

**CORVALLIS CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMISSION ON TRANSIT  
MINUTES**

April 7, 1999

Members Present

Craig Anderson, Chairman  
Bill Hoffman  
Caron Johnson  
Lita Verts  
Ed Barlow-Pieterick, Councilor

Absent - Excused

Joanne Adler

Absent - Unexcused

Dan Preller  
Jessica Pearse, ASOSU Ex officio

Staff

Neil Mann, Public Works  
Bernadette Barrett, Public Works  
Steve Rogers, Public Works

Visitors

George Curtin  
Bob Lowry

**SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION**

Agenda Item	Informa- tion Only	Held for Further Review	Recommendations/Action
Rail Passenger Service	X		
Provision of Fixed Route Operations/ Maintenance			Private Contractor/Joint RFP with School District, include minimum wage
Ridership Report - All-Time Record Ridership Month	X		
Saturday Shoppers' Shuttle	X		
OSU's 1999-00 Group Pass Program	X		
Regional Transit Study	X		
Laidlaw Labor Negotiations	X		
Status of Service Route Bus	X		

**CONTENT OF DISCUSSION**

**I. VISITOR COMMENTS**

Bob Lowry appeared before the Commission to note that the Oregon Legislature would be holding a public hearing on Senate Bill 1051, which provides funding to maintain and enhance passenger train service within Oregon. Without this funding, the existing train and thruway motorcoach service will be terminated. Mr. Lowry encouraged Commission members

to contact Legislators to support this funding.

George Curtin from the AFL-CIO appeared before the Commission to provide information regarding the on-going Laidlaw Transit, Inc. and Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) negotiations covering Corvallis school bus and transit drivers. He reported that Union representatives and drivers were at the most recent City Council meeting. He noted that several unfair labor practice complaints have been filed with the National Labor Relations Board against Laidlaw and that a hearing is scheduled for April 27. He indicated that additional charges have been brought by the Union, and he reviewed the alleged actions which led to the charges. Mr. Curtin requested that the drivers be hired as City workers and indicated that it was his opinion that the City could run the operation at a cost lower than Laidlaw's cost. If the City decided to continue to contract the transit operation, he requested that the City include a minimum wage in the Request for Proposal (RFP). He asked that the City Council issue a statement indicating they were going to establish a minimum wage in the next RFP, believing that Laidlaw would perhaps settle if this occurred.

In response to a question regarding the possibility of arbitration, Mr. Curtin indicated that Laidlaw has not agreed to submit the labor dispute to arbitration and that they are not required to do so. Mr. Curtin described the arbitration process. Commissioner Verts referred to the most recent afternoon strike by local drivers, leaving school children without a ride home. She noted the negative feelings toward the Union's efforts as a result of that action and suggested that they not do that again. Other Commission members expressed the same sentiments.

## **II. PROVISION OF FIXED ROUTE OPERATIONS/MAINTENANCE**

Public Works Director Mann referred to the staff report prepared in response to City Council's request for information regarding the provision of transit service in Corvallis and possible alternatives. He reviewed the schedule for this matter, indicating that the Urban Services Committee (USC) would take up the issue at their April 12 meeting. Staff will report CACOT's discussions to the USC members at that time, and he invited CACOT members to attend if they desired. The USC deliberations will then go to the City Council on April 19. He stated that the City Council has strongly remained neutral regarding the on-going labor relations issue between Laidlaw and the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU), encouraging settlement.

Transportation Division Manager Rogers reviewed the memorandum, focusing on the service delivery alternatives and evaluation of the alternatives. In response to earlier discussions, he noted that under the current contract, the City does have the ability to reject any drivers that we do not feel are providing service consistent with City expectations.

Mr. Rogers reviewed each of the four alternatives, including continuing the existing RFP and private contract; issuing an RFP and contract with a minimum wage and/or benefit condition; joining with Corvallis School District 509J to issue an RFP, with or without a minimum wage/benefit condition; and the City taking over those services currently performed under a private contract. He also reviewed the attachments, which provided information on the City's current transit operating budget, the estimated impacts of various Laidlaw driver salary proposals on compensation paid to Laidlaw, and the costs for the City to provide the service.

Staff's recommendation is that the City join with the School District to issue an RFP containing minimum wage requirements for CTS drivers. The City and School District would enter into separate contracts, with the School District making its own determination regarding minimum wages or other special features. The joint process will encourage competition and may attract additional bidders. This alternative has been discussed in preliminary meetings with the School District staff. It was noted that the City has conducted joint RFP's on a variety of City services, such as banking services and street work. The City's construction contracts contain the prevailing wage language, as required by state and federal law for public contracts.

