

**CORVALLIS CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMISSION ON TRANSIT  
MINUTES  
May 9, 2007**

**Present**

Bob Lowry, Chair  
Lita Verts, Vice-Chair  
Scott Carroll  
Brandon Trelstad  
Robert E. Wilson  
George Grosch, City Councilor

**Absent**

Stephan Friedt  
Kenyon Solecki, ASOSU

**Staff**

Jim Mitchell, Public Works  
Lisa Namba, Public Works

**Visitors**

Mayor Charlie Tomlinson  
Brian Maxwell, Laidlaw Transit  
Gavin Carpenter, SeQuential Biofuels  
Tyson Keever, SeQuential Biofuels

**SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION**

Agenda Item	Information Only	Held for Further Review	Recommendations
I. Introductions	X		
II. Approval of April 11, 2007 Minutes			Approved with corrections
III. CACOT/Visitor Comments	X		
IV. Old Business • Committee Report on CACOT/Staff/ Laidlaw Cookout Plans	X		
V. New Business • Bus Maintenance and Cleanliness Issues • Biodiesel Information	X X		
VI. Information Sharing	X		
VII. Adjournment	X		

**CONTENT OF DISCUSSION**

**I. Introductions**

The meeting was called to order at 8:20 a.m.

Introductions of Commission members, staff and visitors were made.

## **II. Approval of April 11, 2007 Minutes**

The following is a correction to the minutes:

Under CACOT/Visitor Comments, the following bullet shall be added: "This meeting's 5:30p.m. start time was in direct response to a citizen request. It is intended that future meetings will be held at 8:15 a.m.".

**Commissioner Wilson and Verts, respectively, moved and seconded that the Commission approve the April 11, 2007 minutes, as amended. The motion passed unanimously.**

In response to a suggestion from the Commission, Mr. Mitchell stated that staff will note in the minutes the time that meetings are called to order and adjourned.

## **III. CACOT/Visitor Comments**

- Mayor Tomlinson attended the meeting as part of May's Volunteer Month celebration. He thanked the Commissioners for their service to the community and gave each Commissioner a gold Corvallis 150<sup>th</sup> Birthday coin made of chocolate.

Mayor Tomlinson also reported that the Portland and Willamette Railroad, which runs through Corvallis, is considering bringing a historic train to Corvallis in honor of the City's 150<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration. There is no specific time arranged yet, but if the Mayor is able to make this happen, it will be some time after Labor Day.

## **IV. Old Business**

- **Committee Report on CACOT /Staff/Laidlaw Cookout Plans**

The Committee decided to postpone the cookout for one year.

## **V. New Business**

- **Maintenance and Cleanliness Issues - Guest Brian Maxwell, Laidlaw**

Mr. Maxwell said the biggest problem with maintenance issues is the lack of backup vehicles. He cited the dearth of repair shops in the area as the chief reason for lengthy down times for buses. Often, transmissions need to be shipped to Portland or the East Coast to be repaired. For older vehicles in the fleet it is difficult to get parts, which sometimes results in long waits for repairs, even repairs that can be made locally at Laidlaw. Mr. Maxwell responded to Chair Lowry's question about Lane Transit District's (LTD) practices for bus repair. Mr. Maxwell is unaware of LTD's maintenance procedures for transmissions but is aware that they do their own motor rebuilds. Ms. Namba commented that LTD still has 25 of the 1994 Gilligs in their fleet, and they keep three transmissions on the shelf. Laidlaw's long-time mechanic is currently out with a disability which occurred on the job and his return status is unknown. A new bus arrived at Laidlaw yesterday and should be ready to be added to the fleet shortly. Mr. Maxwell noted that Ms. Namba indicated that, in order to maintain a larger backup fleet, we wouldn't dispose of a 1994 Gillig even with the arrival of the new one

Ms. Namba explained that although the three 1994 Gilligs were purchased in the same year, the current highway bill allocates funding to Corvallis for one new bus purchase per year. As the older buses outlive their useful life, CTS cannot purchase three new replacement ones at once. That is the reason older buses continue to be used in the fleet.

