



AGENDA -

WASHINGTON COUNTY TRANSIT COMMITTEE (WCTC) MEETING #2

Date: **September 9, 2020 – 10:30 AM to 12:00 PM**

Location: Zoom meeting

Please click the link below to join the webinar:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83933009616?pwd=czRrb1dFUUExSkJHc21LZW11MDhvQT09>

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Meeting Purpose

Review FY 2020-21 Budget and FY 20-21, FY 2021-22 and FY 2022-23 STIF revenue forecasts and discuss funding priorities to inform upcoming public comment opportunities and STIF recommendations.

TIME	SUBJECT	LEAD PRESENTER	OBJECTIVES
10:30	Welcome and introductions	Chair Harrington	
10:40	Agenda review	Chair Harrington, Washington County	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Confirm understanding• Questions for clarification
10:45	Review revenue forecast and budget	Chris Deffebach Washington County and Julie Wilke, Ride Connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Confirm understanding of financial situation• Questions for clarification
11:00	Solicit input on funding priorities	Dyami Valentine, Washington County and John Whitman, Ride Connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify community needs and service gaps as potential project priorities

11:30	Solicit input on public outreach approach	Dyami Valentine, Washington County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify strategies to get input on funding priorities from diverse perspectives
11:45	Public comment	Chair Harrington, Washington County	
11:55	Next steps	Chris Deffebach, Washington County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare for recommendations
12:00	Adjourn		



**WASHINGTON COUNTY TRANSIT COMMITTEE #1
MEETING SUMMARY
AUGUST 13, 2020, 10:30-12:00 PM
Zoom Virtual Meeting**

Members in attendance

Kathryn Harrington, Washington County, Chair
Jolynn Becker, City of Banks
Dwight Brashear, SMART/Wilsonville
Annadiana Johnson, Rider Representative
Deanna Palm, Hillsboro Chamber of Commerce
Teri Lenahan, City of North Plains

Julie Wilcke, Ride Connection
Mahesh Udata, Rider Representative
Dyami Valentine, Washington County
Elaine Wells, Rider Representative
Rebecca Miller, Washington County

Other attendees

Chris Deffebach, Washington County
Reza Farhoodi, Washington County
Garet Prior, City of Tualatin
Jean Senechal-Biggs, City of Beaverton
Julie Sosnovske, Washington County
John Whitman, Ride Connection

Introduction

Chair Kathryn Harrington opened the meeting at approximately 10:30 AM. Members introduced themselves and the Chair reviewed the agenda.

The purpose of this meeting was to review the charge and role of the Washington County Transit Committee (WCTC), provide background information on the Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) enacted under House Bill 2017 and review the County's service area characteristics, including rural and regional coordination services.

County Transit Committee Charge and Role

Chris Deffebach reviewed the charge of the WCTC, which is to recommend project priorities for areas of Washington County outside of the TriMet and SMART districts, connections between the rural area and the TriMet district and first-last mile connections within the TriMet district. TriMet manages the STIF for the tri-county region and provides funding to the County to help operate these services. Chris also summarized the committee bylaws that were included in the agenda packet.

The transit committee will be meeting 3-4 times per year to review the performance of existing service, provide input on transit needs and service proposals and recommend projects and service priorities for the next biennium of the STIF (Fiscal Years 2021/22-2022/23).

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Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund

Chris Deffebach provided an overview of the STIF, which was established in House Bill 2017 with funding from a new employee payroll tax. The STIF funds public transportation statewide to increase service to low-income populations and students, as well as reduce service fragmentation between providers. Collection of the payroll tax began in July 2018 for Fiscal Year 2019, and the County has received the initial round of funding for service improvements. STIF revenue is allocated to each service area through a formula based on the amount of payroll tax generated in that area. As the designated Qualified Entity for Multnomah, Washington and Clackamas Counties, TriMet receives payroll tax revenue from the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) and distributes them to public transportation service providers outside of its service district. In addition to the formula funds, five percent of STIF revenue is directed toward a discretionary grant fund and four percent is set aside for an intercommunity grant fund, Washington County is eligible to apply for these grants to supplement formula funds. Chris also mentioned that the Oregon Legislature recently passed a bill (SB 1061) to consolidate the STIF with the Special Transportation Fund (STF) program for services provided to the elderly and people with disabilities. Funding for STF will now come out of the STIF, rather than the state's general fund.

