

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

**Meeting Date:** April 15, 2025

**Time:** 4:00 P.M.

**Place:** Columbia County Transit Center, St Helens, OR

**Present:** Karen MacKenzie, Dennis Spitze, Pam Heimuller, Denise Watson, Angela Rose, Brandy Johnson

**Absent:** Marty Rowe

**Staff:** Chris Wheatley, Transit Director; Heather Shaw, Admin Assistant

**Guests:** Megan Wirtz (Virtual)

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

**Approval of March Meeting Minutes:** The Committee approved the March 18, 2025 meeting minutes unanimously.

**Public Comments:** The Committee paused for public comment, and none was given.

**Capital and Payroll Tax Update:** Mr. Wheatley shared that he went to Transit Day at the State Capital on April 1<sup>st</sup> with some NWOTA and OTA partners. He attended meetings with 90 senators and representatives who all seemed they were in favor of passing the Payroll Tax increase. Currently the tax rate is 0.1%, with that tax money going to the county you work in. The increase would span 8-10 years and increase by 0.1% each Biennium. The increase in tax revenue could allow for CC Rider to add an additional route. Mr. Wheatley shared that many have the opinion that the transit tax should go to the county you live in, rather than the county you work in. Chair MacKenzie shared that it would be a lot to tackle a change like that. A majority of the tax paid by Columbia County residents goes to TriMet. Mr. Wheatley shared that there was one senator who was unsure if we would get the full amount of a tax increase that is being asked for. Mr. Wheatley noted that roads and bridges are also included in this Transportation package.

**Meeting with PCC:** Mr. Wheatley shared that he is meeting with PCC on Thursday, April 17th. PCC reached out and said that they want to collaborate with CC Rider on something. Mr. Wheatley is hoping it is something relating to a shuttle for their students to their PCC/OMIC campus in Scappoose. Member Heimuller asked if CC Rider is allowed to do charters. Mr. Wheatley shared that there are a lot of hoops to go through to do what is considered to be a charter. ODOT has standards set in place for charters. The ODOT protocol is currently being looked into.

**Job/Volunteer Openings:** Mr. Wheatley shared that there are currently two jobs posted, a Utility Worker and a Driver. There are quite a few applications for both positions submitted so far, and interviews are hopefully taking place later this week. Member Watson asked if there is a physical required for the driver position. Mr. Wheatley shared that there is no physical required other than the DOT physical required for a CDL license. Many members suggested that the two jobs be combined, which would allow for more hours. Mr. Wheatley shared that the two positions are on different pay scales, so combining them may be difficult. All of the positions for the County are posted on the County Website.

**Updates:** Mr. Wheatley shared that the County is struggling with finances, and assured members that CC Rider is not a part of that due to the Transit department being funded fully by Grants. Member Heimuller asked if there were updates relating to the grants that fund Transit. Mr. Wheatley shared that there are no significant updates other than the time frames for reimbursements may be delayed. Overall, everything is going well, including lots of events in the upcoming months. Members asked about being a part of Halloweentown, and Mr. Wheatley shared that he has not been in contact with anyone from the Halloweentown event yet.

**Committee Roundtable:** Member Rose suggested that CC Rider provides a Fareless route during Halloweentown. Mr. Wheatley shared that if the tax increase passes, he is considering adding an in-town route, similar to the former Flex route. The average cost to run a bus is around \$100. Adding a local route would allow for riders to utilize that route rather than use Dial-A-Ride. Member Rose asked if surveys could be done to see if the community would use a local route. Members discussed the placement of current bus stops and suggested adding a new stop near the Fred Meyer in Scappoose. Mr. Wheatley shared that it is not a quick and easy process to add bus stops, and that the stops must be on ODOT owned property. This process can take up to one year. Mr. Wheatley shared that Jim Seeks from RiverCities Transit will be joining the meeting in person next month to talk about their expansion to Rainier. Members suggested that CC Rider get kids involved with designing magnets or possibly designing a wrap for a new bus. This would get the kids excited about seeing and riding the bus. Mr. Wheatley liked the idea and shared that the price of the wrap for the buses received is already accounted for with the money received from grants. The new buses should be ready for use in two years.

**Adjourn:** Chair MacKenzie adjourned the meeting at 4:51 P.M.