

**ASHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
MINUTES
January 28, 2016**

CALL TO ORDER

Graf called the meeting to order at 6:03pm

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

New commission member Sue Newberry introduced herself to the commission. New Council liaison Steff Seffinger introduced herself to the Commission.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Approval of November 18, 2015 Minutes

Approval of December 10, 2015 Minutes

The minutes were discussed and approved as amended.

ADDING OREGON SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL LIAISON

Bender asked about a past item pertaining to the addition of a liaison from Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF). Faught said that the Commission would need to propose an amendment to the current ordinance to the Council because it outlines specifically who the ex officio members are. Faught stated that staff should contact OSF to see if they are interested in joining the Commission before a recommendation is made to Council. Barth discussed general procedures and wondered if it would be a good general procedure to have an item dated with some way to reflect that it came up two meetings ago. Graf said it was reflected in the minutes in the open discussion portion, but it was not added as an agenda item to be voted on.

Bender/Viéville m/s the Ashland Transportation Commission to recommend staff to contact OSF for interest in having a liaison on the Commission. All in favor.

ADJUSTMENTS TO THE AGENDA

Move Transit System Study Session to the first agenda item.

PUBLIC FORUM

None

OLD BUSINESS

Transit System Study Session

Townsend stated there has been a significant amount of conversation in the community about the Rogue Valley Transportation District (RVTD). She informed the Commission that her presentation was open for discussion at any point and asked if the Commission had specific questions they wanted addressed during her presentation. Barth asked how essential is a transfer location, as it seems the need right now is rather modest. Townsend stated her presentation would answer that question.

She said the quality of life in most communities are dependent upon a transportation system. The United Way of Jackson County has done surveys over the years to identify community needs. Transportation is in the top three issues they are addressing along with housing and food sustainability. Since the recession, RVTD has gained a

deeper understanding of the need for transportation, especially in the valley. RVTD has several trips that are inter-city, not intra-city trips, such as Route 10 to Ashland where a large percentage of people commute to work or school. We come from a community paradigm where the mantra of reducing vehicle travel has shifted to providing greater mobility, knowing that eventually they will offset trips from the transportation system with an efficient transit system. A short sighted term is getting to know the needs of every person in the community and understanding that there are people that live here, work here, have children, are in poverty, and do not own a car. They deserve to go grocery shopping, make appointments, etc. This shift in thinking has been happening with RVTD and the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) over the years. Addressing mobility issues has been a goal for the last seven years while aiming to get people out of their cars, which is also important to RVTD.

Ridership depends on two primary factors: productivity and coverage. Townsend gave an overview of the statistics for Route 10. She said RVTD had gone from 30 minute service to 20 minute service for a short period of time and then recently had to cut back time due to the levy failing. Average capacity is about 75 people per bus and most of the time there are about 45-50 people with standing room only, making it difficult for people to board, de-board, or to ride comfortably. Productivity is a matter of looking at how many seats or buses are needed within a route to support the capacity.

Townsend stated that coverage for Ashland is an issue of equity and making sure there is access to neighborhoods such as Helman and Mountain Meadows. Such routes should be within a short walking distance, typically a quarter mile or less. On these types of routes you do not see low headways (15 minute or 30 minute), usually just one per hour. When timing or funding allows investing in these routes, RVTD would first look at what the ridership would be.

There is an underlying idea about convenience and inconvenience. She asked, when you are in Portland do you drive? She said she does not as it costs too much, parking is hard to come by, and there is too much congestion. For her, it is easier to use the Max to get around town. Here we do not have as much congestion, but we are dealing with parking management issues. The more inconvenient it is to park (financially or timing), the more people will not want to drive their car. Bender asked about routes that have long headways of 30-60 minutes. On the assumption that people have a cell phone with the capability to download applications on it, how is RVTD addressing that? Townsend stated they have implemented an app called One Bus Away. There are GPS units on every bus, so the app users can track buses in route. She stated they have had great reviews of the app from customers. They also have a trip planner on Google maps with transit trip planning. Bender asked for example, if you are sitting in the doctor's office, you could see when the bus is going to arrive. She said yes.

Townsend said she is an advocate for making it a disincentive to park because that is something the city has in their control. Part of a Transportation Demand Management program is to create incentive based trip coordination. For example, you might have a driver decide to drive three days a week and take public transit the other two days. The two days they do not drive they could be offered some kind of credit towards a gift certificate or other incentive. She also noted it is important to have a completely built transit system for access and use.

