

**Salem Area Mass Transit District
Special Transportation Fund Advisory Committee
Tuesday, March 12, 2019
Courthouse Square – Commissioners Board Room
555 Court St NE, Salem, Oregon 97301**

A. CALL TO ORDER & NOTE OF ATTENDANCE:

Ron Harding called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. with a quorum present.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Ron Harding, Chair; John Hammill, Vice Chair; Emily Broussard; Bryant Baird; Beth Jackson; Jean Sherbeck; Sherena Meagher-Osteen [arrived at 9:53 a.m.]

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Marja Byers; Victor Reppeto

STAFF:

Ted Stonecliffe, Transit Planner II; Chris French, Senior Planner; Jeremy Jorstad, Transit Planner I; Steve Dickey, Director of Transportation Development; SueAnn Coffin, Contracted Services Manager; Allan Pollock, General Manager; David Trimble, Chief Operations Officer; Melissa Kidd, Operations Programs Administrator; Jolynn Franke, Administrative Assistant, Transportation Development

SAMTD BOARD LIAISON:

Jerry Thompson, SAMTD Board of Directors; Colleen Busch, SAMTD Board of Directors

PROVIDERS:

Kathleen McClaskey, Woodburn Transit; Jim Row, City of Woodburn; Tim Williams, MV Transportation; Lisa Roth, Salem Health Foundation

GUESTS:

Brent DeMoe, Polk County Family and Community Outreach; Jeremy Gordon, Falls City Mayor; Lyle Mordhorst, Polk County Commissioner

Ron Harding, Chair, opened the meeting with a recap of what occurred at the SAMTD Board of Directors (the board) meeting on February 28, 2019. Ron shared that the board members felt they didn't have as much information as they would have liked in order to make a decision other than the recommendation from the Special Transportation Fund Advisory Committee (STFAC) for funding the FY2019-2021 STF

and Section 5310(ODOT) applications. The board decided to convene in a work session to review the guidance in the Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan (Coordinated Plan), the STFAC process, and the applications submitted for the two grants. The board also requested that the STFAC reconvene and reconsider their recommendation to the board in such a way as to provide justification for the recommendations.

B. PUBLIC COMMENT [Ron Harding]:

Ron reminded attendees that public comment would be limited to three minutes each and to use proper meeting decorum. Ted Stonecliffe informed attendees that the Commissioners Board Room is situated close to other offices and asked that all be respectful by keeping the volume of their voices at a reasonable level and stated that outbursts would not be tolerated. He also asked that guests wait to be called upon for more input after the public comment period closed and not to interject into the STFAC member's discussion. Ron opened the public comment portion of the meeting.

1. Brent DeMoe, Polk County Family and Community Outreach –

Brent DeMoe introduced himself as an employee of the Polk County Family and Community Outreach department. He was part of the group that presented the Falls City Direct Connect STF and 5310(ODOT) grant applications at the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting on January 29, 2019.

Brent recognized there is not a lot of funding to go around for this biennium and whether it be Falls City or someone else, there is going to be someone who gets less money than they asked for. However, as he stated in his public testimony at the last board meeting, there is still a priority and a process that needs to be followed when an entity releases an RFP. So, their concern is not that they did not get funded, it's more that they were ranked fourth, but not funded at all when one committee suggested that there should be a small amount of money, about \$25,000.00 a year for two years, and then another committee, or another process, was changed rather quickly to get no funding at all.

Brent stated that he has worked in government his entire career. He has been the lead in procurement and has been on all ends of grants and this process that this committee and Cherriots Board of Directors is going through appears to be changing the rules mid-stream. Brent was present

at the board meeting last night where Ted Stonecliffe presented some documents. One of the biggest questions is whether the Coordinated Plan ranked the priorities or not. Brent has been a part of writing strategic plans and coordinated plans and, if you go by the face value of what the Coordinated Plan says, all of the bulleted points have equal value. As Ted stated at the board meeting last night, there was a question as to whether these items were listed in priority order and staff have confirmed that that was the intention of the consultant during the production of the document. If that's the case, it seems to Brent that that should have been done in 2014. You can't change the rules in the middle of a process. There's still something that you have to honor.