Mr. Rogers noted that no proposal was prepared for the City to operate school bus transportation because of the many barriers to such an arrangement. It was noted that the School District does not own the 50 buses and 10 special ed buses that are used to provide the current service. Additionally, the two operations are covered by different federal and state rules.

It was noted that the difference between the compensation paid to Laidlaw in calendar year 1998 and the estimate for the City to operate the service is about \$375,000. Three factors were noted that affect this kind of increase: facility costs, increased salaries, and increased staffing due to loss of efficiency if not jointly operated with 509J. In response to Commission questions, Mr. Rogers indicated

that the City's cost to provide the service included estimated salary ranges for proposed personnel at levels within the City's existing Classification and Compensation Plan. He selected salary ranges which Public Works staff believe have similar qualifications. Any new positions would go through the City's Classification and Compensation process and the exact salary ranges would not be known until the outcome of that process. The salary ranges may be higher or lower. Staff was asked to prepare additional information regarding the cost for the City to provide the service using lower driver salary levels. That information will be prepared for the Urban Services Committee meeting. Commission member Verts expressed her support for the City to join with the School District in issuing an RFP and that the RFP contain a minimum wage. She indicated that she had discussed this matter with Commission member Adler prior to the meeting; Ms. Verts felt that Ms. Adler would also support that alternative.

Bob Lowry suggested that wages not be indexed to other providers and cited a California example where that had occurred, unreasonably inflating salaries. He felt that local drivers' salaries should not be compared to larger systems where drivers are faced with more difficult working conditions. He noted the turnover of CTS drivers in the last several years. He expressed concern for the overtime costs that would need to be paid. He related this to the Loop operation and the impact it has on the Loop to provide Saturday and holiday service. He expressed the need to balance the benefits between in-house workers and contracted workers as they relate to wages and work quality. He suggested that if the City were to own the transit facility, similar to the bus fleet, the City would be better able to attract more private contractor competition.

Following further discussion, Commission members expressed their support for Alternative 3, to join with the School District in issuing an RFP which includes a minimum CTS driver wage. Commission members also indicated support for the City to consider developing a transit facility through the Capital Improvement Program and for the City to further explore moving toward City operation of the transit service, possibly after the next 3-year contract period.

### **III. INFORMATION SHARING**

- A. Ridership Report.** The monthly ridership report was provided to the Commission. A new, all-time monthly ridership record was set in March, even with the 1-day

drivers' strike on March 30. The March ridership was 40,008--the first time ridership has exceeded 40,000. The last time a monthly ridership record was set was October 1996, when ridership reached 39,647. Concern was expressed that the 1-day strike, followed by the half-day strike, would discourage people from riding the bus since they can no longer depend upon the service.

- B. Saturday Shoppers' Shuttle.** Staff distributed the results of the Saturday Shoppers' Shuttle for the first five Saturdays. The results show that ridership is only 11.67 rides per operating hour. This is below the average Saturday ridership on the regular fixed route bus service (12.71 rides/operating hour) and well below the free holiday trolley average of 37+ riders per operating hour. The Downtown Corvallis Association has City Economic Development funding to continue this service through June 30, 1999. This service does not appear to be impacting ridership on the regular Saturday fixed-route service.
- C. OSU's 1999-00 Group Pass Program.** Steve Rogers and Bernadette Barrett met with Rob Specter, the new OSU Vice President for Finance and Administration, and Mark McCambridge, OSU Director of Business Services, recently to provide background information regarding the group pass program and discuss the program for 1999-00. The University has agreed to support the program for faculty and staff during 1999-00 at the same compensation level as 1998-99. A signed contract has been received.
- D. Regional Transit Study.** Staff reported that public hearings were held in Corvallis and Albany on March 16 to present preliminary information regarding three potential regional service levels to the public. Neither public hearing in Corvallis or Albany generated much public participation. The next meeting of the Steering Committee is April 20. CTS staff Barrett and Transportation Division Manager Rogers will attend the Technical Advisory Committee meeting on April 14. Another set of public hearings is scheduled for May. CACOT will be kept informed of this study and encouraged to attend the May Corvallis public hearing.
- E. Laidlaw Labor Negotiations.** Staff had no new information to report. It was clarified that staff has had no contact with Laidlaw representatives regarding negotiations other than to keep City staff informed of

the negotiating sessions. No new sessions have been scheduled to staff's knowledge.

- F. Status of Service Route Bus.** Staff reported that the service route bus has left the factory in Kansas and should arrive in Portland this weekend. The bus will be checked against the specifications by the West Coast distributor prior to delivery to Corvallis. The bus will then be checked locally to assure that it meets all specifications prior to City acceptance.

#### **IV. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 a.m.

#### **FUTURE MEETINGS:**

Wednesday, May 5, 7:50 a.m., City Hall Conference Rm. D

Wednesday, June 2, 7:50 a.m., City Hall Conference Rm. D