CORVALLIS CITIZEN'S ADVISORY COMMISSION ON TRANSIT
AGENDA

Wednesday; February 11, 2004; 8:00 a.m.
City Hall Conference Room D
501 S.W. Madison Avenue

I. INTRODUCTIONS

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - January 14, 2004

III. CACOT/VISITOR'S COMMENTS (Items not on Agenda)

IV. CITY FINANCIAL STRATEGIES & TRANSPORTATION FUNDING ALTERNATIVES TASK FORCE

V. FUTURE PASSENGER FARES PRICING REVIEW

VI. INFORMATION SHARING

A. ASOSU Group Pass Program Presentation

B. Advertising on Buses

C. Day Passes

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

E. Ridership Reports (CTS, Holiday Trolley, Philomath, Dial-A-Bus)

F. Winter Newsletter

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Future Meetings:

Wednesday, March 10, 2004 8:00 a.m., City Hall Conference Rm. D
Wednesday, April 14, 2004 8:00 a.m., City Hall Conference Rm. D
Wednesday, May 12, 2004 8:00 a.m., City Hall Conference Rm. D

The Corvallis City Hall is accessible to the public.
Please contact Michelle Rhoads at (541) 766-6916
if you will need any special accommodations to attend the meeting.

CORVALLIS CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMISSION ON TRANSIT
MINUTES
January 14, 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
John Hope-Johnstone, Corvallis Tourism
Paul W. Morgan
Roy Severin

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Agenda Item	Inform-ation Only	Held for Further Review	Recommendations/Action
Minutes- December 17, 2003			Approved as submitted
Visitor Comments	X		
Corvallis Tourism			Recommended free CTS bus pass for use by CTS & Corvallis Tourism
City Council Financial Strategies & Transportation Funding Alternatives Task Force		X	Input provided regarding information presented to date
Advertising on Buses			Recommended that the City enter into a contract with Obie Media
Lights at Intermodal Mall	X		
So. 3rd St. Improvement Project	X		
Implementation of New Routes, Designated Stops, Bus Shelters		X	Input provided
Community Transportation Pilot Project	X		
Ridership Reports	X		
Holiday Trolley & Inclement Weather	X		Suggestions for improvement noted
Bus Priority with Traffic Signals	X		
New Pedestrian Law	X		
Winter Newsletter	X		

CONTENT OF DISCUSSION

I. INTRODUCTIONS

John Hope-Johnstone was introduced to the group.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - December 17, 2003

Lowry made a motion to approve the December 17, 2003 minutes as submitted. Verts seconded the motion. A vote was called and the motion passed unanimously.

III. CACOT/VISITOR COMMENTS

Visitor Paul Morgan commented that people are smoking in and around the bus shelters, especially at the Intermodal Mall, Timberhill, and both sides of Kings Blvd by Buchanan Ave. He asked if more visible no-smoking signs could be installed to help the situation.

IV. PRESENTATION - CORVALLIS TOURISM

John Hope-Johnstone, Executive Director of Corvallis Tourism (CT) noted that 1 in 20 local conferences are comprised of young people who want to get around town. As an example, there will be a Special Olympics event in Corvallis in August 2004 and participants will be staying in local hotels. Every year there are three conferences with international participants and those participants typically use public transit to get where they want to go.

Hope-Johnstone suggested that a free pass program be created and that it would be mutually beneficial in these ways:

- Help sell conferences and tourism for the community
- Would welcome visitors to Corvallis
- Use existing capacity in the bus system
- Provide direct and indirect economic benefit to the community

Anderson asked Rhoads about the direct and indirect administrative costs of implementing a free pass program, including staff availability to coordinate the implementation. Rhoads replied that printing costs will be minimal and that there would likely be some cost sharing between CTS and CT. The Transit work plate is full, but if this is considered a high priority it will be worked in and

other items would be postponed. The Day Pass could also be used to promote CTS within the community and to encourage ridership.

Carroll made a motion for the pass program to proceed using the least cost and most simple option. Lowry seconded the motion. Rhoads asked Hope-Johnstone if CT coordinates the sales of conferences held on the OSU campus as well. He responded yes, CT is the "GSA" (agent) for OSU facilities too. A vote was called and the motion passed unanimously.

V. CITY FINANCIAL STRATEGIES & TRANSPORTATION FUNDING ALTERNATIVES TASK FORCE (TFATF)

Rogers presented information about the City's financial strategies. Copies of the City's public outreach information "Your City: Your Voice" were distributed to CACOT, and there was discussion about the City Council's Revised Budget Service Reduction Scenarios. City commission member/stakeholder budget information meetings will be held during the month of January, and there will be a Community Budget Workshop meeting at 7:00 p.m. on January 29th in the Corvallis High School cafeteria. Rhoads will e-mail a meeting reminder to CACOT members.

