

CITY OF FLORENCE TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
May 22, 2013 ** MEETING MINUTES **

CALL TO ORDER –

Mayor Nola Xavier called the meeting to order at 1:30 PM.

1. INTRODUCTIONS

Kristine Sirmans, Lane Council of Governments (LCOG); Susan Hekimoglu, Lane Transit District (LTD) Accessible Services Specialist; Mike Miller, Public Works Director, City of Florence; Will Mueller, LTD Service Planning Manager; Darby Conner, TAC Member; L.A. Rose, TAC Member; Bill Craig, TAC Member; Jane Ashley, TAC Member; Clara Kuhn, River City Taxi (RCT)/Rhody Express; Cosette Rees, LTD; Max Kuhn, RCT/Rhody Express; 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.

2. 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.*

There were no public comments.

3. NOMINATIONS AND APPOINTMENTS FOR CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR OF TAC

Darby Conner nominated **L.A. Rose to Chairperson of TAC**, Bill Craig seconds, unanimous ayes.
Rose nominated **Darby Conner to Vice Chairperson**, Craig seconds, unanimous ayes.

4. MAYOR NOLA XAVIER

Role of TAC:

- Primarily, TAC is an advisory committee to the City Council.
- TAC promotes the Rhody Express
- Past accomplishments: information booth at green fair, distributing brochures, encouraging ridership, updating all the Rhody Express bus stops
- When public has a concern about the bus, they are instructed to report them to TAC, who in turn analyses the problem and presents it to City Council.
- If TAC has ideas about funding the bus, or increasing ridership budget proposals also considered.

Other Information:

- Funding for the Rhody Express comes primarily through grants which are filtered through LTD. The city of Florence makes up the difference. Very much a partnership between the City of Florence and LTD to run the Rhody Express. *Added later, Hekimoglu: Currently, LTD provides a 50% match for the grants they receive. The City of Florence is contributing \$30,000 and Fares make up about 6% of funding. LTD uses discretionary special transportation fund money to make up the difference between what the City and fares contribute.*

5. PRESENTATION BY LANE TRANSIT DISTRICT

Susan Hekimoglu, Accessible Services Specialist:

Oversees rural services contracts, including the Rhody Express. These services are funded by "Federal 53-11 Rural Funds," which are not discretionary. LTD is the special transportation agency designated for Lane County.

History of Rhody Express:

- Max Kuhn of River City Taxi, currently runs Rhody Express:
 - Rhody Express started October 2001, (RCT currently working on third contract proposal)
 - There was a non-profit prior to RCT who ran the Rhody Express, then there was a voucher program, then became the bus program.
 - Started off at 6 hours a day, not up to 8 hours a day.
- Hekimoglu:
 - LTD has had a great partnership with RCT in running the Rhody Express
 - TAC used to be very involved, and believes that increased ridership
 - A couple years ago, ADA service was added to the Rhody Express. Having a fixed route is required to have ADA curb-for-curb service (complimentary service); Florence has about 25-30 of these rides a month.

Current Situation:

- There is no funding to cover ADA costs; any changes we make to route must take that into consideration.
- Routing has not changed much in the past.
- In February, 2012 LTD received a request from the Confederated Tribes [of Coos, Lower Umpqua & Siuslaw Indians] to expand service to Three Rivers Casino; Fall of 2012, Jeff Stump (CTCLUSI) contacted Hekimoglu again regarding the proposal.
- Will Mueller (LTD) looked at ramifications of potential route changes to Rhody Express
- Right now, the Rhody Express runs on a 1-hour route, keeping the scheduling very simple and easy to catch - LTD believes it should stay as a 1-hour route.
- "5311" is general fund, but Rhody Express is also funded by Special Transportation Funds which are elderly and disabled funds- So a primary goal of the Rhody Express is to serve the elderly and disabled.

