

**Public Transportation Advisory Committee**  
**Meeting Notes**  
**May 8, 2006**

**Date:** Monday, May 8, 2006  
Time: 1:00 p.m. – 4:20 p.m.

**Location:** 2775 19<sup>th</sup> St SE, Salem, OR

**Members Present:**

Bob Lowry, Chair, Oregon Passenger Rail Advisory Committee (OPRAC)  
Frank Synoground, Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)  
Claire Potter, TriMet  
John Wenzholz, Assoc. of Counties (AOC)  
Terry Parker, Lane Transit District (LTD)  
Sally Lawson, Oregon Association of Area Agencies on Aging and Disabilities (O4AD)  
Debbie Wert, Department of Human Services (DHS)  
Jeff Hamm, Salem Area Mass Transit District (SAMTD)  
Margaret Yochem, Oregon Transit Association (OTA)  
John Helm, Governor's Commission on Senior Services

**Interested Persons Present:**

None.

**Members Absent:**

Ernie Palmer, Rural Transit Service  
Raye Miles, Private for Profit Transportation Service Provider  
Terry Thompson, Association of Counties (AOC)  
Janice Wilson, Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC)  
Dennis Dick, Intercity Bus Service Provider  
Martin Loring, Public Transit Division Administrator

**ODOT Public Transit Staff Present:**

Dinah Van Der Hyde, Operations Manager  
Jean Palmateer, Special Transportation Program Manager  
Sherrin Coleman, Planning Manager  
Adam Torgerson, Public Affairs Specialist  
Ivan Presnyy, Transportation Analyst  
PJ Pippin, Executive Support

**Guest Speakers:**

None.

## ITEM A

### 1:10 p.m. **Welcome, Introductions, Items of Interest**

Chairperson Lowry called the meeting to order. Welcome and introductions were made. Mr. Presnyy was introduced as a new staff member, replacing Rita Rogerson as the Transportation Analyst for the Public Transit Division.

### 1:15 p.m. **Items of Interest**

Approval of Meeting Notes: A motion was made (Mr. Hamm), seconded (Ms. Parker), and unanimously passed to approve the March 13, 2006 and April 10, 2006 Meeting Notes with the addition of adding Ms. Wert to the roster of both meetings, adding Ms. Potter and Ms. Yochem to the April 10 meeting, and correcting the spelling of Mr. Lowry's name in the April Meeting Notes.

Training and Events Announcements: Ms. Palmateer reviewed current training opportunities:

- The training for coordinated transportation planning has been scheduled for June 29 & 30 in Eugene. This training conference is in coordination with Mobility USA and Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC). It includes nine communities. For those communities that cannot participate in the June training, there will be another training session on July 21, in Salem. The purpose of this meeting is to share ideas for creating and improving access to public transit. The goal is for participants to leave the meeting understanding more about access issues and with a general outline of how their communities will proceed toward developing a plan that promotes full accessibility.

## ITEM B

### 1:30 p.m. **Administrator's Report**

Mr. Torgerson presented the Administrator's Report in Administrator Loring's absence. A recent review of the Grant County Transportation District revealed regulatory compliance issues. ODOT internal auditors have been sent to review their operations. The local newspaper covered the story and subsequently two board members and the director resigned. ODOT will work with the District to bring them into compliance, and would only terminate funding as an absolute last resort. Ms.

Palmateer then described the extent of the problems found during the site review.

PTAC Members discussed the frequency of monitoring activities. Ms. Palmateer noted that training and technical assistance are extremely important, and Public Transit would like to increase related program activity. Ms. Palmateer noted that a comprehensive review of drug & alcohol policies and procedures will occur shortly as ODOT has hired a consultant to perform this activity. Ms. Palmateer noted that the monitoring aspect needs to be more proactive instead of reactive, and Public Transit Division is requesting additional staffing accordingly.

Mr. Wenholz observed that if there is a problem, the small vendor knows it right away. Ms. Parker noted that problems may not surface immediately; many times it is a call from the community that brings the issue to the forefront. Mr. Wenholz said that rural providers do not want someone to micro-manage them from miles away. If the provider has a problem, the State needs to tell them and they will fix it. Ms. Palmateer brought up some of the questions that arose when the Division explored possible outcomes of the Grant County situation. How would the Division proceed if the transit board were left without a quorum? What is ODOT's role in ensuring transportation services continue? The Division may do follow up work on these questions.

