

## Meeting Notes

### **Madras Transit Stakeholder Meeting April 16, 2013 2pm-4pm Madras City Hall**

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#### **Attendees:**

Beth Ann Beamer (St. Charles – Madras Community Health)  
Tom Brown (Madras City Council)  
Gus Burrell (City of Madras)  
Walt Chamberlain (Madras City Council)  
Patrick Hanenkrat (City of Metolius)  
Shawna Clanton (Mayor of Culver)  
Joe Krenowicz (Madras Chamber of Commerce)  
Jeff Lichtenberg (Community Justice Department)  
Sonya Littledeer-Evans (Juvenile Department)  
Baldemar Lopez (Mosaic Medical)  
Gordon Price (COCC)  
Nick Snead (City of Madras – CDD)  
Kurt Symons (Adult Community Justice)  
JoDee Tittle (St. Charles)  
Patty Woll (Madras Redevelopment Commission)

#### **Staff:**

Scott Aycock, Karen Friend, and Tamara Geiger (Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council)

#### **Introductions**

Scott introduced himself to the group and explained the role of COIC in the community and how CET came to be the regional transit service. He explained that COIC had start-up funds for service (service began in 2008) but was now approaching each community to discuss long-term, stable local funding sources. He explained that COIC wanted to maintain a regional system and that communities like Madras (also Prineville and La Pine) are particularly high users of Community Connector shuttles for school, work, and medical services that are only available in other parts of the region.

#### **Current Service**

Scott continued to explain that all of CET's services are offered to the general public. He explained that local public bus service in Madras is a Dial-A-Ride model (curb-to-curb service) which is typical for a more rural community that is not dense enough to justify a fixed-route service. He added that the Dial-A-Ride model allowed CET to provide service to areas far outside where a traditional fixed route would be located. He explained that they used optimization software to batch and pool rides – which is why it requires a reservation the day before. At its current funding level, the Dial-A-Ride service in Madras only has one bus and they have started to deny ride requests (bus is at capacity). Jeff Lichtenberg asked about how many rides per day are offered by the Dial-A-Ride service. COIC staff estimated about 60 rides (per service day) for October 2012.

COIC recently removed local dial-a-ride service within Metolius and Culver and replaced it with scheduled Community Connector shuttle stops (very few of the Dial-A-Ride requests were for rides within their communities, more wanted to get to Madras). There are two CC stops in Culver (one on each end of town) and one stop in Metolius. Scott explained that the community members are walking, driving or getting dropped off at the stops. He explained that there is not currently a CC shuttle running between Madras-Warm Springs because Warm Springs ran out of money to fund the service. However, he added that funding should come online July 1 and that service will re-start. He also noted that the commute data shows a surprisingly high number of people commuting from Madras to Warm Springs (not as many commuting the other direction). The group added that the mill, casino and schools are larger employment centers where Madras residents may work.

Scott added that in October, due to lack of funding, COIC shrank the service area for local Dial-A-Ride back to the Madras UGB (used to provide service well past city limits).

Scott briefly reviewed some of the demographics that traditionally drive transit demand: poverty, unemployment, age distribution (more seniors and/or young people). He added that one surprise was the high rate of carpooling in Madras. Scott asked Nick Snead whether the City of Madras was still in the process of updating its Transportation Systems Plan (TSP). Nick explained that the majority is already complete because they only updated the bike and pedestrian elements. Scott asked about the transit elements and they agreed to follow up with each other after the meeting.

**Action Item:** Scott to follow up with Nick with some transit language for Madras TSP update.

### **Survey Results**

Scott reviewed the surveys that COIC conducted in Jefferson County and Central Oregon over the past year. He explained that they conducted a random phone survey (statistically significant for the region but not for Madras or other small communities individually) and found that Central Oregon residents rated transit as very important for those that don't have other options. He added that traditionally in rural environments with long distances separating the communities and limited resources, transit services primarily served dependent populations (over choice riders).

He continued that most of the riders surveyed wanted more convenience from the service. CET used to offer "same-day rides" when a rider could call and request a ride the same day he/she wanted it. They preferred the flexibility but it cost COIC a lot of money. He added that from the Community Connector rider survey COIC knew that the predominant use of the shuttles was for work and education. Also, half of the people surveyed ride the CC every day.

