

**Umatilla County Transportation Advisory Committee**  
**Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**  
Umatilla County Courthouse, Pendleton OR 97801 Room 114  
Zoom virtual option  
February 7, 2024 2:30PM

**AC Members Present:** Staci Kunz (City of Pendleton Transit Coordinator); Heidi Zeigler (DHS); Kim Beck (U.C. CDDP); JD Tovey (CTUIR/Kayak); and Teresa Dutcher (Chair)

**AC Members Virtually:** Jose Garcia (New Horizons)

**AC Members Missing:** Rod Harwood (GOBHI); Linda Carter (City of Pendleton)

**County Liaison:** Megan Davchevski (Transit Coordinator)

**Public:** Vicki Croes (CTUIR Kayak) and Angie Jones (ODOT Region 5 Coordinator)

Chair Dutcher greeted the group and called the Umatilla County Transportation Advisory Committee (UCTAC) meeting to order at 2:30 PM. There were introductions of the UCTAC committee members and guests in the room and online.

**Meeting Minutes:**

JD moved to approve the May 17, 2023 minutes as presented. Staci seconded. Motion passed unanimously 6-0.

**System Sustainability Policy:**

Megan provided a brief overview the System Sustainability program in the STIF Plan. Angie, our Region 5 Coordinator with ODOT has suggested that we review the policy for updates. Megan shared that the big issue is that if the County or a provider decide to go after a mid-cycle grant, the grant match cannot be programmed until the next biennium. Adding flexibility would be beneficial.

Megan went through the proposed redlined changes (attached) and explained the reasoning for each change.

Regarding opening the System Sustainability Reserve Fund up for a competitive grant, Staci asked if the competitive grant opportunity would be presented if the County wanted to use the funds? Megan answered, yes.

One additional change was suggested that is not on the redlined version, under c. iv. to require transit providers to provide a 20% match.

Staci asked if providers submitted reimbursement requests quarterly? Megan responded, yes.

**Discussion and Decision:**

JD offered to provide some background on the reserve fund. He shared on the STIF Rules Advisory Committee, and he highly advocated for the rules to allow Qualified Entities to create a rainy-day fund in the case of an economic downturn. This would allow Qualified Entities to bridge potential gaps in funding. JD also explained that the state's revenue projections for STIF were much lower than our actual revenues. JD shared that our reserve fund should not negatively impact our grant requests, rather, it should show that the County is being fiscally responsible.

Angie responded that yes, ODOT is looking at QEs with large reserves and evaluating them. ODOT could

potentially not fund Umatilla County projects because there is a reserve fund.

There was further discussion about retro budgeting.

Kim asked Angie what a “large amount” would be? Angie responded that it is subjective, but the \$2 million threshold that Megan identified is safe for Umatilla County, due to the higher revenues and number of programs.

Regarding the \$500,000 minimum, JD expressed that the funds should be accessible. Megan clarified that under the emergency clause, the \$500,000 does not apply. Additional language was added under c. ii. to read:

Limitations on funds: At no point shall projects be funded that would diminish the System Sustainability Fund below \$500,000, *except for projects eligible under 4(b)*.

Kim expressed support for the \$500,000 minimum, sharing that the System Sustainability Policy can be revisited in four years, or as needed sooner.

Staci moved to approve the presented amended System Sustainability Policy, with the changes discussed as a group previously. JD seconded. Motion carried 6-0.

Megan shared that she would take the amended policy to the Board of Commissioners at their next meeting and send out the adopted version to the UCTAC members.

#### **Roundtable Discussions:**

##### **Transit electric vehicles, EV policies**

Angie shared that there is a push nationwide to push for zero-emission vehicles. This is an issue for most places, particularly rural eastern Oregon. She also shared that there has been a bus shortage for the last few years. Vehicle costs are also increasing.

Agencies are being asked to plan towards being zero-emission. Charging electric and hybrid vehicles will be a challenge. Additionally, these vehicles are just not available and won't be through 2025.

Teresa asked if we should be planning for this? Angie shared that transit providers should be looking at the zero-emission plan. JD asked if this had to be standalone or if they could put this in an existing plan? Angie shared that ODOT has a 6-page model plan, the County could have a County-wide plan with provider inserts, or it could go into the updated Coordinated Plan.

Megan asked if it could be an attachment in the Coordinated Plan? Angie said it could be, but it would be more appropriately in the Capital Asset Management Plan. Angie shared she just paid an invoice for an ADA minivan that cost \$91,000, this amount used to purchase two ADA minivans.

Discussion continued about the pricing and supply of vehicles. There was also discussion about charging stations.

