

# Meeting Notes

## Regional Public Transit Advisory Committee

March 18, 2014

1:30-3:30pm

COIC Conference Room, 334 NE Hawthorne Ave. Bend

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### **Attendees:**

Elaine Henderson (Madras), Molly Baker Ray (La Pine), Anthony Allen (Bend), Sara Thompson (Bend), Jordan Ohlde (Bend), Joni Bramlett (ODOT)

**Staff:** Karen Friend (COIC), Tami Geiger (COIC), Scott Aycock (COIC)

Anthony Allen called the meeting to order at 1:32pm.

### **1. General Public Comment**

Anthony commented that Route 5 outbound from Hawthorne at 7:20am yesterday (March 17, 2014) did not arrive at the stop at Studio and Butler. He shared that seven Mountain View high schools students were stranded and CERC did not know anything about the whereabouts of the bus. The students arrived to school forty minutes late. Molly Baker Ray suggested that CET write to Mountain View to excuse them for arriving tardy. Karen Friend said she would look into it and added that CET is installing new fixed route software that will include a monitor in Hawthorne State with the scheduled and actual times of arrival for the buses. Google Transit will also be incorporated and presents the opportunity for web applications to be developed in the future.

Jordan Ohlde commented that it would be difficult for him to attend meetings if they were located in different cities in the region (as proposed). Karen suggested that they move the meeting times to work better with the bus schedule, and if he still couldn't make it they could use the conference call line. He added that he had considered quitting but thought that having a rider perspective on RPTAC was very important.

Jordan commented that today the two buses running the route to St. Charles were looped together so he had to wait 40 minutes to catch the bus back to Hawthorne. Karen apologized and remarked that Ronnie Burnett had been out of the office today, and so perhaps he was out taking care of the situation. Jordan also asked if it was possible to reduce some of the holes in service in Route 11. Karen explained the CET/COIC recently signed a Letter of Intent with OSU to provide transit service to the new campus and connect to COCC. This would require a regular schedule and shorter headways. It may result in the worst route becoming the best service in the system. OSU is planning to open in September 2015 with 1900 students. Jordan clarified that the service improvement would be when the campus opened and Karen confirmed. Tony recalled that Route 11 had holes in service to allow the driver to cover the breaks of the other drivers, and saved CET the cost of another full time driver.

Jordan asked if there was a way to combine Dial-A-Ride (DAR) rides so that people didn't have to be on the bus by themselves. Karen explained that their intent was always to combine as many rides as possible, but sometimes rider schedules made it impossible. Jordan asked if the call center would ever cancel a Dial-A-Ride without informing the rider. Karen responded no. He asked if they would ever tell a

rider that their ride was not guaranteed. Karen explained that if the rider was not disabled, but was a part of the additional population that utilizes DAR, they could be told that there may be a capacity issue. Jordan responded that it happened to a disabled person, and Karen asked that he give her more information outside of the meeting so she could do some research.

Tony commented that the CERC answering machine had a redundant recording informing the caller about the cancellation policy (once before you press 1 for English and another after you press 1). Karen thanked him for alerting her to the error.

Sara Thompson asked if there was a text-in option to CERC and Jordan asked if there was online scheduling. Karen explained that the technology exists but CET does not have it yet.

**Action Item:** Karen to follow up on Route 5 issue, DAR ride denial with Jordan, and CERC answering machine redundancy.

**Action Item:** Post RPTAC meeting notices at Hawthorne Station for additional public engagement.

### **RPTAC Business**

#### **a. January 21, 2014 Meeting Minutes**

Elaine motioned to accept the January 21, 2014 minutes. Jordan seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by consensus.

#### **b. Re-Visit 2014 Meeting Schedule**

The RPTAC decided to revise the 2014 meeting schedule to better accommodate riding transit and carpooling to meetings. They changed the location of the May 20, 2014 meeting in Redmond to the Redmond Library (transit hub) from 11:15a-1:15p. They also agreed to take a Bend DAR van to the July meeting in La Pine and September meeting in Madras.

**Action Item:** Reserve Redmond Library meeting room for May 20 and Bend DAR vans for July and September meetings.

Jordan motioned to accept the schedule changes. Molly seconded the motion. The changes were approved by consensus.

### **CET Service Update**

Karen announced that the new holiday schedule (for Monday holidays) had not resulted in significant complaints.

Jordan asked why the transit lobby closed at 2:30p on the weekends. Karen explained that they had an increasing number of security problems including fights, drinking, drug deals and a variety of criminal activity. CET now paid a security company \$3600 per month to maintain a respectful environment in the lobby. The lobby is only open from 10a-2p on the weekends because it's an opportunity for Greyhound passengers to buy tickets. Sara offered to ask John at the public library how they have dealt with after hours issues. She related that OSU staff had also discussed how late they would keep the academic buildings open.

