

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

Meeting Date: February 17, 2026

Time: 4:00 P.M.

Place: Columbia County Transit Center, St Helens, OR

Present: Pam Heimuller, Angela Rose, Denise Watson

Absent: Dennis Spitze

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

Guests: Megan Wirtz, Aire Uusitalo (virtual)

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

Approval of January Minutes: The Committee approved (with suggested edits) the January 20, 2026, meeting minutes unanimously.

Public Comments: Guest Uusitalo shared that they believe CC Rider has made good progress with planning for future expansions and budgets.

New Committee Member: Mr. Wheatley shared that he met with someone who applied to join the committee. He has requested a meeting with the Commissioners to have them approved to join the committee. Mr. Wheatley mentioned that there are still two open seats. Mr. Wheatley shared that he hopes to have the new member by the next meeting (March). Guest Uusitalo shared that they might know someone who is willing to join the committee. Mr. Wheatley shared where the application to join the committee can be found.

ODOT Audit: Mr. Wheatley shared that the ODOT audit is next week. It will take place on February 24th and 25th. Mr. Wheatley shared that he met with the finance department, and they are going to come down and talk to the auditors about the finance portion. Mr. Wheatley mentioned that he went through all of the buses making sure they were stocked with everything they needed. Mr. Wheatley informed Chair Heimuller that she is on the list of people they might talk to but mentioned that the auditors have not stated that they want to speak to committee members. If there are findings that need corrected, they will let us know what needs to be fixed. Mr. Wheatley shared that findings will be presented in a report after the audit.

2026 Events: Mr. Wheatley shared that the first event he is attending is tomorrow, February 18th. He is going to a preschool for “Community Helpers” day. Mr. Wheatley shared that he is taking a bus and coloring books for the kids. Mr. Wheatley shared a list of events that he plans on attending. He shared that he has ordered more magnets and stickers to give away at events. Mr. Wheatley mentioned that events have helped him educate the community on what services CC Rider provides. Guest Wirtz asked what events he will have a booth at. Mr. Wheatley shared that he will have a booth at the Day of Service event on March 7th. Chair Heimuller noted that Mr. Wheatley can call the committee members to help with events. Mr. Wheatley will share an event list when more dates are set. Member Rose mentioned that the trail selected for the NAMI walk event was not ADA accessible and voiced her concerns for that event this year.

Committee Roundtable: Mr. Wheatley shared that he had his first budget meeting with finance last week, and there are not a lot of changes for the upcoming budget. There were a few small changes to add money to the marketing budget. Mr. Wheatley mentioned that the Director of Tillamook just got elected as the Oregon Transit Association (OTA) President. And shared that he is a really good contact for CC Rider. Guest Uusitalo asked if Tillamook is part of the same group as CC Rider and shared that they will be joining more transit meetings in Tillamook.

Member Rose asked about ridership. Mr. Wheatley shared that there aren’t huge gains, but all rides have been up. Mr. Wheatley mentioned that a new driver has been hired and started last week. Members discussed the possibility of moving one of RiverCities bus stops in Rainier.

Guest Uusitalo asked if Mr. Wheatley had been communicating with Token Transit. Mr. Wheatley shared that he heard from them, he just needs to email them back. Guest Uusitalo asked about staffing the Rainier Transit Center. Mr. Wheatley shared that the Rainier Transit Center was going to be a visitor center, and he doesn’t have anyone to staff it at the moment. Guest Uusitalo noted that they would volunteer to staff the Rainier Transit Center this summer.

Guest Wirtz asked about the marketing budget. Mr. Wheatley shared that his marketing and promotion budgets are in the same category and average out to about \$1,000 a month. Guest Wirtz shared that she facilitates six meetings a year and would love it if CC Rider attended a meeting. She noted that the meetings are not open to the public.

Members discussed the possibility of a free fare day, and the idea of lowering the cost of the monthly bus pass. Member Watson asked if the Sheriff’s office hands out bus tickets. Mr. Wheatley stated that CCMH orders a lot of tickets for their clients. Chair Heimuller asked about PCC. Mr. Wheatley shared that he hadn’t heard anything else from them. He shared that they were not interested in anything that involves them contributing funds to a route. Guest Uusitalo suggested that CC Rider goes to a PCC campus and survey students to see who would use the new route, as well as others who might use that route if there is service to PCC Rock Creek. Mr. Wheatley shared that he met with them last summer and got them flyers for their students. Member Rose suggests a pop up at PCC and surveying people there.

Adjourn: Chair Heimuller adjourned the meeting at 4:55 pm.