

**CORVALLIS CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMISSION ON TRANSIT  
MINUTES**

February 11, 2004

Members Present

Craig Anderson, Chair  
 Scott Carroll  
 Bob Lowry, Vice-Chair  
 Lita Verts  
 Robert E. Wilson  
 Bjorn Warloe  
 Stewart Wershow, City Council

Staff

Steve Rogers, Public Works  
 Jon Katin, Public Works  
 Michelle Rhoads, Public Works

Visitors

Linda Elder, Dial-A-Bus  
 Paul W. Morgan  
 Roy Severin

**SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION**

Agenda Item	Information Only	Held for Further Review	Recommendations/Action
Minutes- January 14, 2003		X	
Visitor Comments	None		
City Council Financial Strategies & Transportation Funding Alternatives Task Force		X	Recommended that Saturday CTS services be eliminated if necessary to balance the City budget
Future Passenger Fares Pricing Review		X	
ASOSU Group Pass Program Presentation	X		
Advertising on Buses	X		
Day Passes	X		
Implementation of New Routes, Designated Stops, Bus Shelters		X	
Ridership Reports	X		
Winter Newsletter	X		

**CONTENT OF DISCUSSION**

**I. INTRODUCTIONS**

None.

**II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - January 14, 2004**

Held until the March 10, 2004 meeting.

### **III. CACOT/VISITOR COMMENTS**

None.

### **IV. CITY FINANCIAL STRATEGIES & TRANSPORTATION FUNDING ALTERNATIVES TASK FORCE (TFATF)**

Rogers reported that the Transportation Funding Alternatives Task Force (TFATF) has been meeting since August. They have completed Phase I of their work but need more time to discuss recommendations. The TFATF will meet again and determine if there is a need for any additional funding for transportation services.

The TFATF developed some recommendations but Rogers has not yet seen a final report on it so the recommendations are unofficial at this time. There is support for cuts in the transit system if it is needed to balance the City's budget. However, there is not yet a recommendation on the level of cuts.

Another unofficial recommendation is that some of the funding for transit should come from a source other than property tax and federal grants. Further, that it should not be mixed with the City's other funding sources and should be used only to fund transit.

The topic of how much property tax should be shifted away from transit was also considered by the TFATF. There was discussion that anywhere from 50% to 100% of property tax should be shifted. The TFATF will meet again and go into Phase II and make recommendations on the most appropriate alternative funding sources for transportation.

Rogers addressed the issue of the magnitude of the proposed budget shortfall. It varies by the year, but the budget is projected to be solvent through FY 05-06 at existing service levels. The FY 06-07 budget is projected to have a shortfall of \$200,000.00 and for the shortfall to increase to about \$2.8 million in FY 07-08, still operating at existing service levels. This accounts for mitigation of savings as the City does not always spend its full budget. However, if operation of the new fire station is funded the budget cannot sustain itself through FY 05-06.

Budget Commission members gave the City Council some input as to how they felt about revenue sources and the priority

of budget cuts. During the next Council meeting it is expected that the Council will develop a longer term financial strategy and that could include some service reductions. On February 24<sup>th</sup> the Council will present its strategy to the Budget Commission for use in finalizing direction to City staff. Staff will then formulate the FY 04-05 budget. One potential outcome is that voters will be asked to approve additional fund sources as a strategy for dealing with the budget shortfall.

Verts stated that a reduction in transit services is balancing the budget on the back of the most vulnerable citizens in the community. She opposes any transit service reductions. Rogers acknowledged that may be a valid statement.

It was noted that during the January 29<sup>th</sup> community budget meeting, approximately 25% of the participants were vocal supporters of Osborne Aquatic Center, which is also facing potential budget cuts. There also seems to be vocal support for staffing the new fire station. Rogers mentioned that no budget commissioner has taken an official position on transit reductions. However, some budget commissioners have taken official positions to not cut Fire or Police services.

It was noted that the proposed budget cuts to Parks & Recreation and the Library are in the range of 1-7%. A question was asked why transit was listed with a potential cut of 35-50% while cuts to other City services were not listed by percentage. Rogers explained that Public Works used a percentage to determine transit service levels needed for budget cuts. During previous years, substantial cuts were made in Parks & Recreation and Library, and only because there was more Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grant funding than originally anticipated was transit spared budget cuts this year. Otherwise cuts to transit would have already happened.

