



SUNSET EMPIRE TRANSPORTATION DISTRICT
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SUNSET EMPIRE TRANSPORTATION DISTRICT
PUBLIC HEARING
MINUTES
October 5, 2011 2:00 PM
ASTORIA TRANSIT CENTER, 900 MARINE DRIVE, ASTORIA, OR 97103

1. CALL TO ORDER

Executive Director Jay Flint called the meeting to order at 2:00 PM

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

3. ROUTE CHANGE PROPOSAL

Process and Overview:

Executive Director, Jay Flint gave a brief explanation about the Public Hearing process. Executive Director Flint explained that he would be giving an introduction to the proposed route change and then Operation Manager, Scott Earls and Mobility Coordinator Lis Pietila will explain the proposed changes in more detail. After that we will begin the public comment period. Executive Director Flint also explained that the Public Comment period will allow each person that has signed up on the log to speak for 3 minutes but there will not be a question and answer period or any time for debate. Executive Director Flint introduced SETD Board members, Rae Goforth and Vic Kee and said they would be listening to the comments today and they and the rest of the board will receive minutes from today's hearing. Minutes from the meeting will be posted on the website and copies will be available to the public as well.

Executive Director Flint said that today's meeting is part of the public comment period for the proposed route change which began on September 12th and goes through October 12th.

He explained that the public will have an opportunity to make comments until October 12th. On October 13th there will be a special Senior and Disabled Advisory Committee meeting. The committee will take into consideration the proposed changes and all of the comments collected and they will provide their recommendations to the board on the proposed changes. On October 27th the SETD board will take all of the comments and recommendations and deliberate the changes and make the final decision about the proposed route changes. The approved route changes will take effect on November 1st.

Executive Director Flint explained that there are three proposed route changes. The Route 10 near Columbia Memorial Hospital. The Route 101 proposed changes that will involve flipping the afternoon routes because the 2 hour route in the middle of the day is very difficult to keep on time. It is constantly 15 to 20 minutes late.

Executive Director Flint said that our goal is to get the routes to better reflect the traffic times, and that his goal is to have a predictable and accurate transit system that operates on time. Executive Director Flint said the other proposed change is bringing service back to Route 30. This Route 30 will also go through Warrenton and Hammond four times a day and it will go to Westport twice a day. This comes from a Grant that Columbia County received and that we also are a recipient of. Executive Director Flint said he was pleased to announce that the Route 30 returns connectivity between Columbia, Clatsop, Tillamook and Pacific Counties. Executive Director Flint also said that he wants everyone to know that SETD is working on other plans beyond the current route changes. He has been meeting with Cannon Beach and they are keeping their weekend shuttle service through the winter and there are plans to add a couple of routes to Seaside to the Cannon Beach weekend shuttle as well. This is a great new addition that we will start in November.

Executive Director Flint commented that in regards to looking further down the road, the service level that we had a year ago is probably not going to be achievable. When we look at our numbers and how our operations were, we were operating at a level higher than we could handle. Through the cuts and financial problems we have gone below the level of what the service area is. My goal is to try and return us to a balanced point where we can sustainably have a transit system with greater capacity than it has today and be able to operate into the future. There is no money to add service back during this fiscal year unless it is through

partnerships or with grants. Our goal is to bring service back as fast as we can but at a level that is sustainable going forward.

Route 30

Scott Earls, Operations Manager clarified that the Route 30 is not a change, it is an addition. Scott said that the route will start in Warrenton then going out through Hammond, back to Warrenton and Fred Meyer and on to Astoria and then out to Westport. The proposed Route 30 will operate Monday through Friday and go to Westport twice a day and will make 4 trips through Warrenton and Hammond each day. Scott added that this will allow riders to go to Fred Meyer or Astoria and return home again within approximately 2 hours.

Lis Pietila, Mobility Coordinator pointed out that the proposed Route 30 will be different from the previous Route 30 because it will be a commuter type service which is from point to point so there will not be Paratransit services available on this route. Lis explained that SETD does offer the travel training program to teach those with disabilities or mobility needs the alternatives and options for accessing public transportation.

