

Appendix A - Gorge TransLink Alliance

October Meeting Notes

October 29, 2015

3:00 – 4:30 pm

**Hood River County Public Library – Conference Room
Hood River, OR**

Attending: Deanna Bisbee, Nick Ford, Katie Gullans; Via phone: Sharon Carter, Karyn Criswell, Arlene Johnson

Welcome/Introductions: The meeting was called to order at 3:05 pm.

August Meeting Notes: The meeting notes were accepted as submitted.

Gorge TransLink Alliance Promotion & Video Opportunity

The group discussed the 1-Call/1-Click TRC video project with Nick Ford and media specialist intern Katie Gullans. The project is designed to feature those transportation providers within the Human Services Council's service area, which includes Skamania County Community Transit and Mt Adams Transportation Service (Klickitat County). Some filming has already been completed of SCCT and MATS. They will each be featured in short promotional videos that will reside on the 1-Call, 1-Click Transportation Resource Center (TRC) website. The video files will be shared with each agency for posting on their agency website and also with MCEDD's Mobility Manager, Michele, for posting on the Gorge TransLink Alliance website. In addition to SCCT's and MATS' promotional pieces, a short video will be made promoting the Gorge TransLink Alliance and each of its members' services. This video will also be posted on the Gorge TransLink Alliance website. Nick noted the high level of coordination among the Gorge TransLink transportation providers and how critical their services are for those needing to get to Portland/Vancouver. All of the videos produced will reside on YouTube and agency staff may embed the YouTube link on their agency website. Karyn noted the potential to use these videos to promote transportation options. Michele will share the Gorge TransLink Alliance video with Karyn when it is completed.

Gorge TransLink Alliance 2016 Meeting Schedule

Michele noted that at our last meeting, we talked about our meeting frequency and most people wanted to continue with bimonthly meetings or at a minimum quarterly. For 2016 calendar year, Michele proposed we continue to meet bimonthly and the group concurred. The date/time proposed was the second Wed. of the month from 3:00 pm to 4:30 pm, beginning in February 2016. Michele will send out a Save-the-dates announcement soon. She also noted there is always a conference option offered to make it easier for people to attend.

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Update

Michele explained the CEDS, which is a document that MCEDD submits to the U.S. Dept of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (EDA) that prioritizes regional infrastructure projects in order to secure funding to accomplish them. The EDA requires full revisions every 5 years and annual updates in between. 2016 is an annual update year. In preparation for the update, MCEDD is hosting a regional discussion on transportation infrastructure needs, tentatively scheduled for December

3, 2015. Michele, as Mobility Manager, will be representing the Gorge TransLink Alliance at this discussion and asked for their perspective of pressing transportation infrastructure needs. The following items were brought forth:

- Sharon noted the Hood River Bridge replacement is a top priority of the Klickitat County Regional Transportation Council. She also stated the importance of having this project listed in all local plans as that is a requirement for funding streams.
- Arlene noted Skamania County needs a Bus Garage.
- CAT has four vehicles that are nearing the end of their useful life, so replacement vehicles are needed.
- Summer travel and the need for shuttles to promote tourism and recreation, e.g. funding for a bus for transit from Portland into the Gorge was mentioned by Karyn. She suggested we take every opportunity, including this one, to promote transportation options for tourism and its importance to economic development.
- Arlene would also like to see additional funding to extend transit Eastward from Skamania County.
- Sharon noted additional funding is needed to support week-end transportation service.

Michele related that the event isn't until Dec. 3rd so there is plenty of time for Gorge TransLink Alliance members to submit transportation infrastructure ideas to her through email or by phone. Even if some of the project ideas/identified needs do not fit the CEDS criteria, Michele noted it's important for her to be aware of them so that she can match them with different funding opportunities that come to MCEDD's attention.