The lack of awareness and communication in the community about the budget was mentioned and Rogers acknowledged that the situation is due in part to "The City" newsletter not being mailed out due to budget cuts. Warloe Wershow (?) noted that Parks & Recreation user fees have increased the past year as have Library late fees. Osborne Aquatic Center is approximately 80% self supporting through user fees. CTS is receiving approximately 11% in user fees.

Rogers urged CACOT to make a recommendation regarding the proposed budget cuts and to send it forward in person to the Budget Commission which meets next on February 24<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m.

The current funding sources for CTS are:

52% property tax  
36% Federal Transit Administration grant  
11% passenger fares (6% OSU/ASOSU and 5% other passengers)  
1% miscellaneous

Katin noted that the CTS cost per ride is \$2.33 for operating cost only, which is up from \$2.27 from last year. Ridership is fairly consistent throughout the operating day, which may be in part to the high percentage of OSU ridership. Rhoads observed that the voices of transit supporters are not being heard by the Budget Commission.

Lowry stated that some people have proposed cutting transit services down to peak hours of operation. Anderson said that the sentiment among riders is that they can't fathom such significant reductions as 35-50%. Rhoads stated she was asked to provide an estimated cost of providing Saturday services next year. The cost would be approximately \$107,000. Saturday hours are about 10% of the overall system service hours and are approximately 11.3% of the annual cost of services. So another option would be to cut Saturday service if cuts are necessary.

The potential of an additional taxing structure was brought up for discussion and it was determined that the public would most likely not vote for that. It was noted that gas taxes cannot be used for funding transit services. Potential transit funding sources include property tax, income tax, payroll tax, sales tax, and fees.

Rogers explained that there could be a fee added to the utility bill for transportation use only. It does not have to be voted on by taxpayers, but it could be referred to a vote if specified by the City Council. The fee consists of a monthly charge, just like the storm water utility fee. The City of Philomath just enacted such a fee to help pay for street maintenance. So did the cities of Eugene, Springfield, and Portland.

Rogers stated that the Council would consider going to the voters to ask for more operating funds for specific services such as Police, Fire, and/or Parks & Recreation. Wershow observed that the impetus for changes needed for creation of a transit district would have to come from the people.

There was discussion about the 'compression' of the local tax structure, including that there is approximately \$2.00 per thousand of assessed value still available but that all property tax-funded agencies needs a portion of that.

Wilson asked what portion of that \$2.00 was needed to raise a replacement for the general funds currently helping fund the transit services. Rogers replied approximately \$0.205 per \$1,000 would raise approximately \$765,000.

Lowry made a motion to eliminate Saturday CTS services as an alternative to the currently proposed 35-50% service cuts if it is necessary to balance the City budget. Wilson seconded the motion. Verts reemphasized her opposition to service reductions. A vote was called and the motion passed unanimously.

Carroll encouraged the City to be proactive in other ways to reduce costs rather than to initiate service reductions. He has talked with Rhoads regarding performing micro-studies of the route system to identify service areas where cuts could be made to minimize impact on the most vulnerable citizens.

#### **V. FUTURE PASSENGER FARES PRICING REVIEW**

This will be a topic for discussion at the March meeting and Rhoads will provide comparative passenger fare data. During discussions with ASOSU last week, students expressed concerns about some of the route changes and how it is impacting students. They also expressed interest in participating in the passenger fare structure discussion so they are asking that it be reviewed before summer so they could participate in that process. It was noted that the last passenger fare increase was in 2000.

#### **VI. INFORMATION SHARING**

##### **A. ASOSU Group Pass Program Presentation**

Rhoads reported that Katin and she made a presentation to ASOSU last week regarding funding for the FY 04-05 group pass program. The City is currently receiving \$1.80 per term per student for CTS services and the City of Philomath is receiving \$0.05 per term per student for the Philomath Connection service. This year CTS will also receive group pass program funding for the OSU summer term, but the Philomath Connection will not receive it. CTS is proposing its fee increase to \$1.85 and that the Philomath Connection fee increase to \$0.06, for a combined total of \$1.91 per term per student. This reflects an increase of approximately 3%.

The ASOSU Incidental Student Fees Committee tentatively voted to support the fee increase. However, it is also necessary to present the request to the ASOSU Graduate and Undergraduate Senates.

Katin noted that OSU student ridership has increased over the past five years from 32% to the present day 43% and that currently an additional 6% of CTS ridership is OSU staff and faculty. However, OSU/ASOSU is only providing 6% of the cost of the services. The cost of CTS rides being received by the students is approximately \$501,000.00 and the value of passenger fares for the rides being received by the students is approximately \$130,000.00. Katin stated that with student ridership increasing the cost has to be covered. Under the proposal, the students would pay approximately \$100,000.00, or approximately \$30,000.00 less than the value of the passenger fares for their rides.