Vice-Chair Verts asked if, when purchasing a new bus, other bus models are considered, given the maintenance problems of the current fleet. Mr. Maxwell said that purchasing similar vehicle models with parts that are interchangeable is a significant advantage. If a different model bus were purchased, parts for that bus would only be able to be used on that vehicle. He went on to say that purchasing a different model does not guarantee a more reliable vehicle. Further, the 1994 Gilligs have a 12 year useful life (according to the FTA), so higher maintenance costs are more a matter of advanced vehicle age than trouble with particular models.

Councilor Grosch asked if the CTS budget allows for replacement transmissions to be on hand at Laidlaw's shops. Mr. Maxwell said the newer model buses use a transmission that is not compatible with the older model buses. Therefore, it is not possible to strip the older model buses for transmissions in order to have a replacement on hand. A new transmission to keep on hand costs \$20,000 and a rebuilt transmission costs \$10,000. It is Mr. Maxwell's understanding that rebuilt transmissions for the 1994 Gilligs are not available for purchase.

Councilor Grosch asked if recent maintenance issues have in any way negatively impacted ridership totals, since declining ridership is counter-intuitive given the rising price of gas. Vice-Chair Verts speculated that the ridership decline is more a function of the most recent route revisions.

Mr. Maxwell addressed the issue of bus cleanliness. He considers the outside of the buses to be adequately clean but admitted that the insides of the buses are not sufficiently clean. There is an ongoing problem with finding a reliable vendor that has enough staff to consistently keep up with the cleaning. He apologized, but reiterated that it has been difficult to find sufficient staff, particularly given that the work has to occur in the evenings. Contributing to the problem of cleanliness is the fact that the bus facility is paved with gravel. When the weather is dry there is an excessive amount of dust which blows into the buses.

The Commission thanked Mr. Maxwell for his time.

- **Biodiesel Information - Guest from SeQuential Biofuels**

Mr. Mitchell asked representatives from SeQuential Biofuels to attend the meeting to address biodiesel issues brought forth at last month's Commission meeting. The City's current distributor does not purchase the bio component of its biodiesel from SeQuential, but from a supplier located in the Midwest.

Mr. Carpenter said his company has a plant Salem where over 1,000,000 gallons of biodiesel per year are produced. In the future, they will produce over 5,000,000 gallons per year.

Mr. Carpenter and Mr. Keever answered questions posed by the Commission.

- **Question:** When CTS drivers refuel buses at night, the biodiesel sometimes dispenses very slowly. It is their observations that filters are clogging with some type of sediment, an occurrence which

has not been observed with Public Works dispensing tanks. What causes this clogging of filters?

**Answer:** Because SeQuential does not supply biodiesel to the City, the reps could not specifically address this issue. However they did say that biodiesel is similar to petroleum diesel in the way it's handled in the system. There is slightly more susceptibility to small amounts of water invading the biodiesel. Filters on the newer engines which are especially sensitive to water have had increased problems with that water content. It is their opinion that the dispensing filters on the fuel pumps need to be serviced more often. Some simple maintenance techniques, such as sampling to test tank cleanliness, can be implemented. The lower sulphur diesel tends to be more prone to bacterial growth. Tanks should be checked on a quarterly basis.

- **Question:** Is there an industry spec

**Answer:** Yes, in order to be considered biodiesel, the fuel must meet ASTM D-6751.

- **Question:** How does biodiesel contamination occur downstream (after it leaves the manufacturer)?

**Answer:** By not taking proper care of the storage facility. Additionally, biodiesel is susceptible to cold weather issues which can cause it to congeal. Regular maintenance can prevent most, if not all, of these issues.

- **Question:** Why is hemp not used as a biodiesel?