Route 10

Scott explained that there are very few changes. The City of Astoria has purchased bus shelters which they have placed on both sides of Exchange Street just west of Columbia Memorial Hospital. The proposed change has the East bound Route 10 turning right off of Commercial onto 16th street and then turning left onto Exchange Street. This allows the bus when going east to be in a better position to stop at the new shelter. This change would eliminate turning on 20th street to go to Exchange Street. We are asking that these new shelters be the primary go to bus stop for all of the medical facilities in that area. The returning west bound Route 10 will return down Exchange Street following the same route as before and stopping at the new shelter on the north side of the street. Scott said there are also a couple of time changes that allow time for the bus to be fueled on 1230 route to Warrenton.

Lis Pietila added that we have informed the medical community of the reason for the proposed route changes near the hospital so that they can inform their patients and clients.

Route 101

Scott said the proposed changes for Route 101 will allow more time for the mid afternoon route at 3:00 pm. Scott pointed out that due to the afternoon traffic it is impossible for the bus to make it to Cannon Beach and back in 2 hours so the proposed route change would switch the last route of the day which is a 3 hour route with the 2 hour route that leaves at 3:00 pm. This change will more closely match what the bus is capable of doing. The bus leaving at 3:00 pm would become a 3 hour fixed route loop to Cannon Beach. The last bus would leave the Transit Center at 6:00 pm would then become a 2 hour commuter route. Scott said that he has added a 15 minute allowance on the 3:00 pm route to allow for the connection with the Tillamook bus at the Tolovana stop. Scott said that our drivers make every effort to call the Tillamook bus and alert them if our bus is running behind schedule. Executive Director Flint added that we are part of the North West Transit Alliance (NWTA) which is a consortium of 5 districts that are trying to align the routes up and down the coast. He said there are consultants evaluating the route schedules between these districts, so based on their recommendations there may be changes in the future to help connections to the other districts. Executive Director Flint is on the steering committee of the NWTA and participates in weekly meetings. Scott said there used to be a 5 minute wait at Providence hospital but he has removed that wait time to use during the route.

4. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Sherry Wright, 289 Anchor, Warrenton Oregon-

I am a college student. I did purchase the quarterly pass, however I am going to speak for the people who don't have \$60 for a quarterly pass. I believe we are at ground zero in this community for the people who are at or below poverty. In the past it has been commonplace at the probation office or at the agencies around the community to have some provision for bus tickets for the needy. I helped get a gentleman into the GED program and have talked with other adults and one of the barriers to getting an education is getting there. With our bad and inclement weather coming soon I am personally going to purchase \$20 dollars in tickets to give this young man and pay the \$25 GED fee out of my own pocket. I am a college student but am willing to help this

young man get his education. So if there is any money any grant any sponsorship, even if it is 10 tickets just something for the needy people. I have a friend that is on oxygen who moved into an apartment that had bus service. The bus no longer comes by her apartment so she is stuck in an apartment in Astoria and because of her physical disability can't get to where she needs to go not even to a grocery store. So I have taken her to food bank and others take her to the grocery store. Her resolve is to move to another apartment which is doable. Just bear in mind the community is going through a lot of changes regardless of the bus and there are a lot of new jobs but there is still a need that is not being addressed. The college used to give us a free passes as a student. I was fortunate that I got a part time job so I could earn my own money. The last thing I want to say about scheduling is school has been going for 2 weeks now. On the morning bus from the Warrenton Mini Mart to Fred Meyer I have had to wait and I have had to wait for the connection from Fred Meyer to the college. I have not been to my class on time. One day the bus did not arrive at the Warrenton Mini Mart until 8:50 am and that is the time I was supposed to be at the college. That was Monday. With those ideas in mind, I know you cannot solve everybody's problem but you might check with Larry the president of Clatsop College to see if the college is willing to work with you guys. Today is the first day I nearly got to class on time which was 15 minutes late. The new routes will not help this because there are no changes to the morning schedule. If the bus could be on time in the morning I would only be 10 minutes late. I am only one student but I am sure there are more. I have made adjustments to get through this term, and it wasn't easy.

I can get all the way to Longbeach Washington for \$.85 but it takes a \$1 to get from Astoria to Warrenton and another \$1 to go to Safeway.

Judith Choate 19 Nimitz Drive Astoria Oregon

I was wondering if there are going to be any other bus shelters put up like at Short Stop. I do in home care up on Nehalem Street. I take the bus and get off at Short Stop and then walk up to Nehalem street then work for 2 and a half hours and then have to walk back to Short Stop to catch the bus and I have arthritis in both my ankles and there is no place to sit down unless you go into Short Stop. You have to buy

something to sit down in Short Stop. It hurts staying up that long and sometimes I miss the bus and have to wait another hour before the next bus comes and there is no place to sit down just a cement slab where a shelter used to be. I am just wondering if anytime soon it there could be a bench. A while back a driver mentioned that you were getting some new shelters and they were wondering where to put them and he suggested I write a letter and send it to Scott Earls. So I sent a letter and nothing happened.