#### **B. Advertising on Buses**

Katin stated that Rhoads and he had a meeting with Obie Media representatives last week. The Obie representatives indicated they have already pre-sold approximately 60% of the ad space, and it will bring the City revenue of at least \$20,000.00. The first ads should be installed by the end of March or beginning of April. Pre-sold ads include Willamette-Greystone, Willamette Federal Credit Union, and John and Phil's. There will be a joint press release to let local businesses know of this opportunity to contact Obie and to get their advertising on the buses. DCA and other local business organizations will be contacted to inform them of the opportunity.

#### **C. Day Passes**

The new day passes are currently in use at the Northwest Transportation Conference being held in Corvallis this week. The pass must be validated either by the driver as the passenger boards the bus or it will be pre-validated by Corvallis Tourism. CTS will use the passes to encourage people to ride the bus. The drivers will provide a separate count for passengers using the passes. Rhoads distributed some passes to CACOT membership for their use in encouraging people to ride the bus.

#### **D. Implementation of New Routes, Designated Stops, Bus Shelters**

There continues to be both positive and negative comments about the route changes effective January 12. People are happy about the increased frequency of Route 6. As previously mentioned, the timing of the Route 1 continues to be an issue which merits future discussion. To date there have not been complaints about the pairings of routes as it relates to transfers.

On-time performance is still an issue. The drivers collected departure and arrival times for every route for two weeks. The data shows that for the past two weeks the entire route system operated at a level of 93% on time, using the definition of only more than five minutes being classified as late. There were many instances where a route was later than scheduled but within the five minute 'late window' so it was not counted as late.

The pattern that has emerged is that late trips are occurring after 3:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. As time permits, Rhoads will check for connections between passenger counts and the occurrences of the late trips. If the passenger counts are relatively consistent throughout the day but a route is still late, it could indicate there are issues with traffic congestion. There sometimes is also a cumulative effect of the extra time needed to load and assist passengers in wheelchairs.

The on-time performance of specific routes was reported:

Route 1 - 96% on time

Route 2 - 87% on time with a range of up to 19 minutes late

Route 3 - 98% on time; in those three episodes of being late during the two weeks, it was 11 to 12 minutes late each time and there were wheelchair passengers on board

Route 4 - 99% on time

Route 5 - 89% on time combined for both trips; the Route 5 trip paired with the Route 2 is only 79% on time as it is significantly impacted by the consistent lateness of the Route 2; during one trip this Route 5 was 27 minutes late

Route 6 - 91% on time

Route 7 - 99% on time

Route 8 - 92% on time

Late routes are also negatively impacting opportunities to transfer between routes, especially at the Intermodal Mall. The drivers are doing what they can to help passengers transfer without increasing the lateness of already late routes. Rhoads will continue to assess data and look for potential solutions, and the subject will be discussed again next month.

Lowry offered that the left turn signal at 9<sup>th</sup> St. and Circle Blvd. appears to be an issue contributing to the lateness of the Route 2. Rhoads noted that the City is considering the possibility of installing traffic priority equipment at that intersection in an attempt to help the situation. Morgan stated that the lateness of the Route 5 is making it very difficult to transfer onto other routes. Severin suggested that City staff talk with Laidlaw Manager Brian Maxwell about the possibility of adding CTS driver time during one trip every afternoon to help the routes get back on time. Staff will follow up with Laidlaw.

An OSU intern is updating information in the City's inventory regarding bus stops and shelters. The information will be used to develop a proposal for the location of designated stops and it will be presented in map form.

#### **E. Ridership Reports**

Ridership reports were distributed. CTS ridership for January was the 4<sup>th</sup> highest on record for a January. Further, ridership per hour increased to 25 per hour which was an improvement over the prior month. Rhoads had the data entry for December's Philomath connection ridership checked and it was correct as listed in the report.

#### **F. Winter Newsletter**

It will be prepared and distributed as soon as possible.

### **VII. ADJOURNMENT**

Verts made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Wilson seconded the motion. By consensus the meeting adjourned.

#### Future Meetings:

Wednesday, March 10, 8:00 a.m., City Hall Conference Rm. D

Wednesday, April 14, 8:00 a.m., City Hall Conference Rm. D

Wednesday, May 12, 8:00 a.m., City Hall Conference Rm. D