

**MINUTES OF THE
COMMITTEE ON ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION
July 17, 2013
9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**

CAT minutes may be obtained in alternate formats by calling TriMet's Accessible Transportation Program Administrative Offices: (503) 962-8200/TTY 711, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm weekdays

Attendees: Jan Campbell, Chair; Trish Baker, Dr. T. Allen Bethel, John Betts, Harold Cheeks, Patricia Kepler, Arnold Panitch, Zoe Presson, Terry Watson, Chris Walker

Staff: Corrinna Griffis, Najma Haji Mohamed (Intern), Allen Morgan, Kathy Miller, Clay Thompson, David Trimble

Guests: Lina Bensel, Lt. Eric Schober (Transit Police), Ragan Whiting (Bethesda Lutheran Communities)

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA AND MEETING

Jan Campbell, Chair, asked for approval of the June 19 meeting minutes.

Trish Baker noted one correction and said that Paul Meyers was incorrectly identified as a Transit Police officer.

Trish Baker made a motion to approve the June 18 meeting minutes with the correction as noted. The motion was seconded and passed.

ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIR

Jan asked about the dates for the Oregon Transit Association Conference. Kathy Miller said that conference will be held October 6-9 at the River House and Convention Center in Bend. She said that the conference agenda is not yet available.

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WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

Kathy reported there was one piece of written correspondence included in the packet which was staff's response to the letter received from Adam Kris at the June 18 meeting.

STAFF COMMENTS

Corrinna Griffis introduced Najma Haji Mohamed who is working as an intern in the LIFT program through Summer Works. Najma said that she is a student at PCC and will be working on a survey of LIFT and MTP customers' experiences using each of the services.

Allen Morgan reported that the next group of 70 new 3100 series buses will begin in service starting Tuesday, July 23. New features of the buses include: 1) a lighter-weight seating with a 12-year guarantee; 2) a fold-up companion seat in the securement area; and 3) a ramp with improved slope and a sensor to determine if the ramp will be extended to the curb or the street. If the ramp is extended to curb, the internal slope of the ramp will remain the same as other buses. If the ramp is extended to the street, the inner slope will fold down and the entire ramp slope will be 1:8. By comparison, older buses have a 1:4 slope.

Allen added that the buses will be located at the Center Street and Merlo garages and most likely used on all lines.

Kathy reminded CAT members about the tours of the PMLR alignment scheduled for the mornings of August 2nd and 9th. She will send a final schedule by mail.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Lina Bensel commented on the process for making LIFT reservations. She expressed concern that the reservations staff doesn't allow enough time for customers to document their pickup and drop-off times. She added that oftentimes they also don't allow the customers to respond to their questions.

Patricia Kepler commented that she has noticed the exact opposite and feels that at times, she is asked the same question repeatedly.

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TRANSIT POLICE REPORT – Lt. Eric Schober

Lt. Eric Schober reported that crime has been less this year compared to the same period last year.

The Transit Police are preparing for the use of TriMet's new fare payment system for customers using Smart phones. Staff has also been conducting undercover operations at several platforms to address vandalism to ticket machines.

There was discussion about personal safety issues in the downtown area, particularly in the evenings. Lt. Schober said he would relay the concerns to the force.

Arnold Panitch asked if the problems are on the transit system or on the street and not related to transit use. Lt. Schober responded that the problems are shared. He estimated that at times, up to 75 percent of those in the downtown area may be from other states and don't understand the fare system. They are still cited and excluded from the system.

Trish commented on the number of transit users she observes who continue to use their cell phones and electronic equipment in plain view. Lt. Schober agreed and said that electronics and bicycles are the targets for thefts.

Arnold asked about the correct protocol for bringing a bike on the system. Lt. Schober said that it is safest for the bike owner to stand next to his or her bike to discourage theft.

Chris Walker suggested that there may be some benefit in using some type of locking system on the bike hooks.

Jan commented that it is very difficult for people with disabilities to get on the MAX and Portland Streetcar because of all the bike riders, particularly in the summer months.

Jan suggested that Lt. Schober might prepare a presentation on general safety tips for using transit to provide at the September CAT meeting. He agreed and will follow-up with staff.

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Lt. Schober said that Commander Kevin Modica replaced Commander Crebs on July 4th and that he will attend a meeting in the near future. Commander Crebs has moved to the position of Assistant Chief of Services.

The CAT asked Lt. Schober to convey their appreciation to Commander Crebs for his work with the committee and also thanked Lt. Schober for his monthly reports.

CAT REPORTS

CAT Executive Committee

The CAT Executive Committee meeting minutes were distributed at the meeting.

Jan reported that the Executive Committee had also attended a quarterly meeting with Neil McFarlane, General Manager, Shelly Lomax, Executive Director, Operations, and Bob Nelson, Interim Deputy General Manager. Discussion topics included safety on LIFT buses, and LIFT operator breaks, LIFT contracts, and future transit fares.

