

**ASHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
MINUTES
February 25, 2016**

CALL TO ORDER

Graf called the meeting to order at 6:04 pm

Commissioners Present: Danielle Amarotico, Dominic Barth, Joe Graf, David Young, Corinne Viéville, Alan Bender, and Sue Newberry

Council Liaison Absent: Stef Seffinger

SOU Liaison Present: Janelle Wilson

Staff Present: Scott Fleury and Kyndra Irigoyen

Staff Absent: Mike Faught

ANNOUNCEMENTS

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Approval of January 28, 2015 Minutes

The minutes were discussed and approved as amended.

ADDING OREGON SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL LIAISON

Bender asked if staff had contacted OSF about a liaison for the commission. Fleury said OSF is interested in joining the commission and will nominate someone from their internal staff to be on the commission. If we want to add OSF as an ex-officio member, we will have to take a code amendment to the Council that will allow OSF to serve on the commission.

ADJUSTMENTS TO THE AGENDA

None.

PUBLIC FORUM

Huelz Gutcheon, 2253 Highway 99

Gutcheon said he has been involved in the multi-modal project for many years. He said the transportation commission is involved in designing intersections and as a person who rides the bus and rides a bike, he has noticed that traffic gets hectic at certain times of the day in some intersections. He said he has spoken with others who ride bikes and they have concluded that the designers of the intersections only drive cars. If everyone gave up their cars for five years, they would see how it is out there.

Susan Sullivan 305 Stoneridge Ave.

She moved here two years ago and lives in the Meadowbrook Neighborhood. She has been having conversations with her neighbors about the East Nevada Street Bridge and would like a public forum to be held on this topic so the community can give their input on the matter. Nevada Street is not a wide street and there is high traffic in some parts. She does not want to see another car bridge, but supports a pedestrian and bike bridge. If a pedestrian or bike bridge was implemented, school children would be able to walk or bike to Helman Elementary instead of taking a bus. There has also been talk about extending the Greenway because that is an area along the Greenway that is missing from connecting it to Ashland.

NEW BUSINESS

Transportation System Plan-Transit Prioritization

Graf reviewed the handout. He said he looks at this more as what are we going to put our energy into, in order to get funding and while reminding himself about the problems they are trying to solve and the people they are serving. The

commission is trying to improve emissions, create access for everyone, and help with the parking situation. He said they want to serve employees, tourists, students, and residents. He then reviewed the ten projects on the list, which fall into the following categories: 1.) *Improve existing service* by supporting RVTD's efforts in extending service hours and increasing service frequency on Route 10; 2.) *Provide bus rapid transit* by providing an express bus service to Medford and the airport. Graf said we have a lot of employees and students who do not live in Ashland and commute here; 3.) *Internal Ashland circulators* by expanding service area, supporting a private transit circulator, supporting SOU transit, establishing a rubber tire trolley, and implementing a central hub; 4.) *Provide subsidies to riders* by establishing a customized bus pass program and supporting fare free transit in Ashland.

Graf said this is how he envisioned how things fit together, but any of the categories could be adjusted accordingly.

Fleury said he spoke with Paige Townsend from RVTD who said the board voted in favor of the 13 cent levy to reduce Route 10 frequency (30 minute service to 20 minute service), add 30 minute frequency to Route 24, restore Saturday service, add a route to southwest Medford, and maintain existing levels of service.

Young mentioned social media and wondered if this would be a good way to get a message out in supporting and promoting the RVTD levy. Graf asked Young if he wanted to use social media to promote the levy and possibly to receive public input. Young said yes, if we are motivated to support this levy, it is another level to get the word out. We could construct a concise message. Graf said there are tremendous benefits to the city of Ashland and to the people we want to serve if this levy passes and will improve the transit situation to help everyone. Young said RVTD's need to serve the underserved is their main priority, we may have these brilliant comprehensive plans for what we want in Ashland, but they are going to support the people who cannot get to work or go buy groceries first. Graf said he went to a public forum about transportation in Medford where he listened to community members speak about situations surrounding transportation. He said it is heart rendering to hear their stories; people who have disabilities, are unemployed, have young children, or do not have a car, and now there is not a bus service, or they cannot go anywhere after a certain time. Bender said this has been the core market until recently. He said we only have 60 days to get the word out on the levy. Barth asked if there is a group backing this levy. Young said they have a board and maybe an advisor. Graf asked if Al Densmore was working on it. Fleury said he believes they have a group that is not directly affiliated with RVTD and Al Densmore has been associated with promoting transit as well.

