

**Regional Transit Master Plan
Technical Committee Meeting
November 30, 2012
Noon-2:30pm
Housing Works Community Room, 405 SW 6th St., Redmond**

Attendees:

Patrick Hanenkrat (City of Metolius)
Carol Fulkerson (COCA)
Karen Friend (CET)
James Lewis (City of Redmond)
Joni Bramlett (ODOT)
Jeff Monson (Commute Options)
Scott Edelman (City of Prineville)

Staff:

Scott Aycock and Tamara Geiger (Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council)
Scott Chapman, Oren Eshel and Paul Lutey (Nelson/Nygaard)

Introductions

The meeting began with a brief overview of the purpose of the Regional Transit Master Plan and how it connects and complements (without duplicating) Bend MPO's PTP which covers services in Bend only. Questions turned to the lack of stable local funding sources and how CET is going to achieve stable sources of funding. The potential for various types of ballot measures were discussed, Karen Friend described the issue of people trying to defer payment for transit onto someone else (frequently their local government) without making the connection that if the City is paying for it, then the citizens are already paying for it. Scott A. described the need for a comprehensive marketing campaign to teach the community at large about the relevance of transit and why passing a ballot measure would benefit the community.

Project Update

- Updated survey results

The survey findings do not include a survey of Bend Dial-A-Ride riders or start-end data for the Local Public Bus in other communities (this data already exists because the Call Center records each trip origin and destination).

Scott A. and Karen described some discrepancies in rider data that need to be solved, for example 90% of Bend Fixed-Route riders are using the disabled fare. This figure does not realistically reflect the ridership, just people abusing the system. Carol Fulkerson cautions that you can't see all disabilities and just because disabilities aren't visible it doesn't mean they don't exist.

Scott A. described the potential difference in ridership of the Community Connector and the Local Public Bus. While the Community Connector could reduce VMT's for choice riders, local service is most about access - would the person have been able to make the trip without local bus service? According to the surveys, 60% would lack independence without the service. Joni emphasized the need to tell this story to the general public and get them concerned about the need for transit service.

Local Public Bus On-Board Survey: Priority improvements gathered by the surveys are: weekend service, same day rides, later evening. These priorities reflect the needs of people who are transit dependent.

Other survey results include request for same-day rides and fixed-route service in Redmond. 82% of Redmond riders responded 'Yes' or 'Maybe' to the question: Would you use fixed-route service if available in Redmond?

This is a very high response rate. Carol Fulkerson pointed out that not having fixed-route in RDM makes people less interested in riding the Community Connector from Bend-RDM. It's a big problem for COCC students who have to make a reservation to get to campus because the CC drops them at the RDM library downtown.

Community Connector On-Board Survey: Results show a high rate of new riders (who are coincidentally less satisfied with the service, maybe because they are from an area with better transit or have higher expectations because they weren't here when there wasn't any service) and high walk access to the Community Connector stops. Scott E. asked about adding more stops on the CC next to higher density populations. Joni explained that perhaps yes, but 4 or more stops and the CC becomes a fixed-route service that has to include complementary paratransit – can't do it.

Community Preferences Survey: Karen pointed out that this survey was given to many people who didn't have any familiarity with CET (random phone survey). Survey results show that transit had the lowest performance compared to other public services (fire, police). Scott E. indicated that this is somewhat misleading because everyone prioritizes fire and police. James added that people naturally know the good things that the fire and police departments do but if they don't need or use transit they don't see that intrinsic value. Scott A. pointed out that CET needs marketing to inform the community of the value of transit and noted that these results also support the notion that residents want to improve transit performance.

Survey respondents were also asked about their likelihood to support a property tax increase, renters and low/high income were more likely to support a tax increase. Middle incomes were the most against a tax to support transit.

Action Item: Post online and email out the survey findings reports to the Technical Committee.

- Existing Conditions

Scott A. provided an overview of regional population characteristics. There is some confusion about disability figures for the Counties and whether they only include certain types of disabilities (ambulatory...). Carol stated that any disability generally puts people into poverty and that the numbers should reflect the entire class of disability.

Action Item: Confirm all disability numbers and what they represent for absolute clarity.

Karen commented that she likes the category for persons under the driving age because there are more and more young people riding CET to attend the proficiency academy or take college classes. Transit gives them greater access to these opportunities.

Scott A. continued with a conversation about population forecasts that were conducted in 2004. He explained that most of the estimates are already off by a lot, because they are pre-recession forecasts. He wanted to know if the TAC use these estimates as well (OEA in Crook and Jefferson Counties) or if they have a different source. James and Scott E. explained that yes, they use the same forecasts because they are state-recognized and in a twenty-year forecast it is reasonable for the population not to grow steadily but to have more peaks and valleys. We don't know if we'll catch up to the forecast, but it's a possibility.

Regional data on industry employment growth show Health Care and Leisure and Hospitality employment growing from 2010-2020. Scott A. explained that these two sectors can present a challenge to be served by transit, because of early/late shifts and inconsistent working hours.

Scott also presented data on the forecast growth of senior populations in the tri-counties (one of the primary transit dependent populations). While Crook County currently has the highest percentage of seniors the population does not show growth as a % of total population over the next 20 years.