Trish asked about Bob Nelson's return to TriMet and his role. David Trimble, Director, Business Programs, responded that Bob would be working very closely with Neil on specific initiatives, some overall enhancements for Operations, IT, and Safety as well as the interactions of those groups to improve the customer experience.

SEPTEMBER SERVICE CHANGES – Clay Thompson, Coordinator, Outreach Services

Clay Thompson, Coordinator, Outreach Services, reviewed the fixed route service changes which will be implemented on Sunday, September 1, 2013.

Clay reported that while TriMet's long-term financial future is still uncertain, the FY14 budget includes \$2.1 million for minor service improvements on several busy lines to help relieve overcrowding and improve schedule reliability.

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The following bus lines and MAX Blue Line will have added trips to reduce overcrowding:

1. Slight increases in frequency to relieve passenger crowding on:
 - Line 4 – Division/Fessenden (weekends)
 - Line 12 – Barbur/Sandy Blvd. (weekend evenings)

2. Better connections and increased weekday frequency:
 - Line 47 – Baseline/Evergreen
 - Buses run to PCC Rock Creek via NW 174th Avenue and Laidlaw Road, instead of running to Sunset Transit Center;
 - More frequent buses between Orenco/NW 231st Avenue MAX/Station and PCC Rock Creek
 - Line 48 – Cornell
 - More frequent rush hour buses between Sunset Transit Center and NW Stucki Avenue
 - Line 97 – Pacific Highway/Sherwood
 - Runs from Sherwood and Downtown Portland via Pacific Highway using the Tigard Main Street stop and will not enter the Tigard Transit Center. This service has been provided by the Line 94, but the number was changed to alleviate confusion.

3. Time added to present trips to better match schedules with traffic conditions on weekdays and/or weekends:
 - Line 6 – Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard
 - Line 84 – Powell Valley/Orient Drive
 - Line 87 – Airport Way/181st Avenue

4. Begin service half an hour earlier on weekday mornings:
 - Line 9 – Powell
 - Line 21 – Sandy/22rd Avenue

5. Minor weekday schedule adjustments to better match schedules with traffic conditions:
 - Line 62 – Murray Boulevard (weekends too)
 - Line 36 – South Shore
 - Line 37 – Lake Grove

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Clay added that riders will also begin to see more new buses as the agency accelerates its bus purchasing program to replace the aging fleet.

Discussion

Arnold Panitch questioned past reductions in LIFT service and said there didn't appear to be any increases to the service. He asked how that service would be improved.

Clay responded that at this time there were no additions planned for the LIFT service. Kathy added that as fixed route service increases, LIFT service will increase as well. Allen also commented that any new fixed route service or increased service hours would result in increased LIFT service.

Jan suggested that future service adjustment reports might include any impacts to the LIFT service.

Patricia Kepler commented on the amount of LIFT service reduced with the decision to reduce LIFT service to the ADA boundaries and asked if TriMet was going to reconsider the change. Jan suggested that staff report back.

Kathy stated that the LIFT service actually exceeds the requirements of the ADA on weekdays because the service provided is based on peak service provided until 7:30 p.m. The adjustment to the ASA service boundary impacted weekday service after 7:30 p.m. and on weekends.

She said that staff completed extensive outreach with LIFT customers who were impacted and worked with many of them to identify other travel options. She added that at this time, there are no plans to increase LIFT service.

Staff will report on any impacts of the September 2013 fixed route service changes on the LIFT service.

Public Comment

Lina Bensel commented that TriMet does have to increase LIFT service to mirror fixed service if changes are made.

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LIFT ELIGIBILITY – QUARTERLY REPORT - 3RD AND 4TH QTRS. FY13

Kathy reviewed the LIFT Eligibility Quarterly Reports for 3rd and 4th quarters for FY13. Highlights of the reports included:

Third Quarter

- There were 734 LIFT eligibility determinations made for new applicants January-March 2013. Of the 734, 296 were unconditional, 132 were conditional, 96 were temporary, 28 were denied, 9 withdrew, and 173 did not complete the process.
- There were 291 active LIFT customers notified of the need to recertify. Of the 291, 89 were unconditional, 41 were conditional, 6 were temporary, 2 were denied and 153 allowed their eligibility expire.
- There were six appeals of decisions for third quarter. Three were completed by administrative review. One was changed from a denial to conditional and two changed from conditional to unconditional. Three appeals were heard by the panel and all three initial decisions were upheld.

Fourth Quarter

- There were 600 LIFT eligibility determinations made for new applicants April-June 2013. Of the 600, 238 were unconditional, 108 were conditional, 93 were temporary, 12 were denied, 9 withdrew, and 140 did not complete the process.
- There were 850 active LIFT customers notified of the need to recertify. Of the 850, 154 were unconditional, 86 were conditional, 7 were temporary, 1 was denied, 29 did not complete process, and 137 allowed their eligibility to expire. At the date of this report, there 436 applicants with recertifications in process for fourth quarter.
- There were no appeals for fourth quarter reported at the time of this report.

