

Linn County Transportation Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes 11/14/24

Call to order: 3:01 PM by Vice Chair, Barry Hoffman

Attendance: Annie Holsworth, Marilyn Smith, Kindra Oliver, Kristen Preston, Barry Hoffman, Dawn Mitchell, Jeff Babbitt, Cody Franz, Reagan Maudlin

Introductions: Kindra Oliver, Lebanon Senior Center/LINX; Dawn Mitchell, Senior Citizens of Sweet Home, Inc./Linn Shuttle/Dial-A-Bus; Kristen Preston, City of Albany; Barry Hoffman, Albany Transportation/ATS/Paratransit/Linn Benton Loop; Jeff Babbitt, Albany; Reagan Maudlin, Linn County Special/Rural Transportation Coordinator; Annie Holsworth, Senior/Disabled Transit user; Marilyn Smith, Albany City Council; Cody Franz, Oregon Department of Transportation Regional Transit Coordinator

Minutes: Marilyn moves to accept the 11/07/2024 minutes as prepared, Annie seconds. Discussion: Kindra provides suggested corrections and reads aloud the additions to the minutes; corrections were sent to Reagan via email. Marilyn moves to accept minutes as amended, Annie seconds, motion passes unanimously. Reagan will reflect the submitted revisions that were read aloud during meeting in the minutes.

Public Comment: None

Marilyn makes an observation that it is challenging to solicit public involvement and suggests that the group be considerate of meeting times to better accommodate public attendance and participation.

25-27 STIF Reserve Policy Discussion: Discussion was opened by reviewing the TAC roles and goals for the subject of creating a Reserve policy. The Transportation Advisory Committee is imbued with power to make recommendation for policy or changes to guiding documents, but are not imbued with powers to create policy or formally adopt changes independently.

Concepts were discussed around how to determine a methodology of setting parameters on STIF Reserves. Ideas were flushed out such as: using a percentage method or considering operating contingency needs over a period of time. Reagan shares that ODOT suggests providers/QEs have five (5) months of operating contingency, however, recognizes that most providers/QEs do not have such resources. It was asked what the City of Albany policy is on contingency and shared that City of Albany uses a percentage scale to determine contingency. Dawn asks if the County has policy regarding contingency as part of budgeting and if so, would such policies affect the STIF Reserves. Reagan shares it is her understanding that STIF funds are governed collaboratively by an advisory committee and governing body and operates separately from any policy or statute that may govern Linn County General Funds, however, she agrees to investigate to make sure all considerations are reflected going forward.

Reagan shares information gleaned from ODOT regarding Reserve policies. STIF Rule does not require or prohibit a Qualified Entity (QE) from adopting language to govern Reserves as long as it is not in conflict with the approved functions of reserves as per STIF Rule. Guidance at the STIF Rule level is somewhat vague and retains a high level of discretion to QEs. Inquiry was made as to whether there were other QEs that have adopted language to govern reserves in the State. Responses from ODOT included only two examples: Portland (PTD) has some language in their Sub-allocation method that defends the existence of Reserves, but is not specific about the quantity or use; one other QE in the State briefly had

language to govern Reserves, however, quickly abandoned the language when it was determined to be too restrictive and counterproductive to their goals.

Marilyn read language from ODOT provided guidance regarding Reserves focusing on approved usages. Marilyn also mentions that ODOT had scrutinized large carryforward reserves in the past and cautions the group from considering that approach. Reagan shares that the Reserves scrutiny from ODOT never included definitions of what “large,” means; a large reserve to Linn County might not be considered a large Reserve for Portland. Reagan further shares in her conversations with Jennifer Boardman at ODOT, Reserves are a current topic as they are recognizing that agencies with larger Reserves ended up fairs better during the unexpected COVID restrictions and subsequent increase in expenses. According to Jennifer, ODOT is not taking a firm stance on Reserves as long as the language in the STIF plan meets usage rules and is clear on intent.

The group held discussion revealing their individual concerns and what goals they felt Reserves should achieve. It was generally agreed upon that Reserves should be prioritized for ongoing operations rather than being treated as one-time funds that could be focused on one-time spending such as capital type expenses. The observation was made that in the current STIF 23-25 cycle and looking forward to 25-27, an additional 1M has been allocated in each STIF plan above estimated new STIF for the biennium to keep operations at current levels. It was suggested that the Reserves should be at 1M to continue serving that purpose.

Reagan speaks to the group on considering using loose language that retains flexibility for situations outside of our current scope. She gives the language example “setting the goal of,” rather than “the reserves must sustain” a certain level. She also asks the group to consider how using reserves to maintain operations could work in an ongoing, sustainable, manner if it is intended to.

Conversations shifted to where any recommended language regarding Reserves should live. The options provided were a stand-alone policy or incorporating the language into the existing Sub-allocation Method and/or the Linn County Coordinated Plan. Including new language in the Sub-allocation Method was the favored approach. In order to discuss the Sub-allocation Method, there are rules regarding public notice soliciting public and provider involvement and having the topic included on the agenda. For these reasons, it was suggested to reconvene under circumstances that meet all of the criteria of discussing the Sub-allocation Method at a later date.

The group agrees to reconvene on the subject with the intent of discussing it as a revision to the Linn County Sub-allocation Method. The date to reconvene was agreed to occur in February 2025, Reagan will follow-up outside of meeting to set date, time, and location.

Barry requests that Reagan draft some language as a starting point to consider at that meeting. She agrees to provide draft language for the group to start their discussions from at the February meeting.

Other Business: Question was raised regarding updated 25-27 STIF estimates. Cody agrees to follow-up with Reagan outside of meeting with any updates.

Next meeting: TBA February 2025

Meeting Adjourned: 4:25 PM

Meeting Minutes prepared by: Reagan Maudlin, Linn County Special/Rural Transportation Coordinator

Approved: 01/23/25