Chris reviewed a diagram showing the transit committee's role and how it fits into the overall STIF process. The County for the first time will prepare a Transit Development Plan (TDP) which highlights project priorities (the county was exempted in the previous funding round), and is convening a Transit Advisory Committee (this body) to advise on the TDP and recommend priority projects for the STIF to the Board of County Commissioners for inclusion in the TriMet's STIF Plan (known as the Tri-County Public Transportation Improvement Plan [PTIP]) by November. At that point, TriMet's HB 2017 Advisory Committee will then review the proposals from Washington County and other service providers in the region and make recommendations on the PTIP, forward to the TriMet Board for approval and submit for approval to ODOT. ODOT will complete a PTIP completeness review and its Public Transportation Advisory Committee (PTAC) will provide a recommendation to the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC), which will ultimately approve the STIF Plan. Once the plan is approved, ODOT will disburse quarterly payments to TriMet who will then disburse to the County.

Chris also provided an overview of services funded by the STIF for Fiscal Years 2019-21, which include expanding service for demand response, the West Link route, transit coordination with adjacent county service providers and a rural workforce shuttle. The County also received funds from TriMet's STIF allocation for Regional Coordination services in Forest Grove, North Hillsboro and Tualatin, and funds to study feasibility of a fourth shuttle in the Cooper Mountain/Aloha area.

Member questions or comments:

- Chair clarified that the new proposal was for a biennium (two fiscal years) from FY2021-22 to FY 2022-23. Chris concurred, noting that this was different than the first round, which was for a 2.5-year period (Jan 2019-June 2021).
- One member asked how the committee should process and react to the information being presented at today's meeting. Chris responded that the goal is to give members a good understanding of the existing needs in the rural area, how the current service is performing and what improvements are already committed, in order to be able to make informed recommendations on changes or additional investments.

Ride Connection Services

Julie Wilcke provided an overview of Ride Connection, which is a private non-profit public transportation service provider that contracts with the County to provide public transportation services funded by STIF. Ride Connection leverages federal, state, local and private resources to serve older adults and people with disabilities who can't access fixed-route services due to ability or geography, and for network management tasks including driver training, fleet management and compliance oversight. Julie also described the service design process for Ride Connection, which depends on local input in the form of rider surveys, employer meetings, and City Council/public input to make sure that service meets the needs of the community.

John Whitman described existing services in Washington County and expansion plans to be funded through the STIF. WestLink is a commuter-based service that connects the rural communities of North Plains and Banks to employment centers in Forest Grove and Hillsboro, where TriMet service is available. It also supports reverse commuting to job sites in North Plains and Banks. Ride Connection conducted outreach last summer and fall with local stakeholders and found there was demand for service during off-peak hours, which is why Ride Connection proposes to add two midday runs in the fall (one around noon and the other around 3PM) after an upcoming virtual open house.

STIF provides the opportunity to enhance inter-regional coordination with Tillamook, Yamhill and Columbia Counties transit providers to add stops and service. Prior to STIF, Ride Connection had partnered with the Tillamook WAVE to subsidize customers using their service between Banks/North Plains and downtown Portland. STIF provides additional opportunities to reduce service fragmentation with other providers.

Ride Connection also operates rural demand response service for connections from the rural into the urban area or vice versa. The service is available to the general public and currently funded with federal 5311 dollars. STIF funds will allow RC to expand the trip boundaries in the urbanized area from 10th Avenue in Hillsboro to 185th Avenue (for all trips) and the from 185th Avenue to the Willamette River for medical trips. Ride Connection will also be able to fund rural-to-rural connections, relax parameters for scheduling trips and purchase two new electric vehicles.

Ride Connection is using STIF funds to plan a new a rural workforce shuttle that will serve farm, nursery and other agricultural industry workforce needs with input from Centro Cultural and rural employers. The service may be in the form of a public shared-ride, shuttle or microtransit to take employees from the urban to the rural area.

John discussed the three last-mile shuttles in the Regional Coordination Program, which is funded with an allocation from TriMet. GroveLink in Forest Grove is a community circulator that operates weekdays between 6:30AM-7PM, as well as an employment service that operates early mornings and mid afternoons to allow workers to connect between TriMet and local employers east of Highway 47. Based on community input, GroveLink is being expanded in the fall with a pilot program for new weekend service and a weekend extension to Cornelius to help customers connect to shopping and social services.

North Hillsboro Link was expanded using STIF with new service on weekends (15 operation hours each day), five additional service hours per weekday (early morning and late evening) and two newly procured vehicles. John noted that the North Hillsboro Link has been a huge success, with ridership increasing 60 percent since the service expansion began. Recently, Ride Connection completed outreach for STIF funded expansion of the Tualatin Shuttle, creating an additional two service hours per weekday. Feedback included a request to extend service to Bridgeport for shopping and transit connections, to social services along Borland Road east of town, and neighborhoods and businesses south of town.