Discussion

Trish Baker asked if there were any patterns with regards to denials. Kathy responded that there hasn't been any patterns identified and added that there are very few denials. A denial would be based on the fact that either an

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individual does not have a disability or the impacts of the disability do not prevent the applicant from being able to use fixed route.

Arnold asked about the “unable to process” category and how applicants could be assisted to complete the process. Kathy said that the majority of applicants in the category have submitted an application but have not scheduled and/or completed the in-person appointment. Some may also move or make other arrangements for transportation.

Applications are kept on file and applicants are allowed to reschedule up to six months. After that time period, a new application may be required to determine if the applicant’s health has changed.

Trish asked if all applicants applying for recertification have to complete the physical and cognitive assessments. Kathy responded that about one-half of all applicants are asked to complete the physical assessment course. The FACTS assessment of the cognitive skills to use transit is completed by fewer applicants.

CAT members discussed how to provide assistance to those who do not complete the process.

Patricia Kepler suggested that staff review those applications of those applications to determine if there is any relationship between completion and level of disability. It may be that with additional assistance, some could complete the process. Kathy will review and report back.

Patricia also asked about the fact that some applicants were not required to come in for an interview with the beginning of the second recertification cycle. She added that this has been appreciated by the applicants and is a positive move to addressing the needs of the applicant.

Kathy said that with the second recertification process, consideration is given on a case-by-case basis to determine if an interview is required based on the individual’s functional abilities. In most cases, the applicant will still be required to complete the in-person process. The interview also provides an opportunity to update personal information and to evaluate any new mobility devices.

Kathy said that some transit agencies grant different lengths of time for recertification based on functional abilities. Staff may consider reviewing

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eligibility terms once the second recertification has been completed and would discuss any proposed changes with the CAT.

CAT MEMBER COMMENTS

Zoe Presson commented on a LIFT ride on Friday, July 12. She said the operator increased the speed of the vehicle significantly which caused her to shift forward unexpectedly. She will report to Customer Service.

Allen encouraged CAT members to make all reports to Customer Service for both LIFT and fixed route as soon as possible. This helps both staff and the customers to review the incident information promptly.

Patricia Kepler asked if the LIFT buses have cameras. She expressed concern about some operators' interactions with customers with cognitive disabilities. Kathy responded that there are no cameras on the LIFT buses. She added that LIFT customers should feel comfortable about reporting their observations on how other customers are treated to Customer Service.

Terry Watson said that operators also experience stress in their roles. He asked if LIFT operators have the ability to report any difficulties with customers who may be acting out making it challenging for them to provide service. Allen responded that operators do report these instances to Dispatch and a supervisor may be sent to assist as needed.

David reported that staff had discussed with First Transit management staff about how to integrate customer service instructions into their monthly operator meetings. He supported Allen's comments about making immediate reports to Customer Service so any issues can be addressed as soon as possible.

Jan asked about the possibility of CAT members meeting with First Transit staff to review their training programs. David replied that would be acceptable and he would facilitate the process for the CAT to provide feedback.

Trish commented on her following observations regarding LIFT service: 1) Some operators play the radio too loud; 2) more operators are not getting out of their seats to pick-up passengers; 3) there are varying levels of assistance that the operators provide to customers with fastening seat belts; and 4) there has been an increase in operator complaints to passengers.

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Arnold extended congratulations to Dr. Bethel on his receipt of an award for his work with the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Program. He has worked with the Board as well as TriMet staff to advocate for and identify opportunities for qualified DBE companies for contractual work.

These opportunities provide the ability for some DBE's to increase their capabilities to develop and grow within the market place which creates more jobs and eventually increases funds back into the community.

Allen added that when the program increases contracting opportunities, it eventually creates a more competitive marketplace which results in better pricing for the consumer.

Harold Cheeks commented on the progress on PMLR. He said it is exciting to see the work on the bridge, the laying of the tracks on Division, and complimented all on their efforts.

Chris Walker thanked TriMet and C-Tran for the service provided during the Fourth of July weekend. He used both services to attend the fireworks and said that everyone was very helpful.

Chris also commented that he would like to see rapid bus transit using a dedicated bus lane from Forest Grove to Portland.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ragan Whiting, Bethesda Lutheran Communities, commented that her organization supports hundreds of LIFT customers with varying development disabilities. Many customers may have disabilities that prevent them from being able to advocate as individuals. They may also have bad days so it can make it challenging for both the customer and the operator.

Ragan said that some riders had planned to attend today's meeting to share their experiences but were unable to make it. She asked about the provision of sensitivity training for the operators and said that her organization may be able to assist.

Jan thanked Ragan for her comments and invited the customers to attend a future meeting. She asked her to leave her contact information with Kathy.

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Lina commented that CAT members used to attend some of the operator safety meetings as panel members and share information and examples about serving people with disabilities. She said the operators enjoyed the interaction and found it useful.

Jan agreed and said that the CAT would consider further involvement going forward. Staff will follow-up.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 11:52 a.m.