Angie shared that electric vehicles have a 65% downtime for charging, maintenance and repairs are at least double the cost of a diesel engine. Hydrogen engines are triple the cost, propane is more affordable.

JD shared the issues with using electric busses for rural routes over Cabbage and the other commuter routes. An agency would have to have a lot of back ups in order to keep a route functional.

Teresa asked where legislation was on this issue? Angie shared that the legislature is pretty aware and realistic about the issues with electric vehicles and also the issues with manufactures.

Angie shared that the Governor wants the zero-emission vehicle standard met by 2050.

## **Regional Transit District**

Megan shared that during the development of the Transit Development Plan, it was discussed that it would be beneficial for the County to form a Regional Transit District to better manage transit funds and provide a cohesive transit service.

After discussing with JD Tovey and Angie Jones, it became clear that there is no easy or straightforward path for Umatilla County to form a Regional Transit District with CTUIR. State Statute currently only allows cities to form a Transit District, but it doesn't really allow a tribe to be a part of the district. The only way to address this would be to request a legislative amendment from the state legislature. The first step would be to hire a consultant to determine the necessary steps and potentially draft legislative language. There is a planning grant open right now with ODOT, but the County does not currently have any match to go towards this project.

Staci shared that she thought counties could form a regional transit district?

Angie stated that the counties could form transit services, but it wouldn't serve the purpose that we are trying to achieve. Megan reiterated that this process would not allow CTUIR to serve as a member on the board of the transit district.

JD shared that the ORS dictates who can serve on the transit district's board, and provides for tribes to follow their processes for selecting board members. JD shared some of the difficulties with Kayak being housed under CTUIR's Planning Department.

Megan added that the recent decision by the City of Milton-Freewater to drop their fixed route service is adding to the desire for a Regional Transit District to be formed. The County does not provide the service, but is stuck in the middle trying to provide funds so that services are not lost. With a transit district, the transit district would be responsible for all of the services, rather than a piecemeal of services between different providers.

JD discussed Kayak's future expansion plans to provide services that go to the Tri-Cities as well as a circular route within the City of Umatilla.

Jose shared that he can see the benefits of forming a transit district.

Megan clarified that if an RTD was formed, the district would become the Qualified Entity (QE), rather than Umatilla County and would receive the STIF funds. The district would be able to use purchase services if desired, much like the County currently operates. JD added that this is how Tri-Met operates as a QE and funds smaller transit services, like the City of Wilsonville.

Kim asked if a consultant would do this work, and what the match would be? Megan shared that the 5304 Planning grant requires a 20% match, and she estimates the project would cost about \$200,000 which would include the political legislative work.

Kim asked if we could use the System Sustainability funds to request the match now instead of asking next biennium. Angie shared the planning grant is only \$300,000 statewide and is very competitive. JD added that we could build this cost into the next STIF plan. Staci agreed to this strategy.

Staci asked if Morrow County could join the district later? JD responded that it would be possible. Megan added that formation of the district will have to go to the voters on a ballot. It would be smarter to have Umatilla County and CTUIR both put it on their respective ballots, and leave it up to Morrow County to send to their voters later on if they choose. Then the formation doesn't fail if Morrow County doesn't want to join.

JD shared that during the formation of STIF, Morrow County did not want to be under Umatilla County. However, he believes that the current Morrow County staff would be supportive of joining the transit district.

### **Proposed and potential route changes**

Staci shared that the City of Pendleton and Kayak worked together to remove duplicity. The Metro will stop at Walmart, City Hall and Til Taylor Park and the Let'r Bus will pick up ridership in town. Staci had maps and schedules, the changes aren't happening right now, they are still planning these changes.

Staci added that the bus shelter at Circle K in Pendleton was taken down due to being used primarily by the homeless for resting and garbage. She said that the shelter will be relocated somewhere else but she doesn't know where.

Megan asked Staci to share which stop the shelter gets moved to. Angie asked if the stop was going to be removed? Staci responded that she believed the bus will still stop at Circle K, the City believes that the issues with the shelter negatively impacted ridership.

JD shared that the City and Kayak should've discussed removing the shelter as they share the stop. Angie and JD shared equity issues and concerns with removing the shelter. JD added that transit should be at the table during road reconstruction projects, in order to better plan for bus stops, pullouts, shelters, etc.

Angie and Megan shared visiting with ODOT on their project on Highway 207/11<sup>th</sup> Street in Hermiston. ODOT was supposed to contact Kayak for consultation.

Discussion continued about road construction projects and stops with difficulties.

Staci shared that Pendleton's Bus Barn groundbreaking will be at March 7<sup>th</sup> at 4PM up at the airport.

Meeting adjourned at 3:17 pm.

Submitted by Megan Davchevski, Umatilla County Transit Coordinator