There need to be real consequences and deadlines for communities to provide funding or else they lose service. Rick added that causes need a champion and COIC staff cannot be the primary champions. Nikki agreed but added that champions frequently work for 10-40 years to get anything done. Scott stated that Eric King (Bend City Manager), Alan Unger (Deschutes County Commissioner), Jason Carr (NeighborImpact/Prineville City Councilor), Dave Rathbun (Mt. Bachelor) and Jon Stark (Redmond Economic Development) are all strong champions of transit.

Rick added that transit and TRIP97 may be in conflict with each other in the pursuit of funding. He felt it was highly unlikely the region would approve of two surcharges/taxes, and it appeared the power players were more interested in TRIP 97. Scott added that there was the other question of the potentially disappearing Federal Highway Trust Fund. Joni commented that there was a separate Transit Trust Fund from the highway/gas tax. Scott asked if the Highway Fund could potentially raid the Transit Fund. Joni responded that she doubted it would happen due to the political ramifications.

Rick Allen and Molly Baker Ray discussed the situation in La Pine. The City has a population of 1,600 and only collects \$225,000 in property tax for its total annual general fund budget. The request of \$5,000 for transit was substantial and was not approved by the Council; instead the Citizens Action Group and Deschutes County shared the cost. Many transit users in South County do not live within the City of La Pine. Rick added that he felt the outreach person could bring needed awareness and support to transit.

Scott C. asked what the next steps were for longer term service planning with associated costs. Karen explained that those were already developed as a part of the Regional Transit Master Plan and Bend Transit Master Plans. Scott stressed the need for the plans to be out for public consumption. Nikki asked if they had selected a funding source. Karen shared that the CET Funding Committee felt the most viable option was a property tax in 2018 after ample time for outreach and engagement. She added that COIC was in the process of working to change legislation so that it would be allowed to levy a property tax for transit operations. The Association of Oregon Counties and Oregon Transportation Authority are in support of the change.

Joni stated that marketing and outreach were critical to bringing public support up to about 60% to pass a measure. Kim stressed emphasizing the human interest stories, and how people can feel like they're making a difference in the community with an investment in transit. Rick added that they needed to have the sometimes uncomfortable discussion with Council's and whether they will come out in support of a property tax. Also, it will be important to get the rural communities support and not have them dragged along by Bend and Redmond.

5. Monthly Performance Report

Karen stated that some differences between 2013 and 2014 reports were due to improved reporting, Dial-A-Ride 'no shows' are no longer reported as rides. Scott noted that the farebox recovery improved by 13.8% to 14.2%. Karen added that she hoped the number would go up with rural Dial-A-Ride now that they've implemented the fare changes.

Joni asked why the Community Connectors have such a great farebox recovery. Karen explained that utilization is high and the fare is high. Kim asked if CET/Karen would prefer a better cost per ride or farebox recovery. Karen answered that farebox recovery reflects well because it demonstrates that users are paying into the service. Scott asked what historical peak ridership was for the system? Karen answered that she could provide that at the next meeting.

Action Item: Karen to gather historic peak ridership data for next meeting.

They discussed the 'Complaints' column and how CET has received multiple complaints on facebook. Scott asked why keep the facebook if it is only a forum for complaints. Kim and Nikki agreed that facebook will get better with the Outreach and Engagement person posting more consistently. Nikki emphasized that facebook was necessary to reach potential choice riders.

Molly asked for volunteers for the Cascade Lakes Relay and offered to send an email with additional information.

Meeting adjourned at 3:20pm.