RVTD is in the process of getting grants to hire a consultant to update their 10 year Long Range Plan. She said they currently serve seven cities and for the previous plan, they met with a public works representative and a Council liaison from each city. They discussed what transit enhancements were important to each jurisdiction. For the long range planning, it is important to find out what kind of long range developments and land use changes will be happening that RVTD should be aware of. On the top of their to do list is expanding the east side route in Medford, expanding hours, expanding White City routes, and adding back Saturday service.

Faught said when we did the Transportation System Plan (TSP) update there was a joint meeting with the RVTD board and the City Council. Our Council strongly supported the funding that would allow RVTD to have extended hours and was sad that the levy did not pass. Townsend said she always tells the people up north that the City of Ashland transit plan is exceptional.

There were eight proposed routes in the transit system for Ashland, which is more routes than what RVTD has in its entire system. It would have been very costly to have those routes in service. Townsend said they asked which ones were necessary. She displayed a map that shows density levels and proposed routes within the City of Ashland for

one hour and 30 minute services. She pointed out that the Helman and Mountain Meadows neighborhoods have enough density to support a transit route.

Bender said the use of transit by young people is at a record high. Millennials are not driving their own cars due to cost and restrictions associated with getting a license. The need to travel by car is not a necessity for this age group right now because everything they need is accessible by their digital device (watching movies, talking to friends, reading a book, etc.) however it is predicted that these habits are not expected to last and they will eventually use a car as they grow older. He also said there will be more seniors using transit and asked if the study considered that. Townsend said that this study does not look at demographics, just at people per acre. She agreed there is a growing senior population who will eventually rely on transit. She said they would like to have people exposed to using transit earlier so they are comfortable using it and one of the biggest fears for seniors in using transit is not knowing how.

Young talked about people who are making choices based on reducing their carbon footprint, who look forward to walking to the bus stop. The City of Ashland wants to have a service that provides shuttle within the city limits, an intra-city route. Since Ashland wants a shuttle service like this, does RVTD see it as a possibility in their model to contract for services like this with Ashland? He asked, could RVTD offer support of overall operations for this? Townsend said that Ashland identifies with reducing their carbon footprint more than any other city they serve. Ashland has both millennials and older adults and a genuine interest in reducing reliance on the automobile. She said that the City of Ashland has supported RVTD financially to improve service here. They had Route 5 and Route 15 for a number of years. The ridership plateaued after a certain time while the Council and leadership expected it to increase. Townsend said RVTD is up for discussing additional services back to Ashland again. She said the other thing to keep in mind is how many people come into Ashland and make the city function, such as food servers, hotel room attendants, library employees, etc. Having a service that would be convenient for them to get here would leverage and enhance the service through the entire system, but the City was not ready to embrace that. They wanted to have service just within the city and not look at who needs to come into the city. She said that Faught has voiced his opinion on the matter that people need to get in and out of city.

Townsend displayed a map. She said it illustrates that Ashland does not need eight routes within the city. She said they have a vested interest in expanding service into other neighborhoods. Mountain Meadows has also expressed interest in having service to their facility. Not only is funding an issue for this area, but there is nowhere to turn a bus around. They have also looked into servicing the northeast Helman neighborhood as it would serve a larger density area of lower income. The needed connection is the E. Nevada St. Bridge. That bridge is essential for RVTD to get a route into Mountain Meadows and the Helman area. This route would depend on the bridge being constructed. Bender asked if the areas where a bus is restricted because of size, could a van be used instead and if there were any regulations on what size of vehicles could be operated. Townsend said the only requirement is to have the vehicle equipped with a lift for a wheelchair bound passenger. If a van carries a wheelchair, the capacity is reduced from 13 passengers to 4 passengers. She said there are some in the RVTD fleet they use but the cost of fuel and the driver is about the same as other kinds of transportation vehicles, so they tend to use a bus instead.