Mr. Torgerson discussed the annual Oregon Transit Association (OTA) conference that will be held October 10-12 in Seaside. Public Transit Division and the OTA are accepting suggestions for classes and presentations that would be helpful to transit professionals. Suggestions should be submitted to Ms. Coleman.

Mr. Torgerson also explained that the final interviews for the fiscal analyst position in Public Transit will be held on Wednesday, May 10. This will be the second and, most likely, the final step in the interview process.

Mr. Torgerson discussed the Division budget. He explained that ODOT has approved part of Public Transit Division's request for an increase in staffing levels. Public Transit requested 3.5 Full Time Equivalent (FTEs) but was permitted 1 additional FTE through the Agency Request Budget process and hopefully through the Legislature. Public Transit will request permission to hire a limited duration position to help implement new program requirements and then seek to create the position permanently through the legislative budget process.

Mr. Torgerson gave an update on OPTIS – Oregon Public Transit Information System. The contract for OPTIS is pending in the Department of Justice for approval. The contract should be signed soon. The application is web-based, so providers will be able to submit payment requests, reports, and access grant accounting information through OPTIS. The Division requests volunteers to assist development and ensure the system will meet provider needs. PTAC members were very encouraged about the direct entry features of the new system.

### ITEM C

#### 1:30 p.m. **Action Item: Connect Oregon Program**

PTAC completed the ranking process for the 17 ConnectOregon project applications related to public transportation. The final task was to determine a “Bucket” value in terms of the programs statutory considerations for each project as defined below:

Bucket 1 meets all statutory considerations

Bucket 2 meets the first three statutory considerations

Bucket 3 meets one of the statutory considerations

Bucket 4 meets none of the statutory considerations

Public Transit staff recommended a bucket assignment for each project by using PTAC’S consideration ranking from the April 10, 2006 meeting. If PTAC ranked a project from high (1) through moderate (3) for a consideration, it was perceived to meet the test of achieving that strategic consideration.

There was a brief discussion on the Eugene Depot/Passenger Access project to see if it meets the criteria for reducing costs for Oregon businesses.

Public Transit staff recommended reconsidering Eugene’s Depot project ranking to take into account congestion mitigation as reducing costs for Oregon businesses. This recommendation would place the Eugene project into Bucket 1. Several committee members did not feel that this project really reduced congestion but agreed that the project will enhance safety and parking.

Ms. Potter identified Lane/BRT Pioneer Parkway Bus Rapid Transit Project as a project with possible statewide significance. Mr. Lowry and Mr. Hamm agreed that the Medford Intermodal Transit Center project could have possible statewide significance with the

relocation of the Greyhound station (having connections to the rest of the country).

The Committee questioned whether a project could be considered in both the regional funding pool as well as the statewide funding pool. Ms. Parker questioned whether real projects with statewide impact would be immediately construction-ready. There are detailed requirements, including planning, environmental, land acquisition, and other processes that could delay a project with statewide significance.

Public Transit Division received notice that the project in Eastern Oregon, in La Grande, has been withdrawn and will no longer be part of the Connect Oregon project.

LTD/BRT and the Gresham project is in bucket one according to PTAC ratings; the consultant's evaluation of construction readiness may place it in the second bucket. The Committee disagreed with the consultant's findings.

**A MOTION was made by Ms. Parker to confirm the April 10 ratings of the PTAC bucket method. The Motion was seconded by Ms. Potter and unanimously approved by Committee.**

2:50 p.m. BREAK

#### **ITEM D**

3:00 p.m. **Action Item: SAFETEA-LU Implementation; Recommendation for Training, Technical Assistance, and Local Planning Grants,**

At the last PTAC meeting, the Committee supported an implementation design for meeting the new SAFETEA-LU funding eligibility requirements. The requirements for local area planning must be met for the "Elderly and Individuals with Disabilities Capital" and "Pilot" Programs (Sec. 5310), "New Freedom" Program (Sec. 5315), "Jobs Access and Reverse Commute" Program (JARC Sec. 5317) so that ODOT can bring these program resources to Oregon.

Ms. Palmateer discussed the recommendation that was distributed to the Committee.

Ms. Parker asked who needs to the ratify plan. The Transit agency within the MPO must collaborate with the MPOs. At a minimum,

there should be a resolution that recognizes this plan. FTA needs to offer requirements and guidance. This information will be published by the end of June or beginning of July.

