

CORVALLIS CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMISSION ON TRANSIT

MINUTES

December 8, 2004

Members Present

Scott Carroll
 Bob Lowry, Chair
 Brandon Trelstad
 Lita Verts, Vice-Chair
 Stewart Wershow, City Council
 Robert E. Wilson

Staff

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

Visitors

Tom Brennan, Nelson/Nygaard
 Paul Morgan
 Holda Biskeborn
 Ali Bonakdar, CAMPO

Absent

Bjorn Warloe

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Agenda Item	Information Only	Held for Further Review	Recommendations/Action
Introductions	X		
Approval of Minutes - November 10, 2004			Approved with corrections
CACOT/Visitors Comments	X		
Updates to the Draft Transit Master Plan		X	
ASOSU Night Life Shuttle Proposal			Removed from agenda until further notice
ADA Paratransit Passenger Fare to Ride Dial-A-Bus			Recommendation to maintain current \$1 fare with subsequent review in 6 months coinciding with County STF fare review
Holiday Trolley 2004	X		
Information Sharing	X		
Adjournment	X		

CONTENT OF DISCUSSION

I. INTRODUCTIONS

CACOT members, staff and visitors introduced themselves.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - November 10, 2004

The following are corrections to the November 10, 2004 minutes:

Michelle Rhoads reported Bjorn Warloe and Lita Verts were not present at the November 10, 2004 meeting. Jim Mitchell, Robert Straus and Hallie Atencio were present.

Bob Lowry noted on V. Background Information, where wording appears as Route 1 "path", it should read Route 1 "routing". He also noted the misspelling of his last name under item VII. Holiday Trolley, first paragraph. In item VII, second paragraph, the sentence should read "Ridership was highest the week preceding Christmas, nearly double the ridership of the prior week." On Page 5, bottom paragraph, second sentence, "STAC" should be identified as Benton County Special Transportation Advisory Committee.

Bob Wilson made a motion to approve the November 10, 2004 minutes with corrections. Scott Carroll seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

III. CACOT/Visitors Comments

There were none at this time.

IV. Updates to the Draft Transit Master Plan- Presentation by Nelson/Nygaard, Consultants

Steve Rogers started by saying there was a draft master plan in 1995 which was not adopted. The City Council would like to have a transit master plan which is adopted. Half of the chapters are being done in-house. The other half are being done through a contract between the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Nelson/Nygaard.

Tom Brennan reported Nelson/Nygaard has been contracted through CAMPO to update three of the transit master plan's chapters. Nelson/Nygaard also did a lot of the work on the initial transit master plan with the City. The three chapters to be updated are peer review, policy and plans element and marketing plan component.

Nelson/Nygaard did a review of fourteen peer cities. The peer cities had comparable populations, were located in the northwest or northern California, geographically similar, were in university communities and had similar characteristics to Corvallis. Of the fourteen peer cities, three were in Oregon, five in Washington state and four were college towns in California. The peer review provides an important set of benchmarks for policy makers to assess how the Corvallis transit service is serving the community.

The study looked at overall ridership and ridership per capita. Brennan pointed out some trends in the study. The Corvallis system is performing at a fairly high efficiency rate. Jon Katin asked if Corvallis' student boarding rate of 50% is considered better than average for a college town. Brennan responded that 50% is a good average compared to peer cities. Some of the cities in the study which had student boarding rates of nearly 95% were special circumstances. Corvallis offers a relatively low amount of service per capita compared to peer cities. This is offset by the relatively high productivity rate. Steve Rogers said in the early 1990s, there was approximately half as much service as today. This led to higher per capita boardings.

The study also asked the peer cities how much money was spent on marketing. Corvallis spends nearly \$28,000 per year on marketing, which is 48 cents per capita. The median for peer cities is 41 cents per capita. The study did not find a really strong correlation between dollars spent on marketing and ridership levels.

The second updated chapter was the policy and program chapter. This chapter looks at policy and programatic funding background for the system. Jon Katin asked about the process for lobbying federally to increase funding for local transit projects. Brennan responded that federal funding was supposed to be affected by Congress reauthorizing the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century. This action was postponed. There is no definite time-line for getting this done. There have been several updates to the Oregon Public Transportation Plan which are included in this chapter.

The study includes some relative policy elements from the North Corvallis Area Plan and the South Corvallis Area Plan. Corvallis has also adopted a Transportation Demand Management plan in 1998 which is included in the study. Destination 2025, CAMPO's update to the Benton County, Corvallis and Philomath long range plans which will all be included in a regional long range plan.

The third chapter was on marketing. The two major goals of the marketing element were to provide recommendations to improve bus ridership and overall alternative mode use throughout the community. Another purpose of the marketing aspect is to inform the non-riding public about the benefits of public transportation. Less than 25% of Corvallis residents actually use the transit system.

