

**CORVALLIS CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMISSION ON TRANSIT
MINUTES**

May 12, 2004

Members Present

Craig Anderson, Chair
Chris Godwin, ASOSU ex-officio
Bob Lowry, Vice-Chair
Lita Verts
Bjorn Warloe
Stewart Wershow, City Council
Robert E. Wilson

Staff

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

Visitors

Paul Morgan

Members Absent

Scott Carroll, Unexcused

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Agenda Item	Inform- ation Only	Held for Further Review	Recommendations/Action
Introductions	x		
Approval of Minutes - April 14, 2004			Approved as submitted
CACOT/Visitors Comments			None
City Financial Strategies & Transportation Funding Alternatives Task Force			CACOT recommendations will be forwarded to the Urban Services Committee of the City Council
Review of Revenue Percentage from Rides/Services Received and Passenger Fares		X	
Route 1- Follow-up on trial period change implemented April 26			Recommendation to move forward with revising supply of bus schedules
Information Sharing	X		

CONTENT OF DISCUSSION

I. INTRODUCTIONS

Introductions were foregone.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - April 14, 2004

Lowry made a motion to accept the April 14, 2004 minutes as presented. Warloe seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

III. CACOT/VISITORS COMMENTS

Anderson noted that the June CACOT meeting will be his last one as he has reached the maximum 9 year term for commission members.

IV. CITY FINANCIAL STRATEGIES & TRANSPORTATION FUNDING ALTERNATIVES TASK FORCE

All agreed that they had reviewed the Phase 1 report. Rogers said the second half of the report would be discussed first.

TRANSPORTATION FUNDING ALTERNATIVES TASK FORCE

The project has been ongoing since August. Bob Wilson is the CACOT representative on this task force. Stewart Wershow is also a representative of the task force, joining halfway through the project. The Phase 1 report was received by City Council and it was also sent to interested boards and commissions, in this case, CACOT and the Bike/Pedestrian Commission. It will then go to the full Council following consideration by the commissions. The Council then takes action based on commission recommendations. This is scheduled to happen in June. Phase 2 of TFAFT will be to consider and report alternate and new funding sources.

Rogers stated that he will "highlight recommendations from the report that pertain particularly to transit and wants consensus, comments or a motion to send a recommendation to the full Council." He continued that on page two, under the heading of "description of values", the report states that the task force was asked to document the basis for their decision making. There are three listed:

1. There should be some level of reduction before asking the community for new revenue.
2. Preserve the existing infrastructure of a community investment in facilities, particularly with respect to streets.
3. Three commissions which could be quite helpful in this matter are Transit, Bike and Pedestrian and CIP. These three commissions would have expertise in prioritizing what could or should be reduced.

Rogers reviewed the section on street lighting. One recommendation was to transfer \$168,000 per year from the General Fund funding source to a Street Fund funding source. Street funds are not to be confused with transit funds. They are two distinct, separate, dedicated funds.

Under transit there are three important recommendations:

1. There should be some reduction. This is consist with their basic values. No specific amount was recommended.
2. Some of the cost of transit should be provided through a funding source that was not "general community" funding source. Today, primary sources of funding are fares, federal government, the general fund and OSU student group pass program. This recommendation is being considered in Phase 2.
3. When moving into Phase 2, which has occurred as of now, they will be considering a reasonable alternative to alternative funding for transit.

Verts said she "found it very depressing" that the task force would take a service that serves the most vulnerable members and suggest reductions. Rogers responded that transit is the only department that has not suffered any reductions in the past 2 or 3 budget years.

Katin stated that BPAC is the other commission which is affected the most from a transportation standpoint. He went on to say that during the last BPAC meeting, George Grosch, City Council representative to BPAC, made some very strong comments that were "highly supported" by BPAC as a group. Grosch observed that it appeared that there was a cutting of items that support and help reduce the overall transportation costs. Grosch went on to say that bike lanes, path maintenance, transit, alternative modes, and the bicycle/pedestrian program all help reduce, in effect, demand on streets which are the biggest users of money. Grosch said that representation on the Transportation Funding Alternatives Task Force appeared to be disproportionately weighted toward business.

Verts responded that Lincoln Elementary School has 90% of their students on low or reduced lunches. This points out the need for residents of the south part of Corvallis to have accessibility to public transportation.

Warloe asked to have Wilson clarify why, as stated, all the members of the TFATF supported moving at least half of the transit funding to a new mystery source that will be decided later. He asked what they are trying to accomplish by doing this.

Wilson responded that they were trying to provide money when there is no support. In order to get new money, "everybody's gotta bleed some." The target fund for a transit levy is approximately \$500,000. Any such levy would fall on the head of the property owners, who would not generally be represented as transit users. Wilson stated that the forthcoming TFATF meeting will be on May 26 and he cannot attend it.