The public meeting surveys (September and October 2012) found that many were willing to pay an increased fare for service. Scott acknowledged this and informed the group that COIC is working on a fare study and potentially restructuring the fare system; however, fares will never pay the full cost of a transit system (ideally would pay 15-25%). Since it is not a cab company, COIC is looking back out to the communities and community groups to determine how to sustain local service.

The group reviewed the schedules and current ridership data. Scott explained that the local public dial-a-ride ridership chart is more of a supply curve than a demand curve. Demand for service was increasing, but due to funding shortfalls COIC had to cut service which caused the dip in ridership. Karen added that COIC heard a lot of complaints from the Madras community about services being cut and that it is important to recognize that the service does matter to people.

**Action Item:** Check the time period for the "Dial-A-Ride within Madras" map and label.

Scott directed the groups attention to the "Dial A Ride: Madras, Culver, Metolius" map and asked the group if they had suggestions for adding stops to the CC shuttle. He also pointed out that there were not any existing rides going to the airport/industrial park area. He asked if it could be because CET service doesn't appropriately match up with the shift schedule of those workers. He continued with a question about focusing resources on the highest demand. He explained that the demand for the Madras-RDM shuttle is high which is further demonstrated by the response to certain runs being cut (ridership only dipped momentarily, then the riders consolidated to the existing trips).

### **Service Plan and Funding**

Scott introduced the funding discussion by explaining CET's current sources of funding and how they are dwindling. He explained that the Cities of Madras, Metolius and Culver all contribute to the system. He explained that they had a Business Energy Tax Credit (BETC) that was set to "sunset" but the "sunset" has turned into a cliff because it's very difficult to find a private sector partner that will purchase it. Karen explained that it's a great deal but the partner needs to have cash up front, which is very difficult for many businesses right now. Scott added that they are in the middle of a major push to find one or more purchasers for the BETC.

Scott and Karen continued and explained the different funding mechanisms that are used by comparable services in Oregon. Basin Transit in Klamath Falls and service in The Dalles use a property tax and Corvallis

implemented a utility fee. Also some of the larger systems use a payroll tax. Scott added that COIC/CET does not see funding as a “one size fits all” solution for the region by rather thinks that there will be community specific service and funding. They emphasized that federal funding has remained consistent but that local funding has been unstable.

They also discussed the midterm and longterm service plan in the context of funding. Scott explained that the midterm service plan proposes a lot of services but it’s a menu of options rather than a package. Scott and Karen explained that the service plans were developed by transit consultants who identified the service additions as the ideal service plan in the next 3-10 years; however, it was up to each community to decide what they wanted their service to be. Scott also explained that the short term service plan had included eliminating one CC run but that has been reconsidered because the run is being utilized.

The funding conversation continued with the cost of service in Madras. Scott explained that CET needs \$76,000 local dollars per year in order to maintain current service (the City of Madras currently contributes \$7500 and Jefferson County contributes some through the competitive STF program). He explained that while it sounds like a lot, per capita its not. It adds up to \$24 per household per year. He added that unfortunately the breakdown of cost to provide service for Culver and Metolius was not provided in the PowerPoint and so asked to meet with Shawna Clanton and Patrick Hanenkrat individually in the near future.

**Action Item:** Scott A. and Karen to meet with Culver and Metolius staff to discuss cost of service and funding for their communities.

Gus Burril added some background information from the City of Madras budget committee. When CET first opened the City provided \$5,000 for about 1/3 of the current rides. He explained that now the City is providing \$7,500 and is getting 3x the rides in return. Walt Chamberlain asked if CET/COIC was able to access FEMA or United Way funds. He explained that the community organizations access FEMA funds because they provide emergency services. He added that 2x/year they have a board meeting and essentially divvy up the funds (about \$2-4,000/organization/year). Scott explained that they can’t access United Way but could for FEMA and noted to look into it.

**Action Item:** Look into FEMA funding for transit service.

Joe Krenowicz asked about how COIC distributes funding and how Madras and smaller communities can be sure that their funding isn’t going to be transferred to the larger population centers when they request more service. Scott explained that COIC keeps the funding from the different cities separate and since there is not a regionwide transit district (nor is one proposed at least for a while) they do not interplay. Karen added that Bend is completely separate because it is an urban system. Also that the rural communities benefit from being a part of the whole because they maintain connection to other cities and the regional money is divided based on rides and miles (which has brought more funds (per capita) to the smaller rural communities than the larger ones). She added that as each community considers its own funding source it will be harder to know how to fund CC service because they don’t know how they will determine which community benefits from each CC shuttle.