- **Answer:** It is illegal to grow hemp on a commercial scale in the United States. Mr. Keever said hemp would be a supreme crop for biodiesel if it were legal.

Mr. Keever, in response to a question from Councilor Grosch, described the arrangement SeQuential has with the City of Portland. They work with a Hermiston farmer to grow canola and crush it. Portland runs a biodiesel-powered tanker to the farm to apply wastewater bio-solids to the farmer's canola fields, then pick up the canola oil and bring it to their production facility in Salem for processing into biodiesel. The fuel is delivered to the City of Portland, which uses B50 and B99 in its fleet. Councilor Grosch noted that we have 2,000 acres currently in grass seed at the Corvallis Municipal Airport and wondered about the possibility of growing canola there for biodiesel production.

- **Question:** Why don't we grow canola in Willamette Valley?

- **Answer:** There is a very successful specialty seed industry in Oregon, particularly in the Willamette Valley. The seed industry is concerned about wall-to-wall canola being grown which may lead to pushing out specialty seed farmers and causing cross contamination.

- **Question:** What are other potential crops that can be grown in the valley for biodiesel production?

- **Answer:** Flax is a potential crop, though soybean is not at this time. Mr. Mitchell said there are test plots at OSU's Hyslop farm dedicated to research development on potential crops, such as canola, mustard, cantella (a crop found in Eastern Europe which looks promising as a crop in this area) and flax. He described a seed crushing demonstration he recently attended at Hyslop. The demonstration was presented by OSU and geared toward farmers who might be interested in growing and crushing oil crops for use in their own farm equipment.

- **Question:** Will a price increase for corn as a fuel crop be a negative for area farmers because they

would be hard pressed to feed livestock? Further, will we push up the price of worldwide food by converting land for food production into fuel crops?

- **Answer:** This is a concern that is frequently expressed. There is definitely a balance to strike in fuel versus food production; it's a complicated issue. SeQuential focuses on using a recycled product (used cooking oil) and locally produced, sustainably grown canola for use in their biodiesel. However, the biodiesel industry is helping making small family farms more profitable.

The Commission thanked Mr. Keever and Mr. Carpenter for their time. In further discussion, Mr. Mitchell said that he learned at the Hyslop open house that canola is grown in a four-year rotation. Grass seed could be grown for three years and canola the fourth year. The canola crop actually cleans the soil, fixes nitrogen, and perhaps reduces the need for field burning, so it has benefits beyond biofuel production.

## VI. Information Sharing

- The City's "Get There Another Way Week" begins next week in partnership with our Employer Transportation Coordinators group. This is a promotional event highlighting alternative transportation. Posters produced from artwork by Jefferson Elementary School students will be displayed at Footwise and on CTS buses. Free rides will be given on Monday May 14th on CTS and the Philomath Connection (PC) and staff will give away coffee, juice and muffins that morning at the Downtown Transit Center.
- Ms. Namba reported that the search continues for a Transit Coordinator to replace Michelle Rhoads. We didn't make an offer from the first round of interviews, so further interviews will be conducted this month.
- Thanks to a grant from Allied Waste, CTS & PC have been able to significantly expand our Summer Youth Transit Program. Kids 17 years of age and under will be eligible to ride for free from June 1<sup>st</sup> to September 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Commission Wilson asked Ms. Namba if she would be able to provide data on advertising revenue on a basis more frequent than once per year. Ms. Namba agreed to provide data on a quarterly basis. Councilor Grosch commented that his sense is that there is support at the City Council level to eliminate the advertising program if the Commission is inclined to do so.
- Mr. Mitchell noted that staff will begin providing on-time performance both departing the DTC and mid-point through the route.

## VII. Adjournment

**Commissioners Harrod and Trelstad, respectively, moved and seconded that the Commission approve adjournment. The motion passed unanimously.**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:55 a.m.

**NEXT MEETING: June 13, 2007, 8:15 a.m., Madison Avenue Meeting Room**