

**CORVALLIS CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMISSION ON TRANSIT
MINUTES
November 8, 2006**

Present

Stephan Friedt
Joe Harrod
Bob Lowry, Chair
Brandon Trelstad
Robert E. Wilson

Absent

Scott Carroll
Emily Hagen, City Councilor
Lita Verts, Vice-Chair

Staff

Lisa Namba, Public Works
Michelle Rhoads, Public Works

Visitors

Kenyon Solecki, ASOSU
Paul Morgan
Linda Elder, Dial-A-Bus
David Coulombe, City Attorney's Office

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Agenda Item	Information Only	Held for Further Review	Recommendations
I. Introductions	X		
II. Approval of October 18, 2006 Minutes		X	
III. CACOT/Visitor Comments	X		
IV. ADA Paratransit Service Passenger Fares			Recommended increase of ADA fare from \$1.00 to \$1.50
V. Election of Commission Officers			Re-elected Chair Lowry and Vice-Chair Verts
VI. FY 07-08 City Budget Planning		X	
VII. Advertising on Corvallis Transit System Buses			Two recommendations: A) Continuation of bus advertising program and extension of existing contract with Lamar Advertising B) Restrict bus advertising to commercial advertising only
VIII. Proposal to Revise Beaver Bus Route			Accepted staff's proposal
IX. JARC Grant Application to Expand Service	X		
X. Information Sharing	X		
XI. Adjournment	X		

CONTENT OF DISCUSSION

I. Introductions

Introductions of Commission members, staff and visitors were made.

II. Approval of October 18, 2006 Minutes

Commissioners Trelstad and Friedt, respectively, moved and seconded that the Commission approve the October 18, 2006 Minutes.

Discussion ensued regarding the motion. Commissioner Friedt asked Ms. Rhoads to review the audio tape from the October minutes and include the discussion on the progress of CTS's GPS system.

Approval of the minutes was postponed until the December meeting.

III. CACOT/Visitor Comments

- Mr. Morgan asked if the site selection criteria for an operating and maintenance facility site includes the site elevation relative to a flood zone. Ms. Namba noted there are two issues: 1) locating the facility in a flood plain, and 2) locating the facility such that buses might be stranded by flooding. She assured Mr. Morgan that both issues will be addressed in the evaluation process.
- Mr. Solecki read a letter from a citizen which contained a suggestion for a four-way traffic signal at the 26th Street and Western Boulevard intersection. Ms. Rhoads has already forwarded the concern on to Public Works' Bicycle and Pedestrian staff member Joe Whinnery, who agreed to contact Mr. Solecki and discuss this matter. Commissioner Trelstad will forward this concern to OSU's Alternative Transportation Committee.

IV. ADA Paratransit Service Passenger Fares

Ms. Rhoads distributed a handout describing a recommendation that the Commission endorse an increase in the Corvallis Transit System (CTS) Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Paratransit Service passenger fare, from \$1.00 to \$1.50 per one-way ride. Commissioner Wilson noted the fare has been unchanged at \$1.00 for 10 years.

Commissioners Wilson and Trelstad, respectively, moved and seconded that the Commission approve staff's recommendation to increase the ADA Paratransit passenger fare to \$1.50 for a one-way ride. The motion passed unanimously.

This recommendation will be forwarded to the Benton County Special Transportation Advisory Committee (STAC) for discussion during its November meeting.

Ms. Elder noted that Dial-A-Bus is establishing a scholarship fund to assist riders who will be unable to pay the increased fare for a paratransit ride.

IV. Election of Commission Officers

Commissioners Wilson and Friedt, respectively, moved and seconded that the Commission approve the reappointment of Chair Lowry and Vice-Chair Verts. The motion passed unanimously.

V. FY 07-08 City Budget Planning

Ms. Namba pointed out that the diversification of Transit revenue sources and reduced reliance on the General Fund over the past few years has prevented budget cuts which have affected other divisions. Approximately one-third of the Transit operating funds come from the Federal Transit Administration, approximately one-fourth each from the General Fund and Business Energy Tax Credits, with the balance from passenger fare and miscellaneous revenue

Staff agreed to provide a summary of current funding sources, amounts, and how local dollars are used to leverage non-local dollars at the next meeting.

Commissioner Friedt emphasized his desire that staff find ways to further reduce reliance on the General Fund and to find other outside entities to provide funds.

VI. Advertising on Corvallis Transit System Buses

- The first issue of discussion is whether the City should continue to permit advertising on CTS buses and if so, should the current contract with Lamar Advertising be kept in place. Ms. Rhoads was asked about her impression of Lamar regarding its performance as the City's contractor for CTS advertising. Ms. Rhoads said Lamar has been reasonable to work with. An ongoing concern is the City's lack of advertising revenue. Some of the shortfall, far below original projections, can be attributed to the small size of the Corvallis market. Even with the less-than-expected revenue, Ms. Rhoads feels it is advisable to continue with the current contract.