Ride Connection is also conducting a transit feasibility study in the South Beaverton area, which includes Aloha, Cooper Mountain, Murray Scholls and Progress Ridge. Feedback heard based on recently completed public outreach included requests to connect to TriMet bus and MAX services, shopping at Murray Scholls and Progress Ridge and to parks and recreation. Ride Connection is currently evaluating different service models to support the area.

Julie summarized impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic, which included a substantial drop in ridership (and corresponding drop in service) from pre-COVID levels, new social distancing and face covering requirements and increased cleaning of buses. As ridership rebounds, RC will be adding back capacity on shuttles, stressing that the main priority is to keep drivers and customers safe.

Member questions or comments:

- Chair asked for clarification on the role of Ride Connection to match customers with available services. Julie explained that Ride Connection supports a network of social service agency partners to achieve consistency in the level of service that's provided to community members. This is done by ensuring that partners comply with the rules of their funding sources, have the resources that they need to operate, and its drivers are being trained to required standards and credentialed. Ride Connection was also just awarded the grant for the Non-Emergency Medical Transportation Program, which is part of Medicaid, and is applying the same policies with this program.
- One member asked if customers must pay to use Ride Connection services, and if there is a smartphone app available. Julie responded that all the services are donation-based, with no charge to the customer. There is a standard number that customers call for demand-response services and community connectors run on set schedules which feed into online trip planners so that customers can wait anywhere along the route to flag the bus down. RC also works with the County Department of Aging and Veterans Services (DAVS) to ensure that case managers, senior center directors, and social service agency employees can help customers contact Ride Connection. Customers can also call the Aging and Disability Resource Connection for transportation needs, as DAVS (the local Area Agency on Aging) receives a small portion of funding that can be used to pay for transportation needs. However, there is no app yet available, although RC would be interested in developing one.
- One member asked if the presentation will be shared with the committee. Chris responded that it would be posted on the County's website.
- One member asked if there were incidents of riders refusing to follow COVID-19 procedures and how Ride Connection was responding to them. Julie replied RC did not want drivers to have to enforce the COVID policies, and that to date there has been one rider that refused to wear a facemask. In these situations, the driver will ask if the rider wants to use a face shield instead, and if they still refuse then the driver will not allow the rider onto the bus and send for another vehicle for the rider to use alone. However, the second driver can refuse to pick up the passenger as well.
- One member asked if RC's vehicles support the use of mobility devices. Julie responded that their 14-passenger cutaways include wheelchair lifts with two securement stations and their minivans include a ramp with one securement station.

Rural Area Characteristics

Dyami Valentine provided a summary of rural area demographic information, including historically marginalized communities. The rural area has far lower density, a lower percentage of people of color, an average percentage of youth, higher average household income and a greater proportion of older adults, persons with disabilities and veteran population compared to urban Washington County and the TriMet district overall. The highest density of vulnerable populations is located in North Plains and Banks, but there is also higher than average density along the OR 210/219 corridors in southern Washington County. There is also a higher proportion of lower-income jobs in the rural area compared to the urban area, and these jobs are concentrated in similar locations.

Dyami also described commute patterns, showing a map of where workers live and/or work in the rural area. This map indicated that a concentration of rural employees lives in Forest Grove, Cornelius and western Hillsboro, while rural residents have longer average commute distances to workplaces that are generally more dispersed in the urban area. He also noted that more than twice as many workers commute out of rural Washington County to work, as opposed to commuting in, and comparatively few workers both live and work in the rural area.

Public Comment

- One member noted that DAVS is currently in a Needs Assessment process through the end of August and requested that committee members share a survey with their communities in the rural area that included questions about transportation and whether respondents have sufficient access to services.

Next Steps

Chris showed the upcoming schedule of committee meetings. In September, the committee will review revenue forecasts, the performance of existing services, projects funded through the STIF Discretionary program and seek input on priorities. In October, members will be asked to provide input on projects and the County will release the draft list of project priorities for public comment. Finally, the committee will be asked to review public comments and endorse projects and priorities in November, which will then be forwarded to the Board and TriMet.

Member questions or comments:

- Chair requested an agenda item early in the September meeting devoted to feedback from members on service that is currently missing and/or in need of improvement and whether there are other community needs? that should be considered.

Adjournment

Chair Harrington thanked committee members for their time and participation in this process. There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:00 p.m.