Mobility Manager Update

Michele shared the following report:

- She attended the Oregon Public Transportation Conference, Oct. 18 – 21, 2015, in Eugene. Highlights:
 - Dan Schwanz was named 2015 Oregon Public Transportation Award's Outstanding Public Transportation Manager.
 - She attended a keynote on National Geographic reporter Andrew Evans' (aka the Digital Nomad) trip from Washington DC to Antarctica using only public buses. Evans spoke about the importance and affordability of public transportation and was very inspirational. His trip, Bus2Antarctica may be found at: <http://travel.nationalgeographic.com/travel/bus2antarctica/>
 - Michele attended the following sessions that have direct relevance to our Gorge TransLink Alliance:
 - Working with small businesses to promote use of transportation options

- Web design and marketing
 - Regional collaborations to connect public transit

- **City of The Dalles Transportation System Plan Update**
Michele has been appointed to the Public Advisory Committee for the City of The Dalles Transportation System Plan (TSP) update. The engineering consulting firm of Kittelson and Associates has been retained by ODOT and the City to perform the update of the Transportation System Plan. The first meeting will be held on November 18 from 3:30-5:30 p.m. in The Dalles City Council Chambers. The TSP update is coinciding with the 2016 update to the Coordinated Transportation Plan for Wasco County.

- **Mt. Hood Transportation Options Promotion/Outreach Plan**
The draft plan was submitted to ODOT Region 1 Regional Transportation Coordinator (RTC) Karyn Criswell and also to Mt. Hood Express management staff, Teresa Christopherson and Margaret McNamara on October 15th and is currently under review.

- **AOC/ODOT Pilot Project on Coordinated Human Services Transportation for Limited English Proficiency Individuals**
All of the community focus groups, one in each county, have been conducted and the data rolled-up for analysis. The project's Small Working Group will meet November 16 to review the Human Services Stakeholder themes from their interviews and the focus group outcomes. Pilot project money is available from AOC/ODOT to fund a small test of change pilot project.

- **Coordinated Public Transportation Plan 2016 updates for Hood River, Sherman and Wasco Counties**
Michele is on the agenda for each of the December County Commission meetings for Wasco and Sherman counties, along with their STF Committees and is also confirmed for the December meeting of the Hood River County Transportation District Board to give a high level overview of the Coordinated Public Transportation Plan 2016 updates project scope and timeline.

- **WET Seasonal Bus**
Arlene reported the seasonal WET bus ended Oct. 12th. She reported 548 week-end riders for the season. Results from an onboard survey conducted mid-July through August showed 61% of riders were from outside Skamania County. A grant renewal request to extend the week-end service for two more years is in process. A multi-agency Safety Committee is working together to make the access to Dog Mountain during the height of the spring bloom season safer. A shuttle with ample parking to the Dog Mountain trail head is proposed as a way to alleviate hazardous parking situations that have developed at this popular trailhead. Arlene is exploring Home Valley Park as a possible staging/parking area to conduct the shuttle service. The safety plan also calls for the purchase of portable Variable Message Signs as well as additional signage on WA-Rt. 14. These safety improvements, including the shuttle service, will be included in the FLAP grant renewal request.

- **Statewide DLC Challenge (Oregon) Oct. 5-18,2015**

We had two local Statewide Challenge prize winners. Bill Bohn, won a \$20 Ruff Wear gift card, and Ian Stromquist, won two Mt. Hood Meadows adult one day unrestricted lift tickets. The assessment of the overall impact of this year's Statewide Challenge hasn't been completed.

Provider Updates

Karyn Criswell, ODOT Region 1 RTC, explained several upcoming transit studies relevant to both our region and our Gorge TransLink Alliance members:

- A Gorge Transit Planning Study, encompassing East Multnomah County to Hood River County, and comprised of two parts. The first is a pilot project to implement and study a transportation service from East Multnomah County to Multnomah Falls. The pilot is to be implemented by June 2016, in advance of the June 7, 2016 celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Historic Columbia River Highway. The second involves potentially partnering with CAT to expand its existing intercity service to accommodate key stops/recreation areas in the Gorge. The study will conduct focus groups with public transportation service providers who might interface with the proposed service expansion or be able to offer/provide transportation services. The Gorge Transit Planning Study is awaiting notice to proceed.
- ODOT was awarded a Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) grant to study and identify potential long-term solutions to alleviate the heavy congestion along the Historic Columbia River Highway and the I-84 at Multnomah Falls interchange, which are causing many safety issues.
- Oregon Governor Kate Brown convened a collaborative assessment to look at the safety issues between Bridal Veil and the Ainsworth section of the Historic Columbia River Highway. The intent is to address these safety issues before June 2016, in advance of the 100th anniversary celebration of the Historic Columbia River Highway.