The Falls City Direct Connect touches on every single bullet point, except for number two on the list, as meeting the intent of the Coordinated Plan. So, Brent wants to encourage that if there's a process, or if there are rules, that you stick with that to make it fair for all the applicants. Also, Brent is here to answer any questions the STFAC may have about the project or partnerships, as far as who's putting in how much funding between Polk county, Falls City, and other entities; and about what they are doing to ensure that people in one of the most remote areas of the county have access to transportation.

2. Jeremy Gordon, Falls City Mayor-

Jeremy Gordon introduced himself. He is the mayor of Falls City and became involved in the Falls City Direct Connect project mid-way through its inaugural year.

Mayor Gordon would like to echo what Brent said in terms of process. When looking for a third non-profit partner Cherriots seemed like the perfect fit. When looking over the RFP and the priorities, it seemed like a perfect fit, and so they spent a dear amount of time and energy putting it together and presenting it, and it seems that they did it all for naught; that they maybe should have pursued other methods to find a partner in transportation. Falls City has very high poverty rates, very high rates of people who identify with having disabilities, and its lack of access to services make it seem as though Cherriots is the ideal partner. However that partnership manifests, Falls City will leverage whatever they have to make that work.

Mayor Gordon was very excited when the TAC awarded a small portion of the original ask so they could continue operation of the services as they are. The depth of need for folks in Falls City, those that use it, is really a matter of life and death. That is not an exaggeration. The nature of the poverty in Falls City can sort of be compared to the Appalachian communities where the geographic isolation is key and multi-generation poverty is key. The City has done everything they can to bring services to people and to help people access services. They have very few services in town. There's a small, mom-and-pop kind of a grocery store and that's about it in terms of food access. There's no medical providers, no dentists, no mental health, and as the City is trying to move forward with economic development and to see how they can survive as a city, transportation is a necessary, but insufficient condition to make sure they can survive.

So, Mayor Gordon hopes to be able to partner with Cherriots. However that manifests, he will make the best of it on the City's end. Polk County has been an absolute super star partner. So, with that in mind, Mayor Gordon hopes the STFAC will reconsider the original recommendation from the TAC as one that does fit the RFP and the Coordinated Plan.

3. Lyle Mordhorst, Polk County Commissioner –

Commissioner Mordhorst introduced himself and thanked the STFAC for considering what they are asking. When it comes to budgets and shortfalls, all are familiar and know what it's like to try and stretch a dollar as far as it can. Commissioner Mordhorst reiterated that it isn't about the dollars, Polk County has carried the burden for the last few months, but it's about the need, the families and the kids, having access to food and medical services, or just being able to pick up prescriptions. These families have one car and if dad leaves with the car mom is home with the kids with no transportation to go anywhere.

This is a need that has needed to be addressed for a long time and Polk County has carried the torch for a while, but Polk County is also facing budget cuts just like everyone else and they understand that. Looking at the amount recommended from the TAC to be awarded to the Falls City Direct Connect project, about \$54,000.00, it's such a small percentage of Cherriots' budget and maybe they can find ways to absorb that. It seems like a small amount of money for bigger organizations, but for

the Falls City Direct Connect project it's a lot to try and come up with consistently. Polk County does what they can with what they have, but Cherriots' help is needed. Commissioner Mordhorst reiterated that ultimately this isn't about money it's about people who are very isolated and this is their connection to society.

C. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES – February 12, 2019 [Ron Harding]:

John Hammill, Vice Chair, moved that the February 12, 2019 STFAC minutes be accepted by the STFAC as written. Bryant Baird seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously among voting members.

D. ANNOUNCEMENTS: None

E. ACTION ITEMS:

- 1. Make a new recommendation to the SAMTD Board of Directors for funding the 2019-21 STF and 5310(ODOT) grant applications to be presented to the SAMTD Board at their March 28, 2019 Board meeting. [Ron Harding] –**

Ron opened the meeting up for discussion by STFAC members regarding the recommendation to the board for funding the FY2019-2021 STF and 5310(ODOT) grant applications.

