

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

**Meeting Date:** November 18, 2025

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

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

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

**Absent:** N/A

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

**Guests:** Aire Uusitalo (virtual), Sean Gillen (virtual)

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

**Approval of October Minutes:** The Committee approved the October 21, 2025 meeting minutes unanimously.

**Public Comments:** Guest Uusitalo shared that they are a high school transit user. They shared that they believe that CC Rider is a necessary service, and they feel that there is not enough service, causing communities to be left out. They stated that riders are paying the price for the lack of improvement. Guest Uusitalo also mentioned that signage and communication with riders is something that needs to be improved. Guest Gillen shared that they value CC Riders service and are hoping that there can be more service offered in the future.

**Budget and STIF Prep:** Mr. Wheatley shared that all of the budget paperwork can be found on the county's website. He mentioned that budget will start on July 1, 2026, and is wanting to get a jump start. The packet contains the budget for last year, and next year's budget. Mr. Wheatley shared that there isn't anything different going in or out, and that can't be changed. Mr. Wheatley asked if the committee members could take a look at where the money is going and wants input on possibly reorganizing some funds. Member Watson made note that the advertising budget is small. The total budget is close to 2 million a year, with a total of 4 million for the biennium. Mr. Wheatley notes that the second sheet is the grant layout. It states what projects were decided on for the STIF grant, as well as other grants. The STIF grant is used for the match required for other grants. Mr. Wheatley shared that the grant information will not change until the new biennium which will begin in 2027. Members discuss when ridership is calculated into the reporting for the year. Mr. Wheatley shares that the increase in ridership will be counted next year. Chair Heimuller asked about the Vanpool project. Mr. Wheatley shared that the vanpool project is still in the budget but will soon be removed. It has been recommended to hold off on

grant amendments. Mr. Wheatley mentioned that the Vanpool money will likely be moved over to the contingency fund. Mr. Wheatley asked that members look over the numbers and think about what they would like adjusted or changed. Member Rose noted that most of the money goes to Dial-a-Ride(DAR). Mr. Wheatley shared that DAR is a lot more costly to operate. Member Rose suggested that a Flex Route would be beneficial.

**Committee Roundtable:** Mr. Wheatley shared that CC Rider is providing a shuttle for a Christmas event this year at the Fair grounds. People can park at the elementary school and get a ride to the fairgrounds. Mr. Wheatley shared that there was a 200 rider increase on Line 1 in October. Mr. Wheatley mentioned that things are increasing slowly, and that ridership for Line 1 and DAR are increasing.

Chair Heimuller suggested the focus should be on an additional expansion of Line 1. Mr. Wheatley noted that we are better off planning changes and additions ahead of time. The extension to Rainier was quick. Guest Uusitalo shared that the Rainier extension was the biggest thing to happen to Line 1 in a long time, and that they were happy to see that extension. Mr. Wheatley shared that adding a midday run, a weekend run, or expanding to Clatskanie is a possibility. Member Rose suggested doing a survey in Clatskanie. Mr. Wheatley shared that a survey was done a year ago before the RiverCities connections. Turnout for ridership was lower than expected. Member Watson asked about the afterschool program progress. Mr. Wheatley shared that he hasn't heard back about that proposal. Mr. Wheatley shared that he was approached by PCC-OMIC about getting students to the school. They would then have their own bus to get students from OMIC to the Rock Creek campus. Chair Heimuller suggested that PCC pay for the service because they receive tax dollars. Mr. Wheatley was told that the Rock Creek run was funded in the past with funds gathered from the sale of parking passes.

Guest Uusitalo shared that they have friends that live in the northern part of the County and suggested that a DAR service expansion would be beneficial. Mr. Wheatley shared that was the idea with the Line 1 expansion to Rainier. He mentioned that he's talking to Sunset Empire about possibly resuming the connection with them. Guest Uusitalo suggested that CC Rider connect with Washington County providers. Mr. Wheatley shared that the mayor of Vernonia has a bus that he runs for special services, and that might be an option to connect with him to run a route in Veronica and the surrounding area.

Guest Uusitalo shared that people in Vernonia are mad that there isn't service out there and mentioned that there is a nonprofit called "Ride Connections" that could be a connection for service. Members discussed that making these connections are important. Members thanked those who joined the meeting virtually and are very appreciative of their suggestions.

**Adjourn:** Chair Heimuller adjourned the meeting at 4:43pm.