

CITY OF FLORENCE TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
June 26, 2013 ** MEETING MINUTES **

CALL TO ORDER –

Chairperson Rose called the meeting to order at 1:32 PM.

1. ROLL CALL

L.A. Rose, TAC Chairperson; Bill Craig, TAC Member; Jane Ashley, TAC Member; Clara Kuhn, River City Taxi (RCT)/Rhody Express; Susan Hekimoglu, Lane Transit District (LTD) Accessible Services Specialist ; Dave Galati Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) Regional Transit Coordinator for Lane County; Nola Xavier, Mayor, City of Florence; Jeff Stump, Tribal Planner, Confederate Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua & Siuslaw Indians (CTCLUSI); Jacque Betz, City Manager, City of Florence; Katya Reyna, RARE, City of Florence; Mike Miller, Public Works Director, City of Florence; Darby Conner, TAC Vice Chairperson (arrived later);

2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS

*This is an opportunity for members of the audience to bring to the Transit Advisory Committee's attention any items **NOT** otherwise listed on the agenda. Comments will be limited to **3 minutes per person**, with a maximum time of 15 minutes for all items.*

Two public comments were submitted to Katya Reyna. Included in attachments.

4. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Susan Hekimoglu would like to add information regarding funding of Rhody Express to May minutes. Katya Reyna will add this information to May minutes.

Bill Craig moves to approve.

Jane Ashley seconds.

5. TRANSIT CONCERNS AND PAST TAC EFFORTS

Bill Craig: Concerned with Rhody Express marketing. If ridership is down at some stops, for example at Greentrees stop, we need to make sure route information is being distributed. In order to serve Florence's aging population who may not be able to drive anymore, public transit access must be a priority.

L.A. Rose and Mayor Nola Xavier: For years, the Transit Advisory Committee (TAC) was very involved in public relations for the Rhody Express. Flyers and route maps were distributed in all public facilities in town which was very important especially in gated communities. There were also special promotion "shopping days"—free Rhody Express days. TAC lost momentum after the Transportation System Plan was completed in 2011. We need to improve our public relations for

Rhody Express going. Logistics of serving gated communities has always been very difficult. Sometimes the problem lies in the distance to a stop, rather than lack of information.

6. ROUTE CHANGE DISCUSSION:

Katya Reyna: Concerned with current proposal, because it does not include the extension of hours, and if we don't extend the hours, we cannot provide service for (Casino) employees.

Susan Hekimoglu: It would be much more expensive to extend hours at this time. By starting off with these changes in the current proposal, we could conduct a Rhody Express one-year pilot program at minimal cost. The rerouting in the current proposal would not add any additional cost, since it would be making the same eight trips per day, during the same hours. A one-time contribution of \$40,000 from the Tribes would cover most of the public outreach and relocation of some stops for the pilot project. Lane Transit District (LTD) would work on creating rerouting information, signs, and maps.

If we wanted to expand the hours from 6 AM -6 PM for this pilot program, it would cost an additional \$78,000 per year (which either Tribes or City of Florence would have to pay). After a year, we can examine how the public has received the changes, determine Rhody Express demand and ridership, and possibly apply for more money next year and extend hours in future.

After conducting studies and because of declining ridership, LTD believes the Rhody Express should be taken off Hwy 101 and that the Greentrees stop does not pick up enough riders to be worth the detour cost. Rerouting at Safeway may also cause some controversy among the public.

We would work to accommodate Greentrees bus riders in particular. Residents from Greentrees could be picked up by River Cities Taxi and taken to the nearest bus stop. The cost would be covered by ADA funds, regardless of disability level. There are other justifications for the funds such as limited sidewalks and safety concerns.

We will not know what the impact on ridership will be until we get the information out to the public and receive feedback.

L.A. Rose: Scenario 3 in the LTD proposal might be a good option because it does not disrupt the current Rhody Express Route, but instead provides connectivity between Three Rivers Casino van service and the Rhody Express with transfer point at Grocery Outlet. We could instead use the \$40,000 to have the pilot program as a "Saturday Special" route. This would give exposure to the casino and possible changes.

Staff provided an excerpt from the City of Florence Transportation System Plan:

“Two improvements were identified by survey respondents that could be implemented at a lower cost. In order of priority these are:

- Providing Saturday service between 10 AM and 6 PM, serving social and shopping trips on the weekend. The added service would increase fixed-route operating costs by approximately 20% from current levels.*
- Adding weekday service between 6 AM-10AM, making Rhody Express an option for those who wish to use it to commute to work or get to morning classes. The added service would increase fixed-route operating costs by approximately 50% from current levels. “(TSP, 2011, Page 119)*

7. PUBLIC OUTREACH:

Susan Hekimoglu: Before we implement any pilot program, we would need to do a lot of public outreach to insure that we have the community’s support. If there was big opposition, LTD would have to reexamine the proposal. The public outreach process would include distribution of proposed routing maps and brochures, ads in the Siuslaw News, and utility bill inserts. We would solicit public comments and reconvene afterwards to discuss any possible alterations to the proposal. Making a change to the route through the pilot program could bring public awareness about the Rhody Express- resulting in more interest and suggestions.

