

AGENDA - TRANSIT COMMITTEE (TC) MEETING #4

Date: October 28, 2020 – 10:30 AM to 12:00 PM

Location: Zoom [meeting link](#)

Passcode: 519716

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Webinar ID: 860 3391 8340

Meeting Purpose

- Develop recommendations for transit priorities to share with Board of County Commissioners

TIME	SUBJECT	LEAD PRESENTER	OBJECTIVES
10:30	Welcome and Introductions	Chair Harrington	
10:35	Agenda Review	Chris Deffebach, Washington County	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Confirm understanding of objectives
10:40	Public Comment	Chair Harrington	
10:50	Public Comment Survey Results	Dyami Valentine, Washington County	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Summarize public input• Discuss implications for transit priorities
11:05	Revenue forecast update	Chris Deffebach, Washington County	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clarify revenue assumptions
11:10	Draft transit priorities	Dyami Valentine, Washington County John Whitman, Ride Connection, Inc	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Solicit input on transit priorities for next biennium and 5-year transit• Develop recommendations on transit priorities for Board consideration
11:55	Next Steps	Chris Deffebach, Washington County	
12:00	Adjourn		



**WASHINGTON COUNTY TRANSIT COMMITTEE #3
MEETING SUMMARY
OCTOBER 14, 2020, 10:30-12:00 PM
Zoom Virtual Meeting**

Transit Committee Members in attendance

Kathryn Harrington, Washington County, Chair
Jolynn Becker, City of Banks
Dwight Brashear, SMART
Annadiana Johnson, Rider Representative
Teri Lenahan, City of North Plains
Brenda Martin, TriMet

Rebecca Miller, Washington County
Deanna Palm, Hillsboro Chamber of Commerce
MaryAnn Potter, Centro Cultural
Mahesh Udata, Rider Representative
Julie Wilcke, Ride Connection

Other Attendees

Melissa De Lyser, Washington County
Chris Deffebach, Washington County
Reza Farhoodi, Washington County
Jay Hunt, Washington County resident

Tom Mills, TriMet
Julie Sosnovske, Washington County
Dyami Valentine, Washington County
John Whitman, Ride Connection

Welcome and Introductions

Chair Kathryn Harrington opened the meeting at approximately 10:30 AM.

Agenda Review

Chris Deffebach reviewed the agenda and described the purpose of the meeting to share input from the public from the online survey to date and other public outreach efforts and to get input from committee members on priorities for the next biennium. The committee's feedback along with the survey results would be used to shape the proposals the next biennium of the Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund, as well as longer-term (5-year) priorities in the County's Transit Development Plan.

She noted that the revenue forecast for the next biennium is still uncertain due to declines in payroll tax collection stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, and that it would be important to build flexibility into the County's proposal. Members will be asked to prioritize project and program in the event of a funding shortfall.

Public Comment Online Survey – Results to Date

Dyami Valentine summarized the public outreach efforts and results to date. As of Oct. 12, the County has received 86 survey responses (including 5 in Spanish). The survey asked about transit habits prior to COVID, with most respondents stating that they used transit less than 1-3 times per month and that they were neutral or likely to use transit in the future. When asked what would help encourage them to ride transit more frequently, expanded service coverage was the top priority, followed closely by more frequent service, more direct or express service, and improving safety and access to transit, including stop enhancements. The survey also asked respondents about destinations that they may want to access using transit, with connections to the TriMet system being the highest priority, followed by access to rural parks and recreational opportunities. He listed the outreach methods that the County had employed so far and added that staff were interested in hearing other suggestions from members for gathering public input.

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Rebecca Miller provided high-level findings from a recent survey conducted by the County Division of Aging and Veteran Services, which was sent directly to homebound populations and had a relatively high response rate. The survey showed that accessible transportation is the second highest identified need, and that over 15 percent of people age 65-85 would like information about accessible transportation. The survey also found that respondents use their family and friends, online resources and health care provider as the most reliable sources of information, which is useful for the County to disseminate information about transportation services. Rebecca also shared that that more weekend service and access to parks were identified as high priorities in interviews conducted by DAVS. She suggested translating survey materials into different languages in order to market services to diverse populations.

Member questions or comments:

- One member asked if there were any physical methods of outreach being employed, such as postcards handed out to riders. Melissa De Lyser responded that the County does not want to encourage hand-to-hand contact from a public health perspective, however, there were Facebook media buys in both English and Spanish that have made a measurable difference in the number of responses. John Whitman added that Ride Connection did send out emails to riders and connected with followers on social media but had otherwise not handed out materials directly.

