

Meeting Notes

Regional Public Transit Advisory Committee

October 23, 2014

2:30-4:30p

COIC Hawthorne Conference Room, 334 NE Hawthorne Ave. Bend

Attendees: Molly Baker Ray (La Pine), Scott Cooper (Redmond/Prineville), Jordan Ohlde (Bend Self Advocate), Brent Yonkovich (Bend), Kim Curley (Commute Options)

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

Public Attendees: Joni Bramlett (ODOT Rail and Transit Division), Andrew Spreadborough (COIC Executive Director), Judy Watts (COIC Outreach and Engagement Administrator)

1. **General Public Comment**

There were no general public comments.

2. **RPTAC Business**

- July 15, 2015 Meeting Minutes

Joni Bramlett corrected the spelling of Scott Cooper's name. Molly Baker Ray motioned to approve the minutes as corrected, Jordan Ohlde seconded the motion. The minutes were approved.

- Introduce Judy Watts, COIC Outreach and Engagement Administrator

Judy Watts introduced herself to the RPTAC. She explained she came to Central Oregon from MetroPlan, the Metropolitan Planning Organization for Central Arkansas. Her short term projects were to work on existing Action Items, update and revise the rider guide, and assist with grant applications. She requested that the RPTAC email any ideas related to outreach and/or groups she should be meeting with. She stated that the long term goal of her outreach projects was to increase ridership.

Andrew Spreadborough added that Judy's position was created as an outcome of COIC's funding strategy work. All participants requested additional outreach and engagement with the community from CET/COIC. Judy's work would enhance the marketing efforts for the system to engage the community in the value of transit. He added that COIC/CET was positioning the system for a vote in the future for a dedicated funding source.

3. **Meissner Stop**

Tami Geiger presented the results of an online survey to gauge interest in a shuttle stop at the Meissner Nordic Park this winter (survey results are posted on the RPTAC webpage). 263 individuals completed the survey and the results indicated that there was high community interest and most would be willing to pay the Community Connector shuttle fare.

Karen Friend explained that this shuttle stop was proposed in a grant application, but COIC had been unsure whether there would be interest from ridership. Karen and Scott Aycock met with representatives from the Nordic ski club who were interested in the idea and suggested the proposed hours (especially important because they allow left-hand turns onto Century Dr.) and days to be surveyed. The primary area of potential contention was the fare. The Nordic Community and the survey results indicated that users going to Meissner would not be willing to pay the \$11 Round-Trip fare charged by Mt. Bachelor for the shuttle to the mountain; however, Mt. Bachelor would prefer to keep the fare the same. Mt. Bachelor currently pays for the entire cost of operations for Mountain Service; however, it is still a public service operated by CET. Mt. Bachelor also recognized that they committed to offer this service in a grant agreement that provided new buses for Mountain Service.

Andrew asked how the parking lot was maintained. Karen explained that ODOT had the contract to maintain and Tues/Thurs/Sat were the trail grooming days; however, it was not a high priority. The first bus in the morning would communicate the condition of the parking lot and if unavailable, a 'No Service' message would be posted on the Meissner Nordic club webpage and on a sandwich board at the Park & Ride Lot. Mt. Bachelor had also mentioned they may be able to do 'push' notifications to cell phones.

Joni added that there was a new Federal Land Access Program (FLAP) request for applications, and wondered if this shuttle could be included. Karen explained that Scott Aycock would work on the application, but they didn't want short-term operational funds and then be forced to stop service after the grant period. Also, the fare issue would need to be finessed in order to attract enough riders for the route to be successful. The understanding based on the survey results was that an \$11 RT fare would result in zero ridership. Scott Cooper suggested that if the tickets were offered for a reduced fare, they should include a message saying "This fare is paid for in part by Mt. Bachelor" or something similar.

Andrew added that the unique partnership between CET/COIC and Mt. Bachelor created an awkward situation with regard to fare negotiating. However, CET/COIC does not want to create a service that no one rides because it's not affordable. Karen added that she frequently receives feedback that the Mt. Bachelor fare is too high for riders going to the mountain. She added that the next step would be to have the conversation with Mt. Bachelor, but she wanted direction from the RPTAC about which fare to pursue.

The RPTAC agreed that CET/COIC should pursue the Community Connector fare (\$6.25 RT) to build additional support for CET and enhance the possibility of more choice riders.