Viéville asked how the 13 cents compares to other levies. Newberry asked what the last proposed levy amount was. Fleury said last time it was about 50-60 cents higher. Graf said a preliminary survey showed a 60/40 in favor of the previous levy, but then it failed. Young said the majority of the served transit population did not vote and the people voting do not use the bus. Graf asked if there were any more thoughts on the levy or transit in general. Bender asked what if we joined forces with the Traffic Advisory Board in Jackson County to support the levy. Graf asked if everyone supported the levy. Barth said he is supportive of public transportation and it would be great to develop an approach where everyone embraces public transportation and not just the underserved population. If it ran more frequently, the chances that more people would want to use it for smaller trips would increase, such as going to a restaurant. It would be great to include everyone in our marketing. Bender said young people are coming back to transit, but gas is half the price it used to be. Graf said if you are looking at emissions, then all of that stuff is irrelevant, and the point is you want to have more people on transit and not driving individual cars. Barth noted that since he has lived here, he has noticed that Phoenix and Talent seem to be becoming middle-class Ashland overflow and he wondered if we could foster partnerships in transportation with them. Young asked if he was talking about the levy. Barth said that he is proposing more of a grassroots awareness; a mass transit system that is efficient and effective would be a valuable thing to the valley and changing the feeling and perception toward it. He realizes that the levy will be voted on in 60 days, but if we reach out now to other cities, maybe two years down the road when the levy comes up again people will vote in favor. Barth asked what could be done as the Transportation Commission to support the levy. Young said first we have to agree that we believe it will benefit the whole valley, including Ashland, it is a public good, it reduces emissions and allows low mobility people to access transit, and for all those reasons we craft a message. Young said then we disseminate it with a plan, sort of like a campaign and commit to a plan of action.

Graf asked if the commission as a whole supports the levy. All said yes. Graf said first we could make a statement of support and encourage the City Council to make a statement of support. He asked, secondly, do we as a commission or as individuals want to work to support the levy. The first step is easy; the second step is a bigger commitment.

Newberry said she agrees with those divisions and our support is easy to garner. She said the first thing we should do is ask if RVTD is interested in our help and what sort of marketing campaign they are planning. This is RVTD's levy, not ours and we should inquire as to how we can help if we are serious about doing something and see what role they would want us to fill and then see if that is something, we want to do. Young said part of this is that RVTD may not even know if they want help or what they are doing, they have always failed and there is a lot of criticism of their internal process. Graf said he thinks Newberry is right, if we are going to do something we should ask them how to coordinate. Newberry said she thinks it is the diplomatic approach, if they say they do not know what they are doing, then we could offer support. Bender said we definitely need the levy to pass and the majority of the voters are not in Ashland, so if it is just us it will not pass.

Viéville/Bender m/s the Ashland Transportation Commission to endorse the RVTD levy and to recommend to the City Council that they endorse the levy as a benefit to the city of Ashland. All in favor.

Graf said he would work with Faught and Fleury to craft a statement from the Transportation Commission in support of the levy. Young said a message needs to be crafted that highlights the benefits to Ashland and the valley as a whole by supporting this levy. He said he would keep putting it out there on social media and encourage others to share it. Amarotico asked about writing a letter to the editor of the Mail Tribune. Young said yes, absolutely. Bender said getting a joint statement from another commission would be more effective. Young said he could reach out to John Darling about doing a feature article.

All agreed that the Ashland Transportation Commission supports the upcoming RVTD levy. Passage of this initiative will directly benefit the Rogue Valley by increasing transit ridership through increased service hours and greater frequency of routes. The economy of the Rogue Valley will benefit by enabling workers, the disabled, and those without cars to participate in the economy by means of public transportation. Increased ridership will enhance air quality, open up parking spaces, and improve livability for all Rogue Valley residents.

Graf emphasized the importance of not meeting outside of the regular commission meetings. Viéville volunteered to call Paige Townsend at RVTD and then will relay the message to Fleury who will notify the commission via email. Graf said RVTD would be having a meeting at 5:30 p.m. on March 22nd at Jackson Creek Pizza in Medford to discuss transit.

Graf asked if there were any thoughts about a bus rapid transit center vs an internal circulator. Graf said he does not know if we can do both, with the amount of money we have and we would need to narrow it down. Barth said that RVTD has no money or plans to do a circulator with us. Graf said if we could pull off getting a grant RVTD would be delighted to come work with us. Barth asked about the last grant they had. Fleury said the last grant was a three-year grant to expand hours and service, which we helped and supported during the process. Barth said RVTD let the ball drop on renewing the grant to continue the services. He asked if the services would last only as long as the grant was in place or are there steps that could be taken so this time it actually works for the long-term? Graf said we have to get external funding because we are not going to get it from the City alone or from RVTD. If we decide to go ahead with any of these plans, we should look at what is most sustainable and not live from grant to grant.