Karyn discussed the importance of addressing critical short-term transportation safety issues in the Gorge and to have viable solutions in place prior to the June 2016 rededication of the Historic Columbia River Highway (HCRH) for two reasons: (1) Oregon is expecting a surge of visitors on the HCRH due to its 100th anniversary celebration and (2) after the 100th anniversary celebration, ODOT is anticipating a 2017 closure of the HCRH to replace a couple of viaducts.

Sharon Carter reported the MATS' White-Salmon-Bingen-Hood River route schedule is undergoing some changes. The Opportunity Connections stop has ceased due to program changes there and MATS is changing its transportation schedule in response. Sharon emphasized the M-W-F schedule will continue, only the times will change. She reported they have regular users of the service including some bicyclists. Requests for bicycle transportation are coming from Hood River and White Salmon and are primarily for recreational use.

Sharon also reported some very good news: WSDOT has informed her it has received additional funding from legislators so it's very likely some of MATS funding will be restored. MATS didn't

receive any capital funding and this funding includes capital, allowing them to replace one mini-van and also restore transportation service funding.

Arlene Johnson received a notice that Skamania County Senior Services will receive operations funding through the next Highly Rural Veterans transportation grant program. This program focuses on the transportation needs of Veterans in frontier counties.

Nick Ford announced his last day at Human Services Council is Nov. 10, 2015 and he is moving back East. He informed the group that the Human Services Council has approved a VISTA volunteer to continue work on the Transportation Resource Center project, particularly providing support and maintaining development for the rural counties of Wahkiakum, Cowlitz, Skamania and Klickitat counties. He noted a soft launch of the 1-Call; 1-Click website before he leaves and will share the link to Gorge TransLink Alliance members at that time. He said the Human Services Council is planning a community open house to celebrate their new building. The 1-Call;-1-Click TRC will be officially launched to coincide with the open house.

Michele inquired about the promotional videos project and what the plan was to complete these. Nick stated that Katie Gullans, media intern, will complete these videos and, if need be, Colleen Kuhn, has indicated HSC will make additional staff funds available for Katie to complete the video project.

Nick also announced that the Skamania County GTFS data is up on Google, so people can use Google Transit for trip mapping.

Funding/Training Opportunities:

ODOT 2016 Discretionary Grants – advanced information packet released. Includes:

- Special Transportation Funds \$2,117,000 for ODOT region 1; \$558,000 for ODOT Region 4. Available to the 42 STF agencies in the state. Purpose to improve transportation services for seniors and people with disabilities and can be used for transit operations, capital equipment, travel information, planning and federal match. Applications will be released in Dec. No match required. Some of the money is allocated for each region by formula and a separate amount is discretionary under a competitive process and is meant to support projects of statewide significance.
- Capital Investment Program – 5339 Bus Replacement Grant (for Rural communities) \$2.5 million. Available to general public providers who operate fixed schedules in rural and small urban communities. Applications out in January 2016. 15% match.
- 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors & Individuals with Disabilities. \$1.8 million. Local govts., tribal govts., and private non-profit agencies that operate public transit services are eligible to apply. May only be used for replacing or right-sizing vehicles. 10.27% match

- Transit Network Discretionary Fund - \$1Million. Transit agencies; TO programs, non-profits, local govts., and universities are eligible. Project must be designed to make significant improvement in statewide transportation network. Applications avail. Early 2016. Match ranges from 10.27% - 50% depending upon the project type.

Announcements

[Washington Public Transportation Plan Draft](#)

The draft is available for review and public comment by clicking on the Link above. It's described as a blueprint to help guide decisions and integrate all modes of public transportation to better meet our needs over the next 20 years. Public comment period closes January 5, 2016.

National Rural Transit Assistance Program's Safety Training e-Learning: [START Online](#)

An e-learning, interactive version of their popular Safety Training and Rural Transit or START instructor-led course. It has updated content in 8 lessons that cover Vehicle Safety, Driver/Operator Safety and Passenger Safety. Learners can go at their own pace and the system tracks learner progress and results. START Online is free of charge and is hosted on the Center for Transportation e-Learning's platform (C-Tel). For more information about START online, call [888-589-6821](tel:888-589-6821) or email info@nationalrtap.org.

Next Meeting: Scheduled for Wednesday, December 9, 2015 from 3pm to 4:30pm at Hood River County Public Library.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 4:25 p.m.