

**COLUMBIA COUNTY CITIZEN TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND
STATEWIDE TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT FUND COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES**

Meeting Date: May 16, 2023

Time: 4:00 P.M.

Place: Columbia County Transit, St. Helens, OR

Present: Karen MacKenzie, Marty Rowe, Pam Heimuller, Dennis Spitze, Dena Chesney, Denise Watson (Virtual)

Absent: None

Staff: John Dreeszen, Transit Director

Guests: Alta Lynch

Call to Order (CCRTAC): Chair MacKenzie called the meeting to order at 4:00 P.M.

Approval of March 21, 2023 Meeting Minutes: The Committee approved the March 21, 2023 meeting minutes unanimously.

Public Comments: The Committee paused for public comment, and none was given. Committee member Watson was curious if CC Rider applied for the competitive grant money available. Mr. Dreeszen shared that CC Rider did not apply for that specific grant due to having reduced service earlier this year. Mr. Dreeszen believes it would be wise to let the reduced service schedule settle within the community and see what changes could be beneficial for the next grant application process.

Committee member Watson shared that she her Transit background comes from working for the Transit Authority in Lincoln County as a bus driver and helping implement Tsunami evacuation routes. Committee member Watson shared her worry regarding the shutdown of the Lewis & Clark bridge in July, especially the disrupt it will cause weeks before and after. She is very appreciative of CC Rider’s work within Columbia County.

Line 1 Portland Ridership Update: Mr. Dreeszen shared that Line 1 is still holding steady ridership numbers, approximately 2/3 of ridership prior to reducing runs. Mr. Dreeszen compared that ridership is about the same with only 1 AM and 1 PM run into Portland as it was with 3 AM and 3 PM runs – but with only 1/3 of the cost. Chair MacKenzie corroborates Mr.

Dreeszen's claim as she has experienced the bus at near full capacity coming from PDX to St. Helens many times.

Mr. Dreeszen told the Committee members that a service alert was posted regarding the apartment fire in Portland as it is nearly adjacent to one of CC Rider's stops. Riders were cautioned that Line 1 may be delayed in arrival and departure as the Portland Bureau of Transportation closed numerous roads in the area. Committee member Heimuller was curious as to where these service alerts were posted, Mr. Dreeszen explained that they are posted on the CC Rider Facebook page as well as CC Rider's NWOTA page.

ODOT/FTA Drug & Alcohol Program Review: Mr. Dreeszen updated the committee on the completion of the ODOT/FTA Drug and Alcohol Program Review. The consultant provided feedback regarding information and documentation that Mr. Dreeszen sent. The third-party drug testing vendor along with the Columbia County Human Resources Department worked in tandem to address the feedback and remedy solutions.

ODOT/FTA Periodic Review: Mr. Dreeszen explained that while the ODOT/FTA Drugs & Alcohol Program Review focuses on a specific topic, the ODOT/FTA Periodic Review focuses on the broader operation of a transit department overall. Mr. Dreeszen went on to share that the review takes place over the course of two days and involves ODOT representatives and FTA consultants on site. CC Rider's periodic review will begin May 17, 2023 and is expected to conclude May 18, 2023. According to Mr. Dreeszen, the previous periodic review went well, and he expects this review to go just the same.

Financials & Proposed Budget: Mr. Dreeszen shared that the week previous was what is known as 'Budget Week' in the county where the Budget Committee meets and dives deeply into each department's annual budget. Mr. Dreeszen has heard that the Transit budget has been approved by the committee.

Chair MacKenzie asked where the funds for the new buses come from in terms of the budget. Mr. Dreeszen explained that the line item 'Capital Outlay Vehicles' in the Transit budget spreadsheet is where the budget for the new buses is allocated from. Regarding the new buses, Mr. Dreeszen shared that there is no update on their delivery status. Schetcky's NW Bus Sales expects the buses to be delivered to Portland for inspections by the end of May.

Two years have passed since the 4 original transit vans were ordered that Mr. Dreeszen ordered 3 additional busses with new grant money that has become available since then. This grant money allowed for a bit more creative freedom in terms of advertising. Mr. Dreeszen reminded the committee that he is working with a local company, FinishLine Graphics, to create a more dramatic and revamped design of the CC Rider logo to wrap the new buses with.

Mr. Dreeszen went on to point out that CC Rider will end the 22-23 fiscal year with an approximate surplus of \$561,000. That amount will be carried over to the 23-24 fiscal year where a small dent will be made into it, but ultimately resulting in a \$523,000 surplus. The surplus comes from CC Rider's biggest grant fund, Rural Transit - 5311, which in the previous two years layered in CARES funding that had no match requirement, which is a rarity in public Transit. This additional funding has provided CC Rider with a stable operating surplus and contingency.

With news of this surplus money, Chair MacKenzie asked if it would be possible to add another Run to Line 1 in the afternoon. Mr. Dreeszen responded that it is financially possible, however the big concern lies in whether an additional run would attract new ridership. He suggests that if this is an avenue the committee is wanting to explore, research and surveys from riders would need to be completed. Mr. Dreeszen also pointed out that although CC Rider currently has a surplus the country is still amid record inflation and that includes parts for mechanical maintenance.

Chair MacKenzie proposed the idea of having a Saturday service where CC Rider only has designated stops at or around major grocery stores in the towns of St. Helens and Scappoose. Mr. Dreeszen sees the value in a service like this but wants committee members to remember the priority projects they voted on previously.

Committee Round Table: The Committee paused for round table discussion, and none was initiated.

Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 5:07 P.M.