Viéville mentioned someone looking into getting electric buses started. Young said someone had offered to donate money to get things going. He said there has to be a plan first before looking into this. Graf said their vision would be on the table if our highest priority was to look into an internal circulator, but we may decide there is another way to go than their vision for the trolley. He thinks if we are moving tourists around, it should be a public/private partnership and the City should not have to do that all on its own. If we are moving from low-income housing to jobs in downtown Ashland, that would be more on the City than on the business community. He said either way we do it; we have to figure out how many people need to be moved, where they are, and something that is sustainable because no one is going to give us a grant if we cannot demonstrate that it will make a real difference. Viéville said there is a decent intra-city route currently that does not seem to be going away anytime soon. Young said this levy would expand the hours. Graf said we do not have control over the hours or routes. That is why the bus rapid transit is different from Route 10. It would not move people around within Ashland but it would move people into Ashland efficiently. There are a lot of people who live outside of Ashland and work in Ashland, if they had a decent transit system that did not

take an hour each way. When you tradeoff an hour on the bus for fifteen minutes in your car; it is not much of a tradeoff. The express bus has to be competitive.

Newberry asked about how the commission decided to prioritize projects, if they are dependent upon funding or what they think is important. Graf said they always prioritize what they think is important and then staff seeks the funding for it. He said he does not know if there is any more funding available for different packages here. Fleury said RVTD was previously funded by a Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) grant, and a greenhouse gas reduction grant, which is one funding mechanism for transit. The other funding mechanism would be to go after a Connect Oregon grant on the next cycle. They allow caveats for mobility and employment benefits, so if a study was done on either the circulator or the bus rapid transit route, you could show a benefit to mobility or employment.

Young said we are at the painful stage where we need to decide what we want. He said do we play it safe or go for it. There are community members who are ready to do some work and start fighting for a cause. He asked if we keep moving stuff around because it will not work, or do we go for it? Do we stay in the safety zone or stretch for something bigger? Graf said we need to figure out where we stretch because we have previously stayed in the safety zone. He said he is not sure that we have enough money and staff time or support to go after both a bus rapid transit and an internal circulator with the resources we have. Viéville said she sees them as different things; the rapid transit goes outside of Ashland, by bringing people to and from Ashland, while the circulator will benefit the citizens of Ashland.

Amarotico asked if it was premature to ask each Commissioner, what they thought was the most important project on the list. Graf said we do have a commitment to our employees and businesses in Ashland to help them get to and from Ashland, and around Ashland. Bender said there is Valley Lift for people who have disabilities. Viéville said it does not go everywhere though and it only carries one person at a time.

Amarotico asked if anyone knew the statistics for people who live and work in Ashland or live in Ashland and commute outside of Ashland for work. Fleury said he believes there is a graph break down in the Transportation System Plan (TSP). Amarotico said it would be interesting to see these statistics because that could affect their decision on what project to take on. Graf said he does not think we have statistics on employees in Ashland. Supposedly there are 3,000 employees that work in downtown Ashland and if, hypothetically, 2,000 of them come from Medford, that is a lot of people. If we had those statistics, it would help us decide on what the priorities are. He said we need to be data driven. In addition, we do not want to build something just because the people are there, we want to make sure they will actually use it so we need to have public input from the people we are counting on to use the service.

The commission each said what they thought was most important on the project list:

Barth: Internal circulator

Amarotico: Internal circulator around Route 8

Newberry: First priority is existing route, second priority is internal circulator, and third priority is the bus rapid transit

Viéville: Internal circulator

Bender: Internal circulator

Young: First priority is internal circulator and second priority is bus rapid transit

Wilson: First priority is extending service hours and second priority is internal circulator. She said from an SOU perspective, she said students feel stuck when they cannot go anywhere on the weekends or if they want to take classes in Medford at the Higher Education Center building they cannot because they do not have a way to get there.

Graf: Bus rapid transit

Graf said we need to do a study on what would be the best route for an internal Ashland circulator. He said the clear consensus of the commission is to work on the internal circulator.

Accident Report

Barth asked about the accident on Monday on Walker and Siskiyou. MacLennan said the person driving was intoxicated on acid and estimated to be driving at speeds up to 90 mph when he side swiped a light pole and hit the guardrail and pedestrian pole on the sidewalk, which landed in the middle of the gas station parking lot. Debris was

scattered 150-375 feet from the scene of the accident. The driver and passenger were seat belted in and the passenger in the back was asleep and ejected. The back seat passenger died on scene.

Barth said he has noticed more deer on Siskiyou and asked if there was something, they could do to help. Fleury said there have been signs put out on Main St. by the Breadboard and the trestle.

OLD BUSINESS

Tolman Creek and Siskiyou Blvd. Stop Sign

Fleury said he will have all of this together for the public hearing next month and Dan Dorrell from ODOT will be at the meeting. He said he has been verbally letting the word out for the public hearing. Dorrell has a design of the intersection that he will bring. It will be a plain four-way stop and a flasher was not recommended.