Rhoads asked about the business energy tax credits that the City will receive over the next 5 years. She stated that she believed that the transit program did not suffer cuts in the last few years because of additional moneys coming into replace the loss of

property tax revenue. She stated that Katin pushed this new funding opportunity through the Department of Energy.

Rogers stated that it was a short term fix that was supported by the task force. He went on to say that business energy tax credits are not a long-term solution but rather a time saving measure while waiting for a long-term solution. He emphasized again that reductions must be made before any other solutions were implemented. That was just the basic mantra of the task force.

It was noted that transit reductions are not increased efficiencies but rather service reductions. There will not be personnel furloughed, for example.

Warloe commented that if there are to be cuts, they should not be deep enough to endanger federal matching dollars.

Wershow offered that he attended a lot of the TFATF meetings. He offered that Phase 2 is supposed to be responsible for finding the money. He went on to say that bicyclists and the disabled are as, or sometimes even more, adversely affected by poor quality roads.

Lowry commented that many people with lower incomes are dependent upon public transportation. He was appalled by the percentage cuts that have been suggested for transit versus some other programs. He stated that after review, none of the other programs come close to transit in suffering from proposed cuts.

Wershow stated that of the \$2.5-3 million cut from the budget, transit has not been cut at all.

Lowry commented that peak service hours only is not always practical although it is likely the most efficient type of transit service. He also noted that in one of the City surveys, a large percentage of people were concerned about traffic congestion. He recounted a story about avoiding Osborne Aquatic Center during the day because of the "disastrous" traffic situation there. Rogers noted that transportation funding cuts could potentially impact the City's ability to manage traffic through methods such as traffic signal programming and so on.

Verts commented that transit cuts could potentially lead to a loss of employment for those dependent on transit service. These people would then be dependent upon the community for social services.

Wershow defended the composition of the task force, namely having a lot of "business people" on the task force. One advantage is other funding recommendations, previously put forth and defeated soundly, such as the vehicle registration initiative. If new funding sources are not put out to a vote of the people it is entirely possible the voters would refer it. The task force needs to convince the community that they need to support a funding alternative.

Rogers asked the Commission for recommendations to be taken to TFATF and the Urban Services committee of the City Council. He noted that he understood that cuts in transit services were not desirable, but asked that if cuts had to be made in transit, where would CACOT recommend that they be made?

Wilson offered that a budget cut of \$35,000 would be reasonable and not have significant impact on the transit service because of the addition of bus advertising revenue. Lowry offered that eliminating Saturday services is another potential cut and was already offered as a possibility during a previous CACOT meeting.

Rogers asked if it was less important to keep the main transit program whole? Warloe asked about the mix of funding sources identified in the TFATF report. Rogers noted that it was street and general funds.

Verts cautioned again that the City should consider the unintended consequences to the community if there are cuts in street lighting or transit services.

Rogers asked if there was any disadvantage to transit if a portion of funding for street lighting was moved to the City Street Fund. None was noted by CACOT. Rogers also asked if CACOT would support a recommendation to fund transit outside of the General Fund. Anderson commented that he would support transit not having to compete directly with public safety programs like police or fire. Lowry and Verts noted past experiences with separate transit funding levies that required intense effort in time and energy for passage with the voters, in addition to there being a risk of losing a vote.

Rogers asked if CACOT would be supportive of a transportation utility fee that would be collected monthly like the storm utility fee. CACOT was not opposed to a new and alternative funding mechanism, dependent upon the source. Godwin suggested that the "right new money" was acceptable. CACOT members concurred with that view.

Lowry noted that in areas with no public transit, resort hotels and like businesses run their own bus system to ferry workers to and from work. The City of Bend recently voted to reduce its level of property tax funding for its public transportation system.

Godwin said that from an OSU student's point of view, a reduction in transit service could cause students to move closer to campus. This would have a negative effect on parking and traffic in and around campus. In response to an inquiry from another CACOT member, Godwin said most students seem to be relatively indifferent to a possible reduction in Saturday service. However, a reduction in weekday service, especially during the Fall - Spring school year, would have a significant negative effect on students.

It was noted that the City's next budget meeting is May 13.

CITY FINANCIAL STRATEGIES

Rogers provided information about the pending City budget priority process that will begin during Summer 2004 and conclude by March 2005. There will be a business plan for each activity, and there is already a transit business plan. Service packages will be used by the City Council to select potential cuts. The packages of proposed cuts will come back to CACOT and there will be an opportunity to recommend changes.

Proposed cuts will be identified in percentages, along with information about actual dollar impact. In the case of transit, a percentage of service hours will be used in cuts. Rogers said the City Council is looking for packages that are in the \$250,000 or larger dollar amount. Wilson asked what the General Fund contribution is to the transit budget. Rogers responded that the City's contribution to transit is \$800,000, with the total transit budget being roughly twice that.