Townsend explained transfer stations in town. There has been interest to do a circulator in town, high capacity transit or a bus rapid transit, which is a limited stop service and would be faster than the traditional Route 10 service. A transfer center is where two buses of different routes meet up at the same location for personal transfers to another route. An example of this is the transfer center at the South Medford Walmart, which can accommodate three different buses at the same time. A transfer station usually has off-road bus parking, like the station on Front Street in Medford. Usually a station has passenger amenities such as a vehicle and bicycle park and ride along with a place to buy tickets. Transfer station space needs to continue to grow. She said that adding a transit transfer center in downtown Ashland is not ideal, it would need to be moved somewhere else. Faught said the current TSP details a transfer station on Clear Creek Dr. on the railroad property and this location could accommodate for rail transit as well. Townsend said the Front Street location in Medford has the potential to be used for rail transit in the future because of its location. She said in the Croman Mill Comprehensive Plan there are plans for a park and ride, a passenger waiting area, and a docking station located on the rail. This was in anticipation that there may someday be passenger rail in this area. To accomplish this type of project she said it could take 10-15 years of planning.

Seffinger asked Townsend to explain more about the E. Nevada St Bridge connection. Townsend said it would help

them service the Helman area and would make an easier connection to the Mountain Meadows neighborhood.

Townsend said they are having a funding issue at RVTD right now with failed levies. They are now using their reserves to fund their services, about a million dollars a year. Route 2, Route 30, and Route 24 would be cut and Route 60 would go down to one hour frequency if they were not using their reserves to sustain these services. The reserves will be gone by 2018. Their board is looking at a new funding levy in 2016 to sustain service routes.

They had previously expanded services from 6:30-9:00 p.m. but it was too costly and there was not enough ridership during that time. Saturdays are the most productive day of the week. The RVTD board is discussing the future levy and what services to add. The services include: sustain current service, adding back Saturdays, 20 minute service on Route 10, increasing headways on the East Route to 30 minutes, and adding shuttles to the Rogue Community College Table Rock campus in White City.

Graf said that the new projects in the TSP did not seem to be a high priority to RVTD. Graf said only Route 10 improvements were high priority for RVTD any time soon. He asked what the criteria is for RVTD to work with us to get the systems running that we want in Ashland. Townsend said they work on the limited resources they have and prioritize what the greater community needs are. Graf said this sounds fair and it is reasonable for us to know we cannot expect to receive resources from RVTD for new projects and will need to come up with a plan to excite RVTD. He also asked how much of the cost is covered by bus fare and how much is covered by subsidies or grants. Townsend said about 20% is from the passenger fare like Route 10, while Route 30 is closer to 8%. The federal grant is about a third of the budget and the property tax is another third of the budget, while the rest comes from small state funds.

NEW BUSINESS

Siskiyou Blvd. – Tolman Creek Stop Sign

Fleury said a petition letter was submitted regarding safety improvements at the intersection. He was contacted by ODOT about installing a 4-way stop at this intersection. Public Works asked for Kim Parducci, from Southern Oregon Transportation Engineering, to analyze the intersection and make a recommendation for installation of the 4-way stop. Her memo in the packet details the intersection analysis. She said that installing the 4-way stop would improve operations in the area. According to our internal database, there have been nine accidents at this location, while ODOT's database only specifies five. ODOT does not want to move forward with installation without our support. And Faught would like any recommendations for improvement to go before the City Council for final approval. Viéville asked if it would be a stop light or a stop sign. Fleury said this would be a 4-way stop control, which could lead to a signal at a future date. This is an identified location of concern within the TSP. Staff's plan is to advertise for a public hearing at a future TC meeting in order to obtain their opinions on the matter and also include ODOT at the meeting.

Graf said Parducci's memo does not say that the warrants absolutely demand a 4-way stop. It would be an improvement but not required. Fleury said that it meets certain warrants, but not all the warrants as specified in the MUTCD. It would be considered a safety improvement due to the intersection skew. Graf asked if it would be a blinking red light in all directions with signs and if the flasher would be removed?. Fleury said he does not know the plans for removing the flasher and ODOT would have to formulate a final design for installation of the 4-way stop.

Barth said based on the ODOT numbers, which does not clearly warrant a 4-way stop, what does Officer MacLennan think about adding more police enforcement? MacLennan said he believes this an education and enforcement issue, not a roadway issue. He said he went back through the crashes and they were mainly driver error. In 2011 a woman decided to pass a semi-truck that was turning and was side swiped; 2012 a hit and run was reported; 2013 a vehicle pulling out of the parking lot of a local business was hit; 2013 a car was southbound in the right turn lane and was rear ended; 2014 a right turn off of Tolman, a car was turning left into a local business and was hit; 2014 a man ran a stop sign; 2015 a vehicle ran into another vehicle who stated she could not see the other car; 2015 a teenager was speeding and slid into the curb. He believes this is more an issue of enforcement and education not a stop sign and speed issue. Speeds are lower here during the day. The main issue is getting cars to stop behind the stop bar on the northbound Tolman side. MacLennan also mentioned that employees who work at Bellview Elementary signed the petition letter.