Rural Service Needs and Alternatives

John Whitman provided an overview of transit needs in the rural area identified through rider surveys and other stakeholder outreach. This includes bus stop improvements, including ADA-compliant landing pads, shelters, benches, seats, signage and wayfinding elements. Other infrastructure and capital needs include trip planning software, new vehicles and electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

John then reviewed planned service improvements underway with available funding. Ride Connection has available STIF funding to expand WestLink service with two additional midday runs. There is community support to add weekend service and more frequent weekday service and modify the route in the future (such as serving Orenco instead of Hillsboro TC).

The rural workforce shuttle is being developed for service starting this fall/winter as a weekday pilot program. Ride Connection is working with local partners such as Centro Cultural to potentially serve 5-6 employers in the rural area that are located in Gaston and south of Forest Grove/ Hillsboro, with an opportunity to expand to other areas (such as north of Forest Grove/Hillsboro) and add weekend service after the pilot period.

John described new marketing materials being developed to promote existing services more widely to the public, as the general lack of awareness is a key issue.

Ride Connection is identifying opportunities for better interregional coordination between service providers in the rural area (including Tillamook, Columbia and Yamhill counties) by adding stops and new services, as well as coordinating schedules and stop locations for more seamless transfers between service providers. While it's unclear if these providers will be expanding Washington County service in the short-term due to COVID, Ride Connection wants to be prepared to make improvements.

Ride Connection is working on new trip planning tools to help riders plan their journeys, especially if it involves connecting between multiple providers. Other service needs include access to rural recreations

such as Banks-Vernonia Trail, Chehalem Ridge, Stub Stewart Park and agritourism destinations, as well as expanding demand-response services in the rural area.

Dyami Valentine discussed the proposed rural service alternatives for the upcoming biennium (Fiscal Years 2022 and 2023) and longer-term timeframe. He showed the existing FY 21 rural budget which included the two additional runs for WestLink (\$98,000), expanding demand response (\$103,000), interregional coordination (\$23,500), planning for the rural workforce shuttle (\$50,000), marketing (\$15,000) and administration costs (\$10,000) for a total of \$299,500. Julie Wilcke noted that this is a projection and that the amounts could change based on how much revenue is collected, adding that Ride Connection receives federal 5311 funds for the WestLink and demand response which are not reflected in the budget shown. In addition, Ride Connection received a technical assistance grant from Metro to work on customer-facing materials. Currently, materials are produced in English and Spanish, but they are looking to expand to other languages.

Dyami then shared alternative programs and projects, and asked committee members for feedback on priorities for the two-year FY 22-23 biennium and/or the five-year Transit Development Plan. The alternatives included expanding WestLink and demand response; interregional coordination; continuing work on the rural workforce shuttle; capital and infrastructure improvements; marketing; and a program bucket for new pilot planning and feasibility with a few examples shown including serving rural parks and recreation, agritourism destinations, and Farm Direct Nutrition Program sites. The committee will be asked to formally prioritize the projects at the next meeting.

Julie Wilcke mentioned that there are patterns emerging in the demand response trips and predicted that demand response riders may gravitate towards the deviated fixed route services that run more frequently and have predictable schedules. This would allow Ride Connection to increase funding for shuttle services in the future as public awareness grows.

Member questions or comments:

- The Chair asked if the proposed marketing budget would be enough to advertise the planned WestLink service expansion. John Whitman responded that they anticipated to have sufficient funding for a marketing campaign, noting that Ride Connection will also be working on a Strategic Marketing Plan. Marketing is anticipated to be a recurring expense and could be used when developing the web-based trip planner. Julie suggested increasing the marketing budget allocation in the future if funds are available.
- The Chair referenced the Columbia Gorge Express operated by ODOT which is a popular service for accessing recreational destinations and asked if ODOT was planning on anything similar for beach access. Chris responded that ODOT operates the NorthWest POINT intercity bus connecting Portland and Washington County with Astoria, Seaside and Cannon Beach. Tillamook County also has its own service to Tillamook, which has plans to increase service Ride Connection currently subsidizes fares on the Tillamook Wave so that passengers traveling between Portland and Banks or North Plains can ride for free. Julie Wilcke added that Ride Connection is interested in expanding partnerships as part of interregional coordination activities in order to create more seamless transfers between services, whether it includes adding/relocating stops, increasing frequency or adjusting schedules. Other opportunities for collaboration include adding midday service on the WAVE and adding a stop in North Plains along the Columbia County Rider's Vernonia-Willow Creek route, which have both been identified as high priorities among riders of those systems.