Scott Aycock asked if CET planned to install more cameras. Karen responded that they would take advantage of the next grant opportunity to apply for cameras in areas that weren't currently covered. She explained that the police were good at responding but they didn't want to overwhelm them with calls and have them stop responding. Jordan asked that they would remove the one-day exclusion from the service. Karen explained that they were in the process of removing it. Molly explained that they could cite anyone for trespassing and the case would end up at the District Attorney's office. Karen explained that the general policy was to exclude (trespass) them from the lobby facility on the first offense and then exclude them from the entire service (riding the bus) after the second offense. Sara suggested referring them to counseling services at OSU Cascades where students hold open hours.

Jordan asked if the market could stay open later. Karen explained that the longer they were open, the higher costs and more security they needed to have. The staff person used to provide passive security; however, now a security guard was required to protect the staff person. The group discussed other strategies to provide security. They agreed that there was a shortage of warm places for people to hang out in town. They discussed recruiting "Friends of the Bus" volunteers (like in Portland) that provide information, help riders navigate, and provide another layer of passive security. Karen related that the City of Bend had a volunteer coordinator and they had discussed starting an "Adopt-A-Stop" program to recruit neighbors to help with snow removal and keep the stop clear. Jordan suggested that they hand out bus passes to the people who hang out (many are there because they don't have the money for a ticket). However, the RPTAC agreed that would not be the best strategy. Scott suggested that Jordan be a resource for the "Friends of the Bus" volunteers to help introduce them to the transit center.

**Action Item:** Contact the City of Bend volunteer coordinator to start developing a "Friends of the Bus" program.

### **CET Farebox Recovery**

Karen explained that the RPTAC began discussing the fare policy primarily because the general public wanted riders to pay their "fair share." However, it was difficult because any increase in fares would result in a significant loss of riders. Since rural funding is driven by rides and miles provided, a loss in riders would result in a loss of funds. Also, the Bend fixed-route system is not running at capacity and CET wanted to recruit more riders.

Scott added that it could take 1-3 years to recover from a fare increase. The City of Sandy went from a fare-less system to a \$1 general fare and \$.50 fare for seniors and persons with disabilities. This resulted in a 40% loss in ridership. COIC/CET is developing a three year initiative to raise the profile of the transit system and recruit more riders and transit supporters. The fare study they completed indicated that most fares were consistent with their peers; however, the rural Dial A Ride fares were the most inconsistent.

Karen directed the RPTAC's attention to the fare policy they worked on in the January meeting. She reminded them that the policy was supposed to be simple, but it had become extremely complicated when they tried to account for distance equity. She handed out the January Monthly Management Report which demonstrated that the rural DAR, which serves the public (not just senior and disabled like in Bend) should have a higher farebox recovery. She handed out a new proposed fare schedule that recommended a \$.25 increase in rural DAR and eliminated DAR monthly passes (maintained the 10 ride punch card).

Tony commented that it seemed like they were shooting blind when they didn't have a farebox recovery target. Karen explained that some states required a 15% recovery rate and that was the general target for CET. Tony asked what they were going to do about the different distances traveled by Community Connectors. Karen reminded that the distance system made the fare policy too complicated. Tony asked if they had individual farebox recovery rates for the different Community Connector routes. Karen explained that they were grouped as a multi-zone fare and so were not split out. Tony responded that since the Community Connector had a very high farebox recovery rate, there was little sense in over-complicating the fares. He added that the system was a regional unit and it was their job to serve the riders.

Karen explained that if the RPTAC was in general agreement with the new policy, they would start circulating it to the public for input. The RPTAC would consider the input and vote to accept or reject the new policy at their May meeting in Redmond. She added that COIC would set up for the public to email comments to Tami Geiger.

The next change she proposed to the policy was the elimination of the Private Non-Profit Agency discount for DAR and multi-zone fares. She proposed that they continue to offer the discount for fixed-route products in a single zone only. This change should help increase farebox recovery in the rural zones. The RPTAC agreed that sounded like a good idea.

Molly expressed that with the next meeting in Redmond, it was unlikely that members of the La Pine community would attend. Karen offered to hold a public meeting in La Pine to give them the opportunity to comment.

**Action Item:** Molly, Tami and Karen to set up a public meeting in La Pine for comment.

**Action Items:** RPTAC to work on recruiting additional representatives from the other cities (missing Sisters, Metolius/Culver).

**Action Item:** COIC to circulate the new fare policy for public comment.

### **Monthly Performance and Transportation Board Report**

Karen handed out graphs to accompany the annual review of monthly transportation reports. The graphs demonstrated that the Community Connector routes had become more efficient as a result of the service cuts in 2013. Karen also pointed out that many of the troughs in the graph for Bend Fixed Route corresponded to months with fewer days and therefore fewer service hours. She added that they were working to restore some service hours with additional Special Transportation Funds that had been approved by the legislature. Jefferson and Crook County both approved \$30,000 in funds to restore an hour a day to transit service. Deschutes County would receive \$180,000 and CET applied for some funds to restore service in Redmond and La Pine but they had not yet been approved.

Molly asked about progress on recruiting larger businesses in the region to contribute to the system to help serve their employees. Karen explained that they were in talks with OSU Cascades, COCC, and St. Charles.

The meeting adjourned at 3:15pm.