Ron, Jean Sherbeck, John Hammill, and Emily Broussard all expressed concern and dissatisfaction with the guidance provided in the Coordinated Plan and/or the lack of direction on how to interpret that guidance. The Coordinated Plan seems out of date in some aspects, such as services that have begun operating since the document was adopted in 2016. Also, the Coordinated Plan's guidance to give preference to fund existing services discourages new services from forming.

Ted stated that ODOT is not able to provide funding for the Coordinated Plan update process until it is three years old. Ted asked ODOT if there would be funding for an update this year and was told no, that funding would be made available for plans that were more than three years old, but not those that were just reaching three years old. Ted hopes that funding will be made available from ODOT next year. In the meantime, Cherriots staff will begin a cursory update to bring the branding up to date

and to include any new services that were not in operation when the Coordinated Plan was adopted in 2016. However, the process for updating the priorities and strategies of the Coordinated Plan requires a several month's long public process, which requires additional funding from ODOT.

Ron pointed out that as the amount of available funding decreases and the need for funding increases it has become more and more necessary for the STFAC to provide justification for their recommendations. Also, the STFAC is in need of better defined criteria for the application review process. He has requested that these topics be added to the STFAC agenda for discussion at future meetings.

John was serving on the board when the Coordinated Plan was adopted and he does recall the guidance therein being in priority order. Also, John expressed the need for consistency in public transportation services for those that use them and that this should be an overarching principle when considering funding allocations. The downside to that is that new proposals will have a hard time getting funding from the STFAC using the current Coordinated Plan. He reminded STFAC members that while it is not within their power to make changes to the Coordinated Plan, it is up to them to express their concerns to the board. The concern being that good, new ideas are being discouraged. That being said, those are the priorities that the STFAC has now and those are the priorities that they should follow today.

The STFAC members agreed that the recommendation formed at the February 12, 2019 STFAC meeting regarding the Section 5310(ODOT) dollars was not being called into question. It was clear that the one 5310(ODOT) application not recommended for funding did not meet the ODOT requirements for vehicle replacement.

John Hammill motioned that the Section 5310(ODOT) funding recommendation formed by the STFAC at the February 12, 2019 meeting be forwarded to the SAMTD Board of Directors as written. Jean Sherbeck seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously among voting members.

Discussion then turned to the recommendation for STF dollars.

John feels that the STFAC members should have paid more attention to the fact that there is a notable shortfall in STF dollars for the upcoming

biennium. So, no matter what recommendation is formed, existing services will be cut because there is less money available. If that had been called out from the beginning it could have saved some time and confusion around how to allocate those dollars.

At the February 12, 2019 STFAC meeting Cherriots staff eluded to the need to make cuts to the Cherriots Regional service if the recommendation for STF funding formed at that meeting was put into effect. Ron asked that Cherriots staff provide more specific data to the STFAC members on what those service cuts would look like after he was asked for more information at the February 28, 2019 Board Meeting. Ted provided a hand out comparing Cherriots' costs to operate the Polk County Flex service and Polk County's costs to operate the Falls City Direct Connect service. These calculations show that 1) if Cherriots were to add service to and from Falls City two days a week using the Cherriots Regional service there would need to be a reduction of 3 hours and 45 minutes per day in the current five day a week Polk County Flex service to make up for the funding deficit, and 2) if Polk County were to continue to operate the Falls City Direct Connect service at the current levels there would need to be a reduction of 1 to 1-1/2 hours per day in the current five day a week Polk County Flex service to make up for the funding deficit.

Ted asked Brent DeMoe to confirm the average ridership per year for the Falls City Direct Connect service at 840. Brent said that was correct, but to keep in mind that the service had only been operating for one year. Brent then asked if it was a rule that Cherriots would have to cut a Polk County service or if they could cut one of their other services instead. John clarified that the STFAC would not have a say in which services Cherriots would cut, but that Cherriots staff would have to come up with a recommendation to the board and then the board would have the final say in any cuts to any service.

Ted explained that the Polk County Flex serves Independence, Monmouth, and Dallas. Jean is familiar with the service and believes that because it is a five day a week service cutting an hour each day would not be too impactful. Riders might be able to adjust appointments to comply with a smaller operating window. John took a different view as a transit user, that if an hour or more is cut from the end of the service window then riders find they are able to get to where they need to go, but not able to get

back. This may cause riders to avoid using the service rather than adapting to the new service window.