So I am just wondering if you are going to put up a shelter.

Scott Earls responded that the Short Stop owners are in favor of putting up a shelter. I called the City of Astoria and we have to get a permit to set the shelter and has ODOT also approved the project. It is not that we have bought new shelters it is a matter of removing the shelter at Astor Court and placing it at Mini Mart. There is also a shelter across from Peter Pan that is not being used. Executive Director Flint said he will work to expedite that project. Scott apologized for the delay and not sending a letter back.

Maryanne Gregit 575 50th St. Astoria, OR

I am on route 10 and the service is good where I am, but my friend is wondering about Saturday bus service?

Executive Director Flint said that the Northwest Transit Alliance is working on restoring weekend services to all the districts involved, so you can be a recreational weekend traveler. There may be some opportunities through that to restore weekend service next year, so I am working on that.

Carmen Dunnington- 2631 N Mill Creek Lane #202 Seaside, OR

I am a recent transplant from the Portland metro area where I have been a public transit rider for 32 years. I have never had a driver's license and am almost 50 and would like to keep it that way. I moved here just before the cutbacks when the service was great and then it went next to nothing. It's not just recreational for weekends, it's

work. I am looking for work. I was laid off in Beaverton that is why I moved here moved here to be close to my family. Most jobs are not Monday thru Friday in this county. I will probably get a job that will require weekend transportation. The employment response was take a cab. To get to Astoria it costs about \$30. I'd love to get the improvements that you are talking about maybe not up to the way it was before, but just keep in mind that it is not recreational use for most of us it is required. And I have some disability that would allow me to use the paratransit if it were for medical transportation, but I need it for everyday transportation. I am not able to walk long distances, I cannot walk up hills and in the winter it gets even harder because of the cold air. So please keep that in mind when you are bringing your services back. Most of us do not depend on it to just to get to a show. It is to get to work, pick up kids and things that most people just jump in a car to do we either can't or don't.

Executive Director Flint responded that the mention of the weekend recreational use was part of the transit grant that is looking at the greater region use. However our returning service is about balancing the needs of everybody that uses the system. Balancing the needs of the local workforce is high on our list and will not go unnoticed. I want you to know that. One of the things we have worked with is the weekend service to Cannon Beach. The summer service was more tourist oriented, however we are splitting hours of service and working with employers to help accommodate getting people to work. The service is augmented service paid for by the City of Cannon Beach, but I am working with Seaside to support this new route.

Kathy Klezzeck- PO Box 602, Cannon Beach OR

I want to applaud you all and working on realistic times and realistic schedules rather than what we all wished and hoped would work. One of my concerns is that the connections work both north and south so that people that need to leave the area or need to just get connect to the next town over are going to be able to get home and to work when they need to. The other thing that I see as a priority is getting the weekend service going not just on Saturday but on Sunday too because the jobs around here aren't just Monday thru Friday. I am a business owner and I wish I could just schedule

my staff for just Monday thru Friday, but I wouldn't be in business. I encourage you to connect and reconnect those areas that were disconnected by the bus schedule changes. There is a whole housing development in Warrenton that was planned because it was going to be on the bus route and now is not. It would be great to be able to get those people to ride the bus again. The other thing is I would like to remind the people who are working on the schedule that live mostly in Astoria that the South County is really important in a lot of your tax based dollars are from south of Astoria. The people down there want to see that there is a proportionate service going to the different areas. So if you're adding service to Warrenton and Astoria, look at the schedule and see if you can't add a little more service to South County. It looks like there is more service being added to South County but Cannon Beach is actually paying for the service. If there is a way to add a loop within Seaside or a loop in different areas so that it can connect some of those areas that are not just on 101, which could potentially help with traffic in those areas. Is there any sort of campaign or strategy being looked at to approach employers in the area to subsidize passes for their employees? It might help bring in passes for others as well.

Executive Director Flint thanked the board and audience for participating. Meeting was adjourned at 3:15 pm

Mary Parker
Recording Secretary