4. Group Pass Service & Fare Changes

Karen explained that the Group Pass Program is offered to employers as an option to contract with CET and provide all of their employees with a CET bus pass. The recommended change decreased the cost of participation for businesses in Bend from \$5/employee per month to \$2.50/employee per month. CET wanted to encourage participation in the program in Bend because the fixed-route system has the capacity to support additional riders, participants would be new choice riders on the system, and Group Pass income is contracted so can be used as match for grant applications (unlike fare income). Right

now, only COIC and COCC participate in the program. Commute Options (Kim Curley and Jeff Monson) would take the lead on selling the program to their existing business partners, and felt more comfortable approaching them with the reduced cost. Brent Yonkovich asked what groups or companies would benefit. Kim Curley explained that Commute Options partners with over 80 businesses, including St. Charles, COCC, Bend Research, ODOT, and many more.

Scott Cooper expressed his concern that the change was only to the Bend fare, while the CET system is supposed to equitably serve the entire region. Karen Friend and Kim Curley explained that the Bend fixed-route system was the only service area where CET could guarantee service (the Dial-A-Ride systems are at or near capacity all of the time), and that Bend had the critical mass of businesses and Commute Options partners to start promoting the program. There was agreement that the program should be offered region-wide when CET has reached appropriate service levels in the rural communities. Molly added that it made sense to start somewhere, to get the “low hanging fruit” in Bend.

Scott asked why they thought the price was a deterrent for businesses to participate. Karen answered that they were not positive it was the price, but they felt more hopeful for interest in the program with a lower cost. This price could potentially be introductory and be raised in the future, once the value of the system has been proven to the businesses. Karen agreed that they will also work to develop an appropriate group pass for the Community Connector system.

Kim motioned to recommend the change to the group pass fare policy and Jordan seconded. Molly was in favor, Brent abstained and Scott opposed.

5. Warm Springs Contract

Karen explained that CET/COIC entered into contract to provide transit service in Warm Springs. She handed out the Warm Springs’ schedule (created when they ran their own transit service) and explained that the CET schedule would be similar but with time buffers to create a legal deviated fixed route. The service will start December 1st. Warm Springs will buy stop improvements in Warm Springs and Madras and upgrade buses with standard CET equipment (cameras, etc). Since Warm Springs is paying 100% of the cost, they are defining how they want their service (\$189,000 annual operation cost). Scott commented that the success of service in Warm Springs could be an incredible marketing tool to show the other communities what they can get for a certain amount of investment.

Molly motioned to recommend CET provides service as proposed in Warm Springs, Kim seconded. All were in favor.

6. Rural Expansion Prioritization

Karen explained that she wanted the RPTAC to make recommendations for rural service expansion. CET received STF dollars which would be used to add the following service hours per day: 3 in Prineville, 3 in Madras, 3 in Redmond, 1 in La Pine, and 2 hours per week in Sisters. They also have additional funds that could be used for service expansion, but she wanted feedback on where to start. Some potential

resources for decision making are the service plans in the Regional Transit Master Plan and feedback from drivers.

Scott suggested looking at the survey results and going down the list of desired improvements until reaching one that could be achieved within the current budget constraints. He added that this method would be defensible to anyone who asked how service improvements were selected. Karen agreed, but added that the surveys were completed separately - Community Connector riders were surveyed independent of rural Dial-A-Ride riders. She wondered how to determine which service should be favored for expansion. Scott suggested prioritizing based on serving the maximum number of riders, then the most vulnerable populations, then work to build support by enticing choice riders. Scott added that the money put into the Community Connector shuttles is the best investment with 26% farebox recovery. The PTAC visioned a new Community Connector shuttle that connected Prineville to the Redmond airport/COCC area then to the Bend medical center area and then to Hawthorne Station, twice per day.

Karen requested that if the RPTAC heard of any specific requests for types of service expansion, they should send them to her before the next RPTAC meeting.

7. Monthly Performance and Transportation Board Report

The RPTAC did not have any general comments on the Transportation Board Reports.

Karen passed around a flyer and copy of a letter from Andrew Spreadborough alerting OFCO and Abilitree clients and families that there would be a change in their schedule. She explained that the change was to schedule rides based on drop-off time, rather than pick up. The Dial-A-Ride bus that was serving those clients was out of compliance with FTA because people were requesting a certain bus and riding too long so that they could be on the bus with their friends. The changes were explained in the handouts and anyone could contact her for more information.

The next RPTAC meeting will be in November but will be a re-scheduled from the usual date and time to accommodate RPTAC member schedules.

The meeting adjourned at 4:30 pm.