FOLLOW UP ITEMS

Downtown Parking and Multi Modal Circulation Study Update-Improvement Projects

Fleury said the project list was given to the Downtown Committee. These are all the projects that are in the TSP along with a couple of safety improvements, which include the mini roundabout improvement at Hargadine/Pioneer, and the other one is the crosswalk at Third St. and Lithia St. We are also looking at the bicycle boulevards on B St. and A St. He said that A St. has signs, but there are potential improvements along A St. that we are going to look at when we do a capital project to replace the sewer and water lines for the storm drain system. The B St. bicycle corridor will be looked at to implement a potential 4-way stop at Fourth and Eighth Streets to break up the long run between Second St. and Mountain Ave.

He said the Downtown Committee is going to start talking about the three lane to two-lane configuration within the downtown area tying in N. Main and Siskiyou Blvd. They will also begin discussing converting the Beaver Slide to only being accessible to pedestrians and bikes at their next meeting.

Graf asked if the projects that were not in the TSP would come to the Transportation Commission for approval. Fleury said the Downtown Committee will make recommendations and the additional items should come back to the Transportation Commission for discussion. Young said the Downtown Committee will decide what to support and then it will come to Transportation Commission and then to the Council for final decision. Graf said he thinks that most of this should come back to the Transportation Commission for recommendations.

Young said next week at the Downtown Committee we will be discussing the multi-modal plan. Young said Faught is confident that the plan will be approved.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

TC-chair presentation to Council-February 16, 2016

Graf said he presented to the Council about the 4-way stop crosswalk on N. Main St. He was asked if they were going to put flashers at all the crosswalks and told them we were studying that. He said we still do not have the modeling on how well that will work with the flasher. There is a possibility that a light at Wimer St. might be back on the table. If there is a light at Wimer St. that may solve the crossing problem and be more predictable than a flasher that people turn on at random. The challenge is, if you put in flashers, then the traffic is interrupted at random and could stack up, whereas if you put in the light for safety, it does not have to meet all the warrants necessarily. The problem is too many people turn right out of there, so you cannot count them. Fleury said right turns do not count for movements. Graf said if we decide that having a light is safer, we might be able to get it through. Fleury said if an intersection were there, we would continue with the Polara Navigators (the brand of the accessible pedestrian system we use) and all four corners. He said Kim Parducci, Traffic Engineer, will have to do an analysis of the intersection and then the discussions will begin with ODOT because it is their jurisdiction.

Graf said he spoke about Grandview to the Council and they did not have any questions. Barth asked if anything has changed on Grandview yet. Fleury said no, all the surveying is done and now the engineers are working on the design section for the roadway.

Graff also mentioned the transit work to the Council and they asked if the Transportation Commission was talking

with RVTD.

Bike Share Expansion

Faught met with Connie Wilkerson from United Way about expanding the bike share into the downtown area. They did not talk about Zagster specifically but doing a bike share to tie in areas around Ashland. This topic will come back to the Commission to figure out good locations for the bike share. Graf said United Way has a grant and half the decision is where someone wants to put it.

Making an Impact Newsletter (February)

Graf asked how many people get this in an email. No one has been receiving it in their email. Fleury said he would remove it from the hard copy packet and only include it in the email packet.

COMMISSION OPEN DISCUSSION

Barth asked about the loading zone in front of Liquid Assets. Young said the yellow was expanded and one space was taken out. Fleury said the two bus stops have been relocated. Wimer St. was moved 100 yards east and the one on Laurel St. was moved about 100 yards east to be located closer to downtown.

Viéville said she has a question for the Downtown Committee about the truck stops on First Street. When they are going to re-do the truck parking are they going to be anywhere close to the bus stops? Right now the bus stops in front of the hotel on First Street where trucks unload and then the bus will not stop there and keeps going. Young said there will not be a loading zone in front of the hotel and the multi-modal plan will be about implementing designated, visible stops.

Wilson asked if anyone was a part of the steering committee for the Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan. It is part of the United Way Ride Plan updates. She will be attending the meeting and will report to the commission.

Bender said for a future topic at the meeting he would like to include car sharing.

Young asked for more clarification on the bike share. Graf said this is in a very formative stage. Up until now we have been letting United Way do it. The goal is to go beyond this and think about where we want to have bike share locations. It will be put on the agenda at a future meeting and staff will find out what Zagster has to say about working with us and have staff identify what other bike shares are available. Young asked if we can consider this as an agenda item and think about the important places. Graf said this should be placed on the agenda in April. Barth said it would be nice to know what United Way is doing in advance to see if they are still pursuing their own. According to Faught, the Water St. location is doing very well. Young said we should designate the prime locations and go from there.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was adjourned at 7:57pm.

*Respectfully submitted,
Kyndra Irigoyen
Public Works Administrative Assistant*