Scott reviewed other funding options like an employer or student group pass program which can be used as local match but isn’t generally a back bone of funding (also more appealing in areas with fixed-route service). He also discussed the utility fee which keeps funding completely local and is a City Council decision. He explained that there is a different rate for single family, multi-family, smaller and larger businesses. Shawna asked about the process of adopting the fee in Culver and whether they would have control over the fee and dictate what the money would provide them (if they wanted ‘x’ number of additional community connector stops, etc). Scott explained that he imagined the City would enter into an IGA or other structured agreement that negotiated the terms and amount of time it would be valid. He added that he assumed an annual review that would morph into a longer term relationship once everyone was comfortable with it. Shawna added that she was looking forward to discussing with Corvallis how they implemented the fee at a future COIC board meeting.

Patrick Hanenkrat began working out the cost of service in Metolius based on the hourly rate (\$70.08) and 4 hours of service/day. Scott added that for current service (4 hours per day), the cost to the City is only 21.5% because they have leveraged grants; however, the city would have to cover 100% of the cost of any additional service because they have completely tapped the other resources.

Joe Krenowicz commented that it would be hard to sell supporting transit to business owners and Council while the fare remains so low. He explained that it doesn't seem equitable or like the community has enough buy in with such a low fare. JoDee Tittle (St. Charles) asked whether the group pass program could be used for patients. Scott responded that it's difficult to have a pass program for a constantly changing group of people. JoDee added that regardless she felt that St. Charles may be underutilized as a recipient of the system. She explained that there is a large patient population that could be using it, especially dialysis patients who have to travel to Bend. She suggested starting the conversation with Jeanie Gentry, the CEO of St. Charles Madras. Nick Snead added that some manufacturing employees may be interested as well, maybe in carpool, vanpool or transit.

Kurt Symons asked if CET has any idea of the real need for service and recommended promoting that public transportation reduces crime (since he knows many of his clients drive illegally). Scott answered that they know certain populations need transit but they don't have a clear understanding of need (in the sense of specific locations, groups, times of day, etc). Karen added that they know they are definitely meeting a need because they hear a lot whenever they have to cut service. Nick asked if maybe CET needs a change in statute so that transit could be better state funded. Karen responded that the state and federal government want to see a local investment. When the system is more than half funded by federal grants it is very hard to make the case that the system is very important locally. Scott added that when they are at the table with legislators they want COIC/CET to demonstrate that people really want it and the places that have developed the local funding source are seen as 'wanting transit'.

Beth Ann asked about creating a collaborative between the different smaller rural communities. What if Prineville/Madras/Warm Springs/Sisters worked together? Karen responded that COIC is a regional coordinating entity and while it is not specifically rural, Bend only has one representative on the BOD (representation is weighted heavily towards the rural communities). Beth Ann explained a bit further that maybe the rural communities could work together for funding. Karen explained that the rural communities are already funded together because they receive rural specific funds and have a separate budget and structure. Nick Snead added that traditional revenue authorities in the City are becoming politically unviable and more difficult for City Council and so it will be necessary to get creative with funding. Karen responded that CET is currently operating with 51 funding sources and so it feels like they've already pushed 'creativity' it to its limit. Nick asked about comparables and whether there were other services that were operating more efficiently. Karen responded that the transit consultants found CET service to do very well compared to other rural systems. Overall CET has less funding per capita and offers more services. Nick followed up asking how the other rural services are funded. Scott explained that a Business License Fee is often used in conjunction with a utility fee and property and payroll taxes are also used. Nick added that it's hard because in the past CET has not communicated service changes and cuts very well with the local City Councils. He explained that in order to expect funding, CET needed to build a relationship with the Council based on frequent communication. Scott added that it has been a mistake to assume that the things discussed at the COIC Board meetings (with a representative from each City present) are being translated and communicated back to each community. Scott agreed that CET/COIC needed to have a more frequent presence at the local meetings.

Scott added that they are planning a regional stakeholders meeting (for representatives from COCC, St. Charles, etc) and would continue to be in touch with the communities over the coming months. He thanked them all for attending.