A MOTION was made by Ms. Potter for to approve the staff recommendation. The Motion was seconded by Ms. Wert and the Committee unanimously approved the Motion.

#### ITEM E

3:30 p.m.

#### **Discussion Item: 2007-09 Discretionary Program; Recommendations for Developing the “Transit Innovations” Category of Projects**

Ms. Van Der Hyde introduced a draft work plan and discussed the need to develop a process where we can bring those innovations and the support for the program together. The goal is to share with the Committee how Public Transit is approaching this problem.

The OTC has challenged the Division to come up with public transit innovations and directed at least \$2 million short term towards this goal. In the longer term, we have \$3 million STP transfer monies beginning in 2008-11. Ms. Van Der Hyde said that we are tasked to focus on our capability in delivering the programs and to make improvements that maximize strengthening public transportation (such as alternative fuels) We can also think about other types of improvements we could do, like rural bus pull-outs; more technology in urban areas, park and ride, etc.

Ms. Van Der Hyde discussed the sources of information that we might go to for innovation ideas. We can contact experts in the profession through contacts with FTA programs, our own experts and universities. Public Transit needs help from the Committee to sift through the information.

There was a lively discussion about the proposal which was generally considered overly complicated and needed more work. Members were concerned that the proposal for “Transit Innovations” seemed too bureaucrat, take too long to complete, and were concerned that staff had drafted it without PTAC subcommittee input. Ms. Van Der Hyde explained that this was discussion draft #1 only and just a starting place. In the following discussion Claire Potter, Terry Parker, Jeff Hamm, Debbie Wert, John Wenholtz and Chair Lowry expressed various comments and suggestions that were summarized to help in developing a next

draft. The following points are summarized from the discussion to inform subcommittee work:

- Continue to refer to the previous committee suggestions on innovation. (January and March PTAC)
- Balance need for innovations with the need for basic infrastructure support.
- Remember that Innovation is not just “high tech”, but needs to include sustainable, low cost, low tech concepts as well.
- Innovation is not a “cure all” for basic lack of infrastructure.
- Be especially mindful of the demographic shift, and that meeting the mandates to serve the elderly and individuals with disabilities will need innovative solutions if public transit is to survive and grow.
- The unavoidable, primary cost to public transit is getting a bus on the road and hiring workers.
- PTAC might recommend that simply putting together a draft RFP to transit agencies and nonprofits who are seeking innovations in transportation (training, finance, technology) is a simpler way to approach the innovation project.
- The plan for innovations should be simple, not overly involved.
- The PTAC would like to get a proposal for innovation to OTC by July 06.

The subcommittee on transit innovations (Claire Potter, Terry Parker, Jeff Hamm and John Wenholtz) will meet at 10 am on June 5, in Portland, at the ODOT Region 1 office. This subcommittee will derive a process and implementation details for the Innovations project.

Ms. Wert asked a question about who represents PTAC at OTC? Ms. Van Der Hyde responded that Administrator Loring is our Division representative and Commissioner Janice Wilson is our Commission representative and liaison.

Ms Van Der Hyde advised members that the OTC is interested in a presentation of public transportation information at one of the fall OTC meetings. There was discussion about the need for transit issues to be presented to the OTC. Members wish to communicate that transit agencies are struggling with demands of population, fuel costs. Members feel the OTC needs to better understand how important transit is and how it affects people’s lives. Mr. Hamm reflected that we need to take fresh ideas and important items to the OTC and present this information in a way that does not waste

their time. Staff and the committee will be working together on ideas for a good presentation or workshop.

Mr. Wenholz said that he had concerns when PTAC was set up that “frontier” Oregon would not be well represented, but now he is comfortable that the big players are looking out for the little guys. He appreciates that the larger providers look after the interests of rural Oregon.

There was discussion about trying to place the Innovations Project proposal on the July OTC calendar. Public Transit will pursue placement on the OTC agenda for the July 19 Salem meeting but noted that it may be difficult to secure time on the agenda. OTC will meet in Grants Pass on August 23 and 24.

The next PTAC meeting will be July 10.

#### **ITEM F**

4:15 p.m. **Information Item: Transit Input to the “Critical Transportation Needs” Discussion**

Committee did not have time to discuss Item F. It will be put on the June PTAC agenda for discussion at that time.

#### **ITEM G**

4:20 p.m. **Wrap-up and Adjourn**

The Committee adjourned at 4:20 p.m.