The study found CTS does a good job in maximizing participation in the community, such as providing transportation for local events. The study tried to develop easily implemented and relatively

inexpensive strategies. The study tried to pinpoint those who they felt would realistically have a need to access the transit system and not focus marketing funds and effort on those who historically do not and would not use the transit system. An important component of marketing is maximizing the public information system as a marketing tool. Route signs, bus shelters, the buses themselves are all great marketing tools for the system.

A review of the CTS schedule design showed they are well done and informative. One recommendation is to provide separate route schedules. These would be smaller, cheaper to produce schedules which could be distributed on the buses and would provide information on a specific route. Another recommendation is to consider a unified regional logo. This could cover Philomath Connection and CTS.

The City's website is a tool which to this point has been somewhat underused. Corvallis has a very web savvy population, given the university and a relatively well-educated populace. The information on the web is difficult to locate for some because it is embedded within the City's website and doesn't have its own web address.

Typically, large media buys such as television spots tend to be a relatively poor investment in smaller communities. Print media and radio spots tend to be a better investment of funds. Commuter spotlights would highlight normal working folks who bike to work or use alternative modes of transportation. Business partnerships can be effective as well, especially when employer discounts are used as additional incentives.

Speed, reliability, economy and convenience are four key factors in showing commuters the value of alternative modes of transportation. The focus of marketing these days is the competitiveness of transit.

Transit branding is a way to give transit services a certain feel and appeal to the transit user. Boulder, Colorado uses the slogan "Hop, Skip and a Jump" for their marketing campaign. Eugene, Oregon has a service called the Breeze Service, a high frequency shuttle route which serves downtown and the university. Local themes are incorporated into the shelters within this route. Bob Lowry commented that even if these types of slogans or bus names were added, buses and service materials should still be clearly marked to identify the service area covered by the bus.

A recommendation from this study is for the City to lead the way in cultivating employee use of transit through a City employee group pass program. Another longer-term recommendation is community-based social marketing. Used throughout Europe and starting to

catch on in the U.S., this program educates people with transit information and lets people make the choice for themselves to use alternative modes. Phone calls are made to those in a specific community. Then households are listed in three ways. The first is those who are already regular users of transit, bike user or pedestrians. The second category is those that are interested in transit but do not currently use the system. The third category is those not interested. If they are not interested, they fall off the list and no further money or action is spent on them. For those interested, they could be contacted to determine what transportation they would be most amenable to using. Materials would be provided to them based on their answers. For regular users, they could be part of an awards program. The results from this type of marketing has been very successful wherever it has been tried compared to other projects.

Steve Rogers said the Commission members should read the three chapters and make conclusions about making recommendations for changes in the chapters or make a recommendation to City Council to adopt the City Transit Master Plan. From a schedule standpoint, it was envisioned the first three chapters handed out last month, the three chapters handed out this month and some discussion as an agenda item for the January 2005 meeting.

Lita Verts asked about the time pressures for getting the plan approved. Rogers pointed out the plan was supposed to be approved seven or eight years ago. The current City Council was told the master plan would hopefully be to them before a new Council came aboard. This has not happened. From that standpoint, the time pressure is somewhat reduced. Michelle Rhoads offered to send the entire report electronically to those wanting to receive it that way.

Bob Lowry suggested CACOT recommendations on the three new chapters be sent to staff a week before the next meeting. Staff would then compile the changes and have it ready for Commission review and discussion at the January 2005 meeting.

Bob Wilson suggested that CACOT discuss the first three chapters of the Master Plan. He referred to Chapter 1, specifically the title "CTS Today". Wilson said that "Today" would have a different meaning if the plan were approved a year from now. He referred to Page 12, Section 1.4.3 as needing a more complete title as it is currently identified only as "Generally". He referred to Page 11, second sentence, that should have the word "funding" after the phrase "Section 5307".

**V. Night Life Shuttle Proposal- Presentation by Robert Straus,
Community Affairs Director for ASOSU**

No information was received by the Commission for this proposal. The topic will be removed from future agendas until further notice.

VI. Bus Route On-Time Performance

Bob Lowry presented an analysis of on-time schedule problems with specific routes. He assembled data from the City including the previous nine months until September, 2004. Michelle Rhoads then passed out information containing additional data from October and November, 2004.

Lowry pointed out these corrections to the City data from November, 2004: the Route 7 was 99% on time, and that the next two numbers, for Bus "F" should be 98%, then 96%. It was also pointed out the Route 2 turning left on Circle from 9th Street was causing the route to be late. If the Route 2 continued on 9th Street and took a left turn on Walnut Blvd., then took a right turn on Satinwood to join with its normal route, it would save on traffic congestion and time. Drivers have indicated there is little ridership on Circle between 9th Street and Highland. Other routes traverse this route. The Route 2 would then be able to better maintain its on-time performance while at the same time improving the on-time performance of the Route 5, with which it is paired.