- The Chair asked if a web-based planner would be able to work with different devices (computers, phones, tablets, etc.), and if support for different languages would be provided. John responded that TriMet's and NW Connector's trip planners both operate seamlessly across devices, and any system that Ride Connection uses (either developed in-house or participating in an existing system) would have this capability (community connectors already have stop information in Google Maps). However, there may be some technical complexity involved so either TriMet or NW Connector would ultimately have to make the decision to integrate Ride Connection into their existing trip planners. Language support will also be a priority for the new trip planner.
- The Chair asked about the fare structure for the rural workforce shuttle and whether it may cause a potential barrier to access, suggesting that compatibility with TriMet's Hop Farepass system would be useful. John responded that the rural shuttle will be free like all of Ride Connection's service. However, fare reciprocity was an issue when transferring between services that would need to be worked on moving forward as part of interregional coordination.
- Several members expressed support for marketing as a continuous, ongoing expense to promote awareness and help orient prospective users to the services available.
- Several members expressed support for coordinating schedules between service providers to expand the reach of transit as a near-term priority.
- Two members expressed support the rural workforce shuttle to connect workers to rural employment. The Chair noted that the County should be prepared to adjust the service as needed in the following biennium (FY 24-25) based on the results of the pilot.
- One member prioritized maintaining and expanding basic service to support households that were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic but liked the idea of implementing a new shuttle pilot for recreation as part of a longer-term need.
- One member promoted a web-based planner as an important resource for riders.
- One attendee supported adding trips to WestLink, continuing to develop the rural workforce shuttle, and for investing in interregional coordination, noting that the County's survey showed that connection to TriMet's system is a high priority.

Regional Coordination Service Needs and Alternatives

Julie Wilcke discussed regional coordination service needs and priorities. The budget for FY 21 was \$1.168,000 million. In the next biennium, the TriMet HB 2017 Transit Advisory Committee has recommended maintaining the current funding levels. Ride Connection will maintain the existing and planned services (including Grovelink expansion this winter and Tualatin Shuttle expansion next year) while seeking additional revenue to fund future service improvements.

Dyami Valentine provided an overview of the longer-term service alternatives to include in the TDP. These include expanding existing shuttles to serve more of Tualatin and Cornelius, as well as adding new shuttles in the South Beaverton/Cooper Mountain/Progress Ridge area, Metzger/Washington Square/Tigard area, South Hillsboro and North Bethany. For the service expansion, feasibility studies will be needed.

Member questions or comments:

- The Chair suggested looking at planned affordable housing sites in the County funded by Metro bond as a guide to help plan future service in the urban area.
- One member asked if there was plan for near-term service in the South Cooper Mountain area. Brenda Martin responded that TriMet will be extending Line 56 to Progress Ridge and South Cooper Mountain, although it has been delayed to FY 23 due to the declining payroll tax revenues. South Hillsboro will also be receiving service in FY 22 as part of the Line 47 reroute. TriMet has been in

discussions with Ride Connection about how to serve the South Cooper Mountain area in the meantime. Dyami added that the County is working on a shuttle feasibility study for north-south service in this area.

Statewide Transportation Improvement Program Discretionary Grants

Dyami Valentine described the County's proposals for two STIF Discretionary grants. The first proposal is to provide shuttle stop improvements based on a community connector stop inventory completed by Ride Connection (total cost: \$325,000). The second proposal is to initiate a shuttle pilot in collaboration with Clackamas County, SMART and local cities that will connect Bridgeport Park & Ride and downtown Tualatin with the Stafford area, where there will be a transfer available to a new express shuttle operated by SMART that will provide service along I-205 between Wilsonville and Clackamas Town Center (total cost: \$862,650).

Ride Connection Service Enhancement Outreach

John Whitman described an upcoming online survey to solicit public input on the planned improvements on the WestLink, GroveLink and demand response services. Chris added that TriMet will be seeking public input on their next STIF Plan as well in October.

Public Comment

There was one public comment from a resident in unincorporated Washington County (near the City of Portland boundary) who expressed concern about the lack of transit connections between SW Portland and Washington County, and felt that more TriMet service in that part of the county was necessary to increase ridership. He also expressed concern about the lack of safe infrastructure to access transit stops in his neighborhood.

Next Steps

The next Transit Committee meeting is scheduled for October 28, where members will review public comments from the survey and provide input on the FY22-23 rural and regional coordination transit proposals. The committee will be asked to recommend project priorities for the FY22-23 biennium and longer-term priorities to the Washington County Board of Commissioners. The Board of County Commissioners will consider the committee's recommendations and on whether to approve the plan for submission to TriMet in November for approval by the HB2017 Advisory Committee and the TriMet Board and incorporated into the next Tri-County Public Transportation Improvement Plan (PTIP). The Oregon Transportation Commission will then approve the PTIP in early 2021.

Member questions or comments:

- The Chair asked if survey results could be provided to the committee in advance of the October 28 meeting. Melissa de Lyser responded that the survey is scheduled to close at 5pm on October 23 and that she would write a high-level summary with demographic information that could be distributed to members ahead of the meeting.
- One member informed the committee that the Division of Aging and Veteran Services Advisory Council will be meeting on November 19 to review the County's five-year strategic plan for DAVS, which will include discussions on accessible transportation, and that participation from committee members would be welcomed.

Adjournment

The Chair adjourned the meeting at approximately 12:00 p.m.