Proposal and its Process:

- Hekimoglu and Mueller came to Florence and did some route timing on the Rhody Express to develop proposed route change map (distributed- see attached).
- They concluded that in order to add Casino to route and keep it at 1-hour, there would have to be some changes in the current route.
- Current Proposal include eliminations of 4 stops in current route (distributed- see attached)
- LTD considered three proposals:
 - Expand service to casino, add another bus to keep route at 1-hour (estimated cost: \$540,000); Not an option
 - Make route an 80-minutes, with 40-minute frequency instead of 30, add another bus, keep all existing stops (cost too high); Not an option
 - **Examine ridership and modify route to serve the casino (actual proposal)**
- LTD believes this proposal would be a good pilot project because ridership has been declining over the last two years:
 - In FY 2011, Rhody Express carried 13,711 rides for the year
 - In FY 2012, only had 13,052
 - This year, after 10 months of ridership counts, projecting to have 10,423 for FY
 - Of all the 5311 programs this year, Florence was kept flat, while others increased at least 3%
 - LTD believes TAC being in session in the past increased Rhody Express ridership and TAC being disbanded in past couple years has had effect on ridership.

- Ridership has a huge effect on funding, if we don't get our numbers back up, we risk having Rhody Express funding being cut.
- LTD is proposing a one-year pilot program to see what would happen with ridership.
- Hekimoglu has not heard of any other proposals being made for Rhody Express.
- Chairperson Rose says he has heard residents of Driftwood Shores (which is now part of the City) express want for Rhody Express service.
- Will Mueller (LTD) Presented Rhody Express route modifications:
 - Hand-out: "Rhody Express Route Re-reckoning-May 2013" (see attached)
 - As a transit planning principle, you want the bus to run at least once an hour- for convenience and consistency—Highly recommended
 - Current routing time estimate= 57 minutes roundtrip; Casino route time estimate= 7 minutes round trip; Total of both loops= 64 minutes
 - Mueller believes having 64 minute route would alter the scheduling too much, making it less convenient for riders, not increasing ridership, and recommends we modify route, to cut those extra 4 minutes.
 - Potential time savings- recommended based on ridership numbers (all 4 modifications below would have to be made to get full 4 minute reduction):
 - Greentrees East (only approx. 10 rides a month, less than 1% of ridership)
 - Senior Center
 - 43rd/Oak routing after Fred Meyer (will still stop in front of Fred Meyer, but not cut across shelter, which would reduce waiting time.)
 - Safeway re-routing
- Request from CTCLUSI was given to the City in 2012, through former community development director, who forwarded it to Hekimoglu (LTD).
- LTD met with Stump and went over some scenarios, did research of costs and brought back the three scenarios, which Stump presented to the Tribes. Tribe said they would be able contribute \$40,000.

6. ROUNDTABLE

Jacque Betz:

- Believes the City was left out of this process. Points out that there will be costs for reeducating the public on re-routing and expanding stops.
- Asked if there is anything in our Transportation System Plan (TSP) that addresses whether or not service can be expanded outside the city limits or that Rhody Express stay at 1-hour route.
- Emphasized the importance of consulting the TSP for recommendations to increase ridership (i.e. expanding hours). We cannot consider a proposal from the Casino, which is not in the TSP without at least also looking at the ones that are.
- TAC is responsible for reviewing all possible proposals and making a recommendation to Council.
- TAC needs a formal proposal from CTCLUSI (Jeff Stump).

According to the Transportation System Plan for the City of Florence, adopted December 2012 "[Rhody Express] Service should not be expanded outside the city limits at this time unless paid for by those benefiting from the service (for example, through a direct monetary contribution or by charging a premium fare)" (Section 7, page 119). No policy in plan says anything about keeping at 1-hour route; this is a recommendation from Transit Planners at LTD. For more information, please refer to Transportation System Plan for the City of Florence, found at <http://www.ci.florence.or.us/planning/transportation-system-plan>.

Jeff Stump:

- Believes the Casino also feels left out [of the transit system] and felt a partnership between the Tribes and the City would be beneficial.
 - In the process of making Coordinated Transit Plan for Tribes.
- Casino has a lot employees that would benefit from transit service

Cosette Rees:

- There was no intention to leave the City out.
- The city was involved up to a certain point and then it was handed off to LTD.
- We are very happy that TAC is reactivated, because we [LTD] have done as much as we feel comfortable doing. We are not here to dictate. We are not here for a decision, but to hear what the City's priorities are.
- TSP is a very good resource, but when it was written the Rhody Express had good ridership, so we need to take the next step to do what makes sense for the current times.
- TAC has a lot to consider, and it would be helpful to have some direction from them.
- LTD can provide a pointed list of the scenarios and choices.