Commissioner Wilson said the City's public perception is enhanced by showing the public that it is trying to generate revenue without taxpayer involvement. Secondly, a new solicitation would result in direct and indirect costs which would impact the budget.

Commissioner Friedt is concerned about the lack of advertising inside the buses and if Public Service Announcements can be added inside the bus. He asked if Lamar has followed up on the leads of prospective advertisers provided to them by Ms. Rhoads. Ms. Rhoads confirmed that at least some of the leads had been followed up on. She is concerned that there is no full-time sales associate assigned to CTS and she and Ms. Namba have met with Lamar representatives to discuss her concerns.

Commissioners Friedt and Trelstad, respectively, moved and seconded that the City continue to permit advertising on CTS buses and to continue the current contract

with Lamar. The motion passed unanimously.

- The second issue is if the City continues to allow advertising on CTS buses, agreed upon in the earlier discussion, then what should be the City's policy regarding content of advertising?

Mr. Coulombe addressed the Commission on the political and legal perspectives to this issue. The fundamental issue is whether the City opens up a non-traditional public forum, buses, for the full expression of ideas or does the City limit and retain the ability to restrict content? In a legal sense, the City must have a compelling interest(s) to restrict content and must use the least restrictive means necessary to advance that compelling interest(s). Most restrictions have a difficult time passing the courts' strict scrutiny. Once the forum is viewed as public, it then becomes difficult to reverse. Mr. Coulombe's initial inclination is to advise the Commission that if it wants to restrict content, there is a paradigm in the federal analysis which would allow for the City to limit advertising to commercial speech provided there is a written policy that states such a limit and a written policy which justifies the limit. State of Oregon allows for less leeway in permitting public entities to limit advertising in a public forum.

Ms. Namba said the draft policy being reviewed today was borne out of discussions with City staff and City Council when the advertising contract was first enacted. The draft was never ratified.

Commissioners Friedt and Wilson, respectively, moved and seconded that the Commission approve a recommendation that advertising on CTS buses be limited to commercial advertising only. A formal draft policy will be proposed stating this limitation. The motion passed unanimously.

Staff will work with the City Attorney's Office to draft desirable policy language.

VII. Proposal to Revise Beaver Bus Route

Commissioner Friedt said CTS drivers reported their desire for more Beaver Bus schedules on buses. They feel this would increase ridership from return customers. Ms. Rhoads said ASOSU has a draft brochure review ready, subject to revisions. Also, the lack of lighting at bus stops makes it difficult for drivers to identify riders. Riders will be encouraged to use a flashlight to alert drivers at bus stops. Another suggestion is that CTS distribute safety lights, though it was noted that the cost of such a distribution is not currently in the Transit budget.

Ms. Rhoads and Ms. Namba met with ASOSU representatives to discuss proposed route revisions. The revisions are being considered in part because there is time available during the current routes and there has been a request for service closer to downtown businesses and to multi-family housing in southwest Corvallis. Proposed changes are:

- Service closer to or on 2nd Street by both the North and South routes.
- Expanding the South route to operate on SW 49th St., Country Club and 35th St., to

bring service closer to a significant student population.

The Commission recommended, in lieu of a vote, to support staff's proposed changes. Ms. Rhoads will speak with ASOSU and CTS drivers again to confirm changes before they go into effect.

VIII. JARC Grant Application to Expand Service

Ms. Namba provided an overview of the Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) opportunity. JARC is a federal grant program which addresses two areas, job access and reverse commute. CTS is applying for a job access grant, targeted at work related transportation for limited income citizens. ODOT administers the federal funds for small urbanized areas like the Corvallis Urbanized Area and for non-urbanized areas in the state, and several weeks ago notified the City of available federal fiscal year 2006 dollars. The grant requires a 50% match from the recipient and staff has proposed using a portion of the current local "over-match" as the funds for these dollars without having to increase local funds. The City submitted its grant proposal for expanded Saturday hours and increased weekday service for the Philomath Connection. The expanded CTS hours would provide additional Saturday service including approximately two hours in the morning and 90 minutes in the afternoon. Also, service hours for the Philomath Connection would increase Monday-Friday by adding an early morning run from Philomath to Corvallis to allow workers to get to Corvallis in time to make a connection to a CTS destination and start work by 8:00am. Included in the proposal is a free pass program that would be used by local employers for their limited-income employees.

Costs for administrative duties, new schedules, information gathering, etc. were included in the proposal. ODOT administers funds on a biennium basis. The program is expected to continue for the extended future. The City will apply for the same grant again in 2007.

IX. Information Sharing

- The Holiday Trolley is expected to run for thirteen days this year. A kickoff event will take place Friday, November 24th.
- Year-to-date rides per service hour on CTS has steadily increased to a current high of 24.
- Four passenger shelters are being relocated. Three are in the OSU area. The fourth is near Stoneybrook on SW Country Club Drive. This shelter was previously located on SW 49th Street.

X. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by Chair Lowry.

NEXT MEETING: December 13, 2006, 8:15 a.m., Madison Avenue Meeting Room