Michelle Rhoads said the suggestion of the Route 2 change has been well received by the drivers. Rhoads and the drivers would support a trial period for the change. Lita Verts asked about methods to notify passengers of the change. Rhoads said notices would be posted on all bus shelters that serve the Route 2. Drivers would speak with any passengers boarding the bus in the affected areas. There would be at least a two week notice before implementing the change. Rhoads pointed out the success of the Route 1 change. She suggests a three month trial period. If the change proves successful, it could become a permanent change. If the change proves unsuccessful, it could go back to the previous route.

Bob Lowry believes more riders are impacted by the failure to keep the Route 5 on schedule than would be impacted by the Route 2 change.

Lita Verts made a motion to approve the change to the Route 2 for a provisional three month period. The motion was seconded by Bob Wilson. The motion passed unanimously. The change will go into effect in mid-January, and most likely January 10.

VII. ADA Paratransit Passenger Fare to ride Dial-A-Bus- Follow up discussion and action

CACOT discussed the staff recommendation that CACOT support CTS's intention to maintain the existing price of \$1.00 per one-way ride for CTS's ADA paratransit services, with a subsequent review in six months to coincide with the County STF (Special Transportation Fund) fare review process.

Bob Lowry asked if Dial-A-Bus is a fare-based system or a donation-based system. Michelle Rhoads answered it is a fare-based system. There is no sliding scale. The average (fully allocated) cost is about \$12 per ride. The passenger pays only \$1 per ride although Rhoads noted that Linda Elder, the Director of Dial-A-Bus, has occasionally paid the \$1 fare for people who could not afford it. Brandon Trelstad and Lita Verts asked Rhoads how many of the Dial-A-Bus riders could not afford the \$1 fare. Rhoads said she would gather that information. Jon Katin said Lisa Forkner, Special Transportation Fund manager, would be the best resource for this information.

Bob Wilson asked which organization funds Dial-A-Bus. Rhoads answered that two public agency contracts provide primary funding for the Dial-A-Bus program. One is through Benton County for special transportation services. The other is through the City for ADA paratransit services.

Bob Wilson made a motion to accept the staff recommendation that the ADA paratransit fare remain at \$1 per one-way trip. Lita Verts seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

VIII. Holiday Trolley 2004

Rhoads thanked Stewart Wershow and Bob Lowry for their help during the kickoff event for the 2004 Holiday Trolley service.

There are three new Trolley sponsors this year. Two of the sponsors signed up after the Trolley schedules were printed. Elmer's Restaurant on 9th Street and Bed, Bath and Beyond on 9th Street will be two additional stops not noted on the schedule. Starbuck's on 9th Street and OSU Bookstore were the sponsors who chose not to be involved with the program this year.

Brandon Trelstad asked if the opportunity still exists for sponsors to fund a stop. Rhoads answered sponsors are still welcome and encouraged to sign up as the Trolley is operating with a budget deficit. Bob Lowry asked if notices could be posted at the Intermodal Mall to highlight Elmer's and Bed, Bath and Beyond as

sponsors in lieu of their not being in the Trolley schedule. Rhoads said this is possible and would happen.

Lita Verts asked about the possibility of operating the Trolley later than December 26. Rhoads said merchants did not appear to be interested in having the Trolley operate later than that.

Rhoads noted the vital role CTS drivers perform in making Holiday Trolley service a success. One driver was instrumental in bringing the "Corvallis Chordsmen" to perform at the November 26 Trolley kickoff event.

IX. Information Sharing

A written Information Sharing report was distributed during the meeting.

Stewart Wershow said he thought it would be interesting to know how the City's peers identified in the Nelson/Nygaard report operated their transit services, be it in-house or contracted with a vendor as is the case with Laidlaw operating CTS. The City is looking at building its own transit center some day, which would make it more competitive for other vendors to make bids. Jon Katin noted that the CIP Commission approved moving forward with plans to design and locate a transit operations and vehicle maintenance center. The City could choose to bring the operation in-house or have a contractor operate and maintain the buses.

Michelle Rhoads said Corvallis is unique in that the contractor who provides the CTS services also provides the school district services. This arrangement helps keep down costs as Laidlaw's administrative costs are shared by the school district and CTS. Bob Wilson said it would be interesting to compare CTS operating costs per mile with the peers identified in the report.

X. Adjournment

Brendan Trelstad made a motion for adjournment. Lita Verts seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Future Meetings:

Wednesday, January 12, 2005 8:00 a.m., City Hall Conference Rm. D
Wednesday, February 9, 2005 8:00 a.m., City Hall Conference Rm. D
Wednesday, March 9, 2005 8:00 a.m., City Hall Conference Rm. D