Mayor Xavier: The City could host an open house at City Hall with information on the proposed route changes.

L.A. Rose: There could be presentations given at homeowners associations to reach out to residents in gated communities.

Darby Conner: Can assist with any flyering that needs to be done.

Xavier: Greentrees and Florentine Estates have a monthly Saturday coffee gathering which would be a great place to do handout brochures.

8. ROUNDTABLE:

Bill Craig: Likes the idea of a one-year pilot program and it could be very beneficial for the transit system. Felt concerned that it may be diluting service to community if the casino purchases the Rhody Express. In favor of extension of route times, even if it means going over 60-minute route, so as to not eliminate any current stops.

Jacque Betz: Research was done on the former Community Development Director Sandra Belson’s computer and communications with the Tribes regarding this plan were found.

The current proposal from the Tribes states: *“The City of Florence and the Tribes are both authorized under ORS 190 to enter into the Agreement when it furthers economy and efficiency in local government which this mutually beneficial agreement certainly would accomplish. A separate Transit service operated by the Tribes in Florence directly competing with the City of Florence Transit service is not an efficient use of State funding and minimizes the effectiveness of the City funding.”*

Believes LTD's proposal for a one-year pilot program would be a great approach to see if the City could increase Rhody Express ridership. We should not, however, be eliminating routes that are being used by the public. After a year, LTD will measure the success rate of the route changes and ridership numbers. If the pilot program turns out to not be "mutually beneficial," we can terminate that ORS agreement and the pilot program in order to go back to the current Rhody Express route we have.

Believes entities should be sharing resources whenever possible and this will be a great partnership.

Jeff Stump: Tribes have a Casino transit service, but it would benefit both entities to not compete with the Rhody Express. If we show that this route has been successful with the pilot program (through ridership increase) we can seek more funding next year. The Tribes are currently working on their transportation plan and the Rhody Express is a high priority project because it would have the highest impact on tribal members and employees.

Susan Hekimoglu: We are currently locked with our funding and there are currently not funds available for expansion of hours. So for now, we could do this one-year pilot program and then seek more funding for further improvements next year.

Making this change will provide insight on what people in Florence want. The route has been the same for a very long time and by modifying the route it will bring awareness and encourage people to become engaged. During this public outreach process, more comments and suggestions may be made which would be taken into consideration and possibly implemented in the future.

The Tribes should not have their own bus system competing with Florence, but rather working together with the City to improve the Rhody Express. The Tribes can apply for 5311 funds next year to assist Rhody Express if the pilot program proves to be successful. Expanding hours and routes can also be discussed next year when funding becomes available.

There are many possibilities for the future of the Rhody Express such as extending north to create connectivity with Yachats to the complete coastal transit route.

The Window for public comment will be from when ads are posted (ASAP) until the public hearing on August 5th. We hope to begin the Pilot Program on September 1, 2013.

Annual 5311 funding applications are due in March. If any additional changes to the route are desired, such as extending the hours, LTD will co-apply with the Tribes to receive more funding to cover any expansion.

9. DECISION:

TAC Chairperson L.A. Rose motioned to recommend the City Council to begin a public outreach process for "Scenario 1" in the current LTD proposal.

TAC member, Darby Conner seconded.

By voice; all ayes. Motion carried unanimously.

10. NEXT STEPS:

Jacque Betz: LTD proposal needs to include reasons for implementing the pilot program, such as the risk of losing funding due to a loss in ridership. Betz would like to have this proposal presented to City Council at the August 5th meeting (public hearing).

The Council will be making two decisions:

1. Moving forward with TAC's recommendation to being the public process of a pilot program.
2. The City entering into an intergovernmental agreement with The Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians.

Hekimoglu: The minutes from ODOT Public Transit Advisory Committee meeting state the ridership information and she will retrieve those to include in the proposal. LTD will work on a final draft of the proposal to present to City Council in August.

Craig: There is some confusing language in the 'Tribes' proposal. Some language included in the proposal may not be relevant to current situations and should be modified.

MEETING OUTCOMES:

TAC recommends City of Florence to proceed with LTD and the 'Tribes' one-year pilot program proposal.

The Tribes, LTD, and the City of Florence will be working together and sharing resources to promote a one-year program and conduct public outreach.

LTD will begin developing the following items in preparation for the Public Outreach Process and City Council meeting:

- Intergovernmental agreements (City, LTD, Tribes)
- Press Release and 1/2 page ad for review ASAP for the Siuslaw News
- Full page flyer for general distribution
- New Bus Stop Signs
- Memo to City Council: Current memo will be revised as discussed. Adding information on loss of funding risk and a breakdown of how \$40,000 from Tribes will be spent.

ADJOURN AT 3:07 PM