Rogers asked for input from CACOT on two issues:

- Strategies to deal with budget shortfalls
- Ideas for presenting information to the community and gathering input

Verts asked about the impact to the City if Measure 30 is not passed by the voters. Rogers responded that there would be no direct impact in that the City gets very little state funding, and not any general funds. However, there is the potential for secondary impact if the Oregon Legislature were to reconvene in special session and reduce other non-general state funds in order to mitigate the general fund cuts on other programs. Rhoads added that Corvallis could also be indirectly impacted through a reduction of social service funding provided by the state, as it might cause increased social service needs in the local community.

Wilson asked what the budget shortfall is that would be addressed if the Council pursued Alternative # 2 - Request Additional Property Tax Revenue. Rogers responded that it is approximately $1.5 million in FY 05-06. It was noted that the City's general fund contribution to the transit program is approximately $800,000 - about the same amount as was added to the FY 04-05 City operating budget for staffing new Fire Station 5.

Carroll asked how and why the City's finances got into this situation. He observed that the City is proposing to make the most sensitive cuts that will impact the most vulnerable citizens. Rogers responded that the City has already implemented all but just a few of the $3 million total service and budget cuts identified during the last prioritization process.

There was discussion about forming a transit district and that it would not reduce taxes, only shift them. Further, it would create its own governance, administration, and funding mechanism of taxes to provide its services. It was noted that the recently formed Corvallis Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) does not in itself create new funding sources, but instead plans and approves the use of federal funds for projects like transit.

Carroll asked if the items listed in the "Your Voice" hand out were all property tax funded programs or services. Rogers responded yes, but also that those are not all of the property tax funded services and programs provided by the City. Lowry asked about basic City administrative costs such as finance and budget. Rogers responded that each department of the City pays into the general administrative services budget. Wershow noted that these are considered overhead expenses. Wilson added that each new budget session requires analysis of increasing levels of data.

There was discussion about the public budgeting process and opportunity for community input. Anderson stated that he doesn't like the reductions presented and asked what other items the City may have to offer for consideration of potential reductions. Warloe noted that cutting expenditure budgets and reducing services and programs frequently results in a loss of its corresponding revenue. He asked if this loss of revenue was included in the budgeting process. Rogers responded it was included in the transit budget information but he could not respond to the information supplied by other departments.

It was suggested that there is a public perception that city government is "bloated." Further, that the City should show the reductions in staffing over the past few years via graph to provide a visual effect. Wershow noted that people like to vote on specific projects or services. Morgan encouraged the City to engage the public in top-end priorities only after convincing the public that there is a problem. Copies of the recent Citizen Attitude Survey will be distributed to the CACOT membership.

Warloe commented that if transit service levels are reduced by 50% that the anticipated revenue from advertising on the buses could also go down. There was discussion about the current taxing structure and assessed property values. Lowry stated he favors Council strategy Alternative # 4 - Seek a New Non-Property Tax Revenue Source, and in the form of a payroll tax.

Rhoads commented that during a recent stakeholder meeting she attended, there were expressions of support for transit services and its importance to residents of the community. Wilson stated that if a local income tax was instituted, there would be an administrative cost to it. Wershow noted that the City's FY 04-05 budget is balanced, but the Council is still considering cuts to minimize the cuts that would be necessary for FY 05-06 under current service levels. It was suggested that OSU/OSU riders should pay a higher proportion of the cost of providing transit services since they are a high proportion of the ridership.

Lowry provided staff with a list of comments on additional ways to present the case for transit during the community budget discussions. The list included:

- State what the loss of ridership would be
- State how many more vehicles would be on streets
- Offer more specific service cuts and the effect and dollar amounts, for example a) eliminate Saturday service; b) eliminate Saturday service plus change to 2 hour cycles on select routes
- Provide a reminder on what percentage of costs are labor

VI. INFORMATION SHARING

A. Advertising on Buses

The deadline for receipt of proposals to manage the City's advertising on buses program was extended to January 13, 2004 due to the inclement weather last week. The only proposal received was from Obie Media, which claims to be the 2nd largest transit advertising firm in North America.

Obie is offering a 30% share of revenue for the first three years, increasing it to 35% in the subsequent years. The proposal did not offer a minimum guarantee of revenue sharing as requested by the City. Apparently Obie only offers such a guarantee to systems with more than 50 buses. Obie also indicated there are several companies already interested in advertising on the buses.