John pointed out that if all four of the existing service STF applications are recommended for funding at the scaled request amount there would be \$22,282.00 of STF dollars remaining. The scaled requests do not suggest that the applicants would find a way to continue to provide the same service levels that they are currently providing. So, the question is whether that remaining amount would be best applied to the Falls City Direct Connect or to bring the existing services closer to their full ask.

Ron asked City of Woodburn representative, Jim Row, if Woodburn Transit would be able to maintain existing service if they received their scaled request amount. Jim clarified that the full ask would provide funding to maintain existing service levels, but receiving the scaled request amount would result in service reductions.

John asked Polk County representatives if the \$22,282.00 for the biennium would be enough to continue to operate the Falls City Direct Connect service. Brent replied that if the STFAC decided there was no other option he would take that option back and look into what they could do with that amount. Brent does not have the authority speak to how much money Polk County would be willing to contribute as they look for another solution, but if that was the only amount available from STF dollars Brent would be happy to take that option back, discuss it, and let the STFAC know what they would be able to do with that amount. They would likely seek additional funding sources.

Brent asked if there were other services currently operating in Polk County besides the Polk County Flex and doesn't CARTS run there, too? He also asked Ted to clarify a comment he made at the March 11, 2019 Board Work Session that ridership for the Polk County Flex service was currently 100 percent Goodwill and Garten employees. Ted clarified that it is not 100 percent, but it is above 80 percent. Brent wanted to make sure everyone knew that if an hour of service was lost on the Polk County Flex service the CARTS service would still be a transportation option to all the same places.

Ron asked that this portion of the meeting be kept to discussion between STFAC members and that applicants answer direct questions, but not interject.

Mayor Gordon offered an answer to John's question regarding whether the \$22,282.00 would be enough to operate the Falls City Direct Connect service at the current levels: No, it would not, but Falls City is very committed to keep the service running. Commissioner Mordhorst stated that Polk County would help as well.

Ron reminded STFAC members that he would ask for justification behind any motions brought to the floor and to make sure any recommendations are in line with the guidance provided in the Coordinated Plan.

John asked STFAC members where else the \$22,282.00 would be allocated to if not to Polk County. For example, if it were allocated to the City of Woodburn it would bring them above their scaled request, but still under their full ask.

Ron reiterated the importance for the STFAC to be able to justify any prioritizations and recommendations they come up with. Even if the rankings made by the TAC are used as the basis for a recommendation, there still needs to be justification behind that recommendation. An example of that would be if one application is not recommended for funding and a number of riders are lost because of that, but there are more riders gained by recommending funding for another application. That is Ron's opinion of what justification might look like, but he reminded STFAC members that the board has the authority to agree or disagree with that opinion.

John Hammill motioned to approve funding for all STF applications for existing services at the scaled request amounts and to approve funding of the Falls City Direct Connect operations application in the amount of \$22,282.00. Jean Sherbeck seconded the motion. Ron Harding opened the motion for further discussion from the STFAC members.

Sherena Meagher-Osteen stated that the guidance provided in the Coordinated Plan is that funding should not be provided to new services when existing services are being cut. Therefore, the remaining dollar amount should be distributed among the existing services so they are closer to being able to maintain existing levels of service.

John felt that this was a concrete justification for amending his motion by substituting a portion of the motion.

John Hammill moved to amend the motion by substituting the portion that reads “to approve funding of the Falls City Direct Connect operations application in the amount of \$22,282.00” with the words “to distribute the remaining \$22,282.00 among the existing services applications in proportion to their scaled request amounts as they relate to the total allocation.” Sherena Meagher-Osteen seconded the motion to amend. Ron Harding opened the motion to amend for further discussion from the STFAC members.

Sherena reiterated that the justification for amending the motion is that the guidelines laid out in the Coordinated Plan indicate that funding should not be distributed elsewhere when existing services are not being fully funded. John’s justification for the amendment is the priority listed in the Coordinated Plan that says to fund existing services first.