Newberry asked is there a need for a stop sign if it is not warranted. She said as most studies show if we start adding unwarranted stop signs people start running them. Officer MacLennan is not recommending putting stop signs there, but having more enforcement. Faught said he would like to look at the issue further.

Bridge St. Parking Restriction

Fleury said he updated some information in the packet including a couple of parking lot counts at various times of the day. He spoke with one of the owners of one of the buildings, who said this is the slow time of year for that location as Mihama's closes for two weeks during the winter and SOU is out for winter break. He said it is up to the Commission to make a decision on the issue. The business owners want to have a one-hour parking restriction. Amarotico asked how many different time zones there are. Fleury said there are 10 minute, 15 minute, 30 minute, 1 hour, 2 hour, and 4 hour parking time zones. Most of the time zones are in the downtown core area. Viéville asked if this was to discourage students from parking there. Fleury said that the anecdotal evidence says that people arrive there early in the morning and park there all day because they do not want to buy a campus parking pass. Young said it is to benefit the customers and employees parking there. Graf asked who would enforce this. Enforcement will be on an on call basis as officer MacLennan stated they do not have time to check this area for parked cars. Faught said most people want to follow the rules if the signs are put there. MacLennan said if they see the same vehicle parked there repeatedly, they would take action on it. Young asked if this sets a precedence for other areas where businesses have issues with parking. He pointed out that the Commission will be looking at the Siskiyou Blvd. corridor as a major project. He thinks rather than do this on a complaint driven basis, they should wait to solve this with a more comprehensive plan. Graf said the Siskiyou Blvd. study stretches from Walker to Sherman. He asked if everyone agreed with Young's idea of waiting to solve this when the Siskiyou Blvd. corridor is studied. Majority agreed.

Accident Report

Officer MacLennan reviewed the accident report. He said a few were reported after the accidents occurred. The first one he reviewed, on November 2nd was from an inexperienced driver who ran into a parked truck. Young asked about the last four accidents on the first page. MacLennan said he could not say much about these because they were not his. The one reported on November 19th was reported after the fact. Viéville asked what 'after the fact' means. MacLennan said someone will be in a crash and will not call until an hour or two; maybe a day or week later after the crash actually occurred. He said he did not issue a citation for the one on December 1st because both drivers in the accident could not see due to the sun. He said no citation was issued on December 14th for the pedestrian that was hit. The pedestrian was intoxicated, a local transient, and issuing a citation would not have done any good.

Election of Vice Chair

Viéville nominated Barth to be vice chair. All were in agreement to appoint Barth to serve as the vice chair to the Ashland Transportation Commission.

FOLLOW UP ITEMS

City Source-Sidewalk Clearance

None

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

TC-chair presentation to Council-February 16, 2016

Fleury said he would like to know if the Commission would like to present anything at the Council level. They decided to come up with something offline for this. Graf and staff will be meeting the following week to discuss.

Action Summary

Fleury said deer signs were installed on N. Main, which were provided by ODOT.

Making and Impact Newsletter (January/December)

Barth asked about the zig-zags on the road on page 1, where they approach the crosswalk and wondered if they could be used as a possible solution on Siskiyou and Tolman. He said it seemed cheap and easy. Faught said he has never seen that used before.

Grandview Shared Road Status

Faught said this project is still in the surveying and engineering phase.

COMMISSION OPEN DISCUSSION

Graf received an email from Zagster, a bike share company, who is interested in coming to Ashland. Faught said he received information that a bike share will be installed at the hospital. Graf asked if the Commission wanted to have Zagster speak with the Commission or continue working with United Way who is already doing this. Viéville asked if it would be a bad thing to hear from them. Graf said no, but they may not come if they know the city is considering United Way. Faught recommended they let them know City is working with United Way on this project.

Amarotico said she really enjoyed Townsend's presentation and that she is glad she came today.

Bender said he would like to discuss car share services at a future meeting.

Graf said now would be a good time to talk about future agenda items. Next time the commission will discuss Tolman Creek and then follow-up on transit.

The Commission discussed some plans for future meetings.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was adjourned at 8:15pm.

*Respectfully submitted,
Kyndra Irigoyen
Public Works Administrative Assistant*