Verts asked how rising gas prices are affecting ridership on the bus system. Rhoads commented that ridership has gone up. It was noted that fuel cost, in relation to total operating costs, is relatively small, estimated at less than 5% of the transit budget. Conversely, the percentage of revenue derived from passenger fares is approximately 11%.

Wilson asked that when it comes time to ask CACOT for its recommendations, that the information supplied for review include information about the City budget and potential cuts overall, not just information about transit alone. Rogers agreed to this request. He said the results of the prioritization process will be ready in March for potential use in fiscal years 2005-06 or 2006-07 dependent upon the City's budget process.

V. REVIEW OF REVENUE PERCENTAGE FROM RIDES/SERVICES RECEIVED AND PASSENGER FARES

This information was unavailable. The topic will be discussed next month.

VI. ROUTE 1

Godwin stated that the recent revision to Route 1 seems to be working wonderfully and better meeting the needs of OSU students.

Rhoads reported that Route 1's on-time performance has stayed about the same, consistently high. She said that due to rider concerns, drivers are now arranging transfers between the Route 1 and the Route 5 at Kings Blvd. and Monroe Avenue.

Rhoads asked the members what they have heard from the community regarding the new Route 1 schedule. Warloe stated there seems to be the same number of riders at HP, with no complaints. Wershow stated that he has heard no negative comments regarding the new Route 1 schedule. Paul Morgan had a similar comment.

Verts said that the only negative she has heard is a recent editorial in a local paper complaining about the advertising on the buses. Morgan said that he heard strong negative comments about the bus advertising from three riders, but when he explained to them that it was a new revenue source, they were okay with it.

Rhoads proposed moving ahead with revising the supply of bus schedules to reflect the changes to Route 1 since there have not been negative complaints at this point. It could cost as much as \$750 in time and material to revise all of the supply, and the expenditure should only be made if it's likely that the changes to Route 1 would become permanent in July. Warloe made a motion to accept the staff recommendation and it was seconded by Lowry.

Morgan asked if there was an intention for Route 1 outbound designated stops on Walnut for folks getting from one side of Timberhill to the other. Rhoads replied there would be designated stops at Kings and Rolling Green.

A vote on the motion was called, and the motion passed unanimously. It was noted that the supply of schedules will be revised a portion at a time.

VII. INFORMATION SHARING

- A.** Rhoads distributed copies of the April ridership reports. A few of the highlights were:
- ◆ CTS ridership was approximately 8% more than April 2003, although the number of days in a month will impact those numbers. It was also the second highest April ridership on record. Rides per hour was 23, which has been consistent with the previous few months.
 - ◆ Philomath had its second highest April ridership on record.
 - ◆ There was a slight increase in Dial-A-Bus ridership overall, while the number of ADA rides stayed about the same.
 - ◆ Results of the 2004 Senior/Youth/Disabled ridership report showed that youth ridership was up almost 5% compared to last year while disabled ridership was down by about 2%. Senior ridership has stayed mostly consistent over the years. Rhoads has asked CTS drivers

for their feedback on why they think the ridership percentages has changed.

Warloe speculated that youth ridership may be up because of the Corvallis High School renovations that have lessened available vehicle parking. Wershow expressed interest in the ages of the youth riders. Currently there is not a mechanism in place to collect that data.

- B. CTS provided 2,198 free rides on Earth Day April 22, 2004. The only route that seemed to have a significant change in ridership on that day was the Route 4.
- C. Rhoads thanked Verts for volunteering her time at the recent "Senior Opportunities and Services" event held at the Senior Center on a Saturday. Verts added that participation in the event seemed worthwhile and recommended it be considered for future participation.
- D. The implementation of designated stops is still moving forward and additional stop signs and shelters will be installed over the summer months.
- E. The on-time performance of the CTS routes improved to 95% during April, compared with 92% and 93% performance in previous months.
- F. The first advertising on buses payment was received from Obie Media.
- G. The City-sponsored "Get There Another Way" promotional event will be held May 17-21. CTS will provide free rides on Wednesday, May 19, and there will be refreshments available at the Intermodal Mall that morning as well.
- H. Katin said there have been 5 requests for the request for proposal document for the purchase of the Auto Announce System. He speculated that the proposal document was 99% done and would be ready to put in the mail very shortly. He added that he hoped the proposal would allow for a system which could record demographics of ridership.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Verts made a motion to adjourn the meeting. It was seconded by Wilson and the motion passed unanimously.

Future Meetings:

Wednesday, June 9, 8:00 a.m., City Hall Conference Rm. D
Wednesday, July 14, 2004 8:00 a.m., City Hall Conference Rm. D
Wednesday, August 11, 2004 8:00 a.m., City Hall Conference Rm. D