Action Item: Check Crook County senior population data.

Action Item: Check Census 2010 population numbers.

Maps: Very limited populations live between the cities in the tri-counties. Paul explained that the general threshold for proving fixed route transit service is about 20 people/acre or 8 households/acre. The maps illustrate the potential to serve smaller communities like Culver and Crooked River Ranch along the way of a larger Community Connector route, or a vanpool may be a better option to serve those communities.

Scott A. addressed the question of how to determine who should get public services. Do you cut it off at city limits or try to provide limited services to everyone? Jeff Monson commented that people who live far out of town shouldn't expect services. Sunriver is brought up as an example since it is geographically isolated but has a growing permanent community and remains a tourist attraction. Paul explained that service really comes down to density; if you can serve Sunriver well then that's one thing but would it be very difficult and inefficient? Scott A. suggested lower cost models to connect smaller communities to the Community Connector shuttles, such as a volunteer driver program that uses a CET vehicle and maintenance. Karen suggested Metolius could use this model, Pat Hanenkrat suggested Juniper Canyon could also benefit from this model. Karen stated that Juniper Canyon is problematic because the roads are not maintained and the CC already has stops at Juniper Canyon. Scott E. suggested potentially moving the Prineville stop closer to town to the base of Juniper Canyon Rd.

Karen added that local businesses want better services for tourists to transport them to patronize their businesses. Scott E. stated that if the businesses want it then they need to support it and the Visitor's Centers need to get on board.

Commute Patterns Map: Karen responded that the map clearly shows an untapped demand for Prineville-Bend and Sisters-Bend commuters that CET is not capturing. Scott A. pointed out that although its only 15 minutes longer to transfer in RDM, people's perception is that it takes a "long time" and don't want to do it. The map also confirms a high number of commutes from Madras to Warm Springs.

Average Daily Ridership: Scott A. shared ridership data from October 2012 (after the service cuts) and how the number of riders/month remained steady despite the cuts. Scott E. commented about the efficiency of the Airporter (not currently taking many people) but that rides to the RDM COCC campus should be considered a part of the Airporter shuttle. Joni mentioned that the Grant County People Mover had contacted her because people have been calling them to provide rides since the late-morning/midday runs have been cut. The GCPM was concerned they would be stepping on toes by providing these rides.

Action Item: Karen to contact Grant County People Mover to relieve anxieties about providing midday service.

Presentation of Demand Estimates

- Demand estimates methodology

The demand estimates methodology uses the travel demand model from 2003-2030 and assumes steady growth to provide a 2012 figure. This methodology could result in an inflated demand because the forecast is from 2003 pre-recession levels. Paul stated that the overall goal is to determine the strength of the transit market and use it as a way of developing service options. Karen suggested comparing our community to a similar community to estimate demand. Scott A. stated that the only way to manage things happening that we can't predict is to update the plan every couple of years.

In response to the Local Market Assessment Factors, TAC members had some questions about the methodology. Karen F. stated that Prineville should be a High rating rather than a medium. There is also confusion as to why La Pine shows a greater Transit Mode Share based on per capita trip demand than the other communities. Paul suggested including a memo with the Assessment Factors table to send out to the TAC for comment on the methodology because there are so many questions. James Lewis suggested improving the table for clarity, especially when considering showing it to the community at large, it is very confusing.

Action Item: Nelson Nygaard put Methodology into memo format and send it to the TAC for feedback on methodology and qualitative assessments.

- Regional (community-to-community) demand estimates
- Local (within communities) demand estimates

Paul posited a question to the TAC: What is your sense of general support for transit in the communities? In order to gain support, Carol suggested reaching out to EDCO because their goals are attracting businesses and local development. Scott A. suggested community specific meetings and meetings with region-wide stakeholders like COCC, St. Charles, COCOA, ODOT to gain support. Critical as well is identifying champions in each community that will market the meetings to their communities. Jeff Monson suggested that he and Kim Curley can help with the meetings. James Lewis suggested that COIC/CET have a greater presence at the City Council meetings in the area. He explained that he is not able to “sell” transit in the same way that COIC/CET can, but that he (City employees) could be there to show support.

- Regional Transit Guidelines

Next Steps

- Service alternatives

Joni asked if the potential new volunteer driver program will be included in the RTMP. Scott A. suggested a separate section for “service outside the service area” in order to capture those ideas. Joni emphasized the value of including it in the plan because it demonstrates creative, low-cost solutions that could be used to leverage funding. Jeff asked about Bus Rapid Transit, Paul explained that BRT has limited stops and controls the lights to improve speed and efficiency. Scott C. shared that Bend is looking at it in their transit plan.

Paul stated that Redmond is the area with the highest potential for transit improvements. Karen added that increased direct connections for Community Connectors (i.e. Prineville-Bend, Sisters-Bend) also have strong potential.

- Next TAC meeting

Meetings for community stakeholders will likely be held in February. James suggested going to City Council’s before to set the stage. Jeff Monson suggested sharing with Council’s as early as possible – want them to be informed about the planning process not find out later and not be on board.