Susan Hekimoglu: Proposal will not increase cost, but CTCLUSI has offered to contribute \$40,000.

Will Mueller:

- Rhody Express must increase ridership or risk having funding cut, and having the Casino give \$40,000 would be a great benefit.
- Cost of this proposal are minimal
- The TSP has great ideas, but where is the money going to come from to fund them?
- Maybe extending the hours would be a good proposal, because it would meet the Casino's workers' needs, as well as the community needs
- This is an attempt to get a starting point to see how the City and the Casino can work together.
- Doesn't see how City could fund any TSP projects without the Casino's involvement

Hekimoglu: LTD just finished their budget, and these projected ridership numbers were made as of a few weeks ago.

Clara Kuhn (RTC): Has very precise ridership numbers.

Darby Conner:

- Asked if Three Rivers Casino already has other transportation, would the Rhody Express contain/be included in the same promotions, advertising, etc.

Stump:

- Promotions for transit come straight from Casino, no federal money.
- Tribes are in the initial stages of developing a Transit System with federal parameters: Coordinated Transit Plan.
- Part of the Coordinated Transit Plan is outreach to the stakeholders; that will be developed
- The Tribes would manage their future transit system/plan, including promotions
- But they already see there is a need for increased transit, which is how the proposal came about, and Tribes made that comment in the City's Transportation System Plan.
- Current casino transit is not for employees, only tourists. Since it is funded by Casino and not federal money, they can restrict that.

Hekimoglu:

- LTD believes that the Rhody Express must increase ridership, in order to sustain funding and that is their motive for this proposal.
- The Tribes could technically start their own transit agency in Florence if they chose.
- The reason we did not go forward with the first two proposals, or expanding hours was because the Tribes rejected them (they are funding the project- they would have to pay for the difference)
- If we keep the route to one hour for this pilot project it would increase ridership.
- This pilot project would be low-cost, however there would be costs for ADA (people from Greentrees)
- We still have work to do, refining the proposal and we would still need to ask the riders and get information out on the rerouting.

Betz:

- Recommends the written proposal from Stump be addressed to Chairperson of TAC, and the proposal will be vetted through everyone present at meeting.
- Ultimately, TAC makes the recommendation to City Council.
- We need to do our due-diligence to ensure the public we looked at all possibilities and that we're not just expanding outside the city limits when there is a need within the city.
- Katya Reyna is the staff person for TAC, correspond with her

Hekimoglu:

- Will forward all information and scenarios she has, including cost estimates

Mayor Xavier:

- Proposal must include implications, possible outcomes enough information for TAC to make a decision.

Bill Craig:

- We have had many suggestions in the past, and should consider this as a proposal along with others.

Hekimoglu:

- We have had no other requests to expand anywhere else
- There is a possibility that with the \$40,000 from the Casino we could expand the route as well as the hours, and have the bus start at 8 AM or 9AM-7 PM.

Kristine Sirmans:

- Requests that we look at more than just ridership numbers before we take off anything from the current route

Rees:

- Grateful for TAC and looking forward to reestablishing these relationships and resources

L.A. Rose:

- Happy to be a part of this process again, and that TAC is a part of this decision making
- TAC needs a formal proposal from CTCLUSI
- TAC needs to see all these possible scenarios with figures and numbers
- TAC needs to see Breakdown of ridership numbers for at least the past year from RCT/ LTD
- Would like to see a scenario where Rhody Express runs from 6AM to 6PM- to provide for workers at Casino—especially since expanded hours was mentioned in TSP (*From LTD?*)

Please have these documents to TAC by June 14th.

7. FUTURE TAC MEETING DATE:

June 26th, 1:30 PM at City Hall

L.A. Rose adjourned the meeting at 3:00 P.M., second by Bill Craig

APPROVED BY THE TAC ON THE 26 DAY OF JUNE, 2013

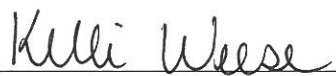


Chairperson, L.A. Rose

06/26/13

Date

ATTEST:



City Recorder, Kelli Weese

6/27/13

Date