Katin is recommending that the City proceed forward with entering into a contract with Obie Media for an initial term of three years with the option for two, one year renewals. He asked for CACOT's support.

Carroll made a motion to recommend that the City proceed with a contract with Obie Media, and Wilson seconded the motion. A vote was called and the motion passed by a vote of 5-1 as follows:

In Favor - Anderson, Carroll, Lowry, Verts, Wilson
Opposed - Warloe

B. Lighting at Intermodal Mall

Katin noted that some problems with the lighting at the Intermodal Mall are resolved at this point.

C. South 3rd St. Improvements

There was a meeting recently to gather public input on proposed improvements to So. 3rd St. Katin noted that there was positive feedback regarding the City's proposal, including that location of transit stops would coincide with locations for pedestrian crossings.

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

Most comments about the route changes have been positive although it's too soon to assess the full impact of the changes since they were just implemented on January 12. Response from the public about the new design of the CTS schedules has been extremely positive. The Corvallis Gazette-Times published a complimentary article about all the changes, but its focus was on the doubling of service to south Corvallis.

Anderson commented that the Route 1 has been running late and is not able to connect with the Route 5 at Timberhill. Verts expressed appreciation for Route 6's increased frequency of service, and requested that the community-build bus shelter on Ryan St. be included as one of the designated stops in the route system. Severin noted there has been a request for a Route 6 stop on 4th St. near the downtown Safeway store.

E. Corvallis Selected for ODOT Community Transportation Pilot Project

Corvallis is one of three communities across Oregon selected to participate in a future ODOT pilot project that will be tasked with resolving political, financial, and governmental barriers for the purpose of creating a community-wide transportation service delivery system. When the project is commences, it will involve the City, Benton County, the School District, private for-profit and not-for-profit organizations, and possibly other organizations.

F. Ridership Reports

CTS, Philomath Connection, and Dial-A-Bus ridership reports were distributed to the membership. CTS's December 2003 ridership was the 2nd highest for any December on record and was an increase of more than 1.2% over December 2002 ridership. Philomath's December ridership was the 3rd highest in the 4 years of service. Albany Transit reported the 2nd highest December ridership on record. The Linn-Benton Loop's December ridership was the highest in the past 4 years.

Anderson commented that there seems to be more Philomath ridership than is reflected in the report. Rhoads will assure the accuracy of the data entry.

G. Recap on Operations During Holiday Trolley & Winter Storms

The Corvallis Gazette-Times published a complimentary article about the 2003 Holiday Trolley service. A total of 1,448 rides were provided, which was less than in 2002. Ridership per hour in 2003 was a little less than in 2002, but was a little higher than in 2001. Unfortunately, late in the day on Friday, December 19th, the Trolley experienced a mechanical failure and the necessary repair part was not available until early the next week. As a result the small Collins bus was used in place of the Trolley during the last shopping weekend before Christmas. This may have had some impact on ridership. Verts noted that she heard compliments about the Holiday Trolley service from some senior riders.

For the most part CTS experienced high ridership during the inclement weather and community members and riders were very appreciative that the service continued during this time. There were a few complaints about the buses not being chained up during the first challenging snow day, which

caused some problems on NW Elks Dr. and Witham Hill Dr. The There also was at least one miscommunication with riders of the Philomath Connection regarding use of snow routes. Rhoads discussed complaints with Laidlaw management and those issues were addressed for future use.

A new concern was aired during this meeting. Drivers should be careful about what they are saying on the 2-way radios because passengers can hear their communications. Rhoads will address this with Laidlaw. A suggestion was made that signs for bus stops that might be impacted by inclement weather could include an extra metal sign that states something to the effect of "This stop may not be served in inclement weather." It was also noted that when it is time to revise the CTS schedules, information about inclement weather routes should be added to it.

H. Bus Priority with Traffic Signals

The traffic signal bus priority system is in effect and comments from CTS drivers have been positive so far.

I. New Pedestrian Law

CTS drivers have expressed concern about the impact of the new pedestrian law on the OSU Campus. An Oregon State Patrol trooper stationed at OSU informed Rhoads that their emphasis will be on educating people about the new pedestrian law effective in January rather than issuing citations. This is because there is understanding of the unique atmosphere of vehicle and pedestrian traffic on Campus. Rhoads is waiting to hear back from the City Police Department on this issue, but anticipates a similar approach.

G. Winter Newsletter

It should be distributed soon.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

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

Future Meetings:
Wednesday, February 11, 8:00 a.m., City Hall Conference Rm. D
Wednesday, March 10, 8:00 a.m., City Hall Conference Rm. D
Wednesday, April 14, 8:00 a.m., City Hall Conference Rm. D