



Salem Area Mass Transit District
CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
VIRTUAL MEETING

Tuesday, July 21, 2020, 5:30 PM

Meeting ID
meet.google.com/xws-