Jean Sherbeck disagreed with the amendment to the motion. Jean’s justification not to amend the motion is more philosophical. Jean believes that transportation is essential to communities and individuals. Allocating the \$22,282.00 to the Falls City Direct Connect service would provide transportation service to an underserved community and provide a solution to what has been a problem in Polk County for many years. Jean believes the service is working for the community, it is very valuable, and is philosophically the best recommendation.

Bryant Baird asked for clarification on the guidelines in the Coordinated Plan as this is his first time through this process as an STFAC member. Ron explained that the guidelines do not state that any remaining funding should be allocated to existing services, but they do state that maintaining existing services is the first priority.

Ron Harding called for the vote to amend the motion by substitution. The amendment passed with five votes in favor and two votes opposed among voting members.

Brent stated that, while he realized he was interrupting, since the STFAC had already passed the motion he wanted to let them know that Polk County plans on appealing the decision and that they would take it all the way to the State. He feels the STFAC should be embarrassed by this process that they seem to be making up as they go because that’s not the way an RFP is to be done, that is not a way that public dollars are to be distributed. Assuming that the STFAC agrees that the number one priority

is the first bullet point in the Coordinated Plan guidance, how did they define that maintaining existing services is the number one priority when it does not say that? It says maintain, improve, expand. All equal. You can define a slash mark all day long, but if you believe that bullet point is number one, it's to maintain, improve, and expand existing services, increase capacity hours, improve service quality, avoid service reductions in both urban and rural areas. If that's the number one priority, the STFAC didn't even follow it. Brent just wanted to share his opinion on that.

Ron thanked Brent for his comments and understands them. He believes the STFAC's interpretation of the Coordinated Plan guidance is part of the reason why the board had the discussion that they had at the March 11, 2019 Work Session. Brent, Mayor Gordon, and Commissioner Mordhorst then left the room.

John asked that, for clarification purposes, the following statement be added to the minutes: The reason for the amendment of the original motion is that some STFAC members want to allocate the remaining amount of STF dollars (\$22,282.00) to the Falls City Direct Connect service while others want it to be distributed to existing services in order to minimize reductions to those existing services. Allan let the STFAC members know that Cherriots staff would let the board know that there was some dissent in the STFAC on how to allocate the \$22,282.00 STF dollars. He reminded them that the board could come up with their own recommendation regardless of what recommendation comes from the STFAC.

As Chair, Ron Harding restated the amended motion in full: The amended motion is to approve funding for all STF applications for existing services (i.e. SAMTD STF Operations, Grant Match, and Administration; City of Woodburn STF Woodburn Transit Operations; City of Silverton STF Matching Funds for Operation of the Silver Trolley; and Salem Health STF Volunteer Coordinator/Driver) at the scaled request amounts as listed in the applications and to distribute the remaining \$22,282.00 STF dollars among the existing services applications in proportion to their scaled request amounts as they relate to the total allocation. Sherena Meagher-Osteen seconded the motion. Ron called for any further discussion before the vote.

Allan asked for clarification on how the remaining \$22,282.00 STF dollars

would be distributed to the existing services applications. John gave the following example: If the scaled request amount of the SAMTD application was 75 percent of the total allocation amount then they would be allocated 75 percent of the remaining \$22,282.00.

Ron believes that this recommendation is justifiable and that he could convey that in the staff report to the board. However, it would then be in the board's hands as the STFAC would have done their due diligence.

Ron Harding called for the vote on the amended motion. The amended motion passed with five votes in favor and two votes opposed among voting members.

F. DISCUSSION ITEMS:

1. Provider Updates: None

2. Round Table Topics:

- Ted shared an upcoming grant opportunity. It is a Section 5310(ODOT) discretionary grant opportunity for rural service providers throughout the state. ODOT is expected to make the applications available in November of this year. Eligible projects would be operations, mobility management, purchased services, and preventive maintenance. Interested parties would apply directly to ODOT for these funds. Ron asked that Ted share this information with the Polk County representatives as they had already left the room. Ted will make sure they are aware of it.

G. ADJOURN: The meeting adjourned at 10:24 a.m.

Recorded by: Jolynn Franke, Administrative Assistant, Transportation Development Division

NEXT MEETING:

Tuesday, April 2, 2019; 3:00 - 4:30 PM Courthouse
Square Building, Senator Hearing Room 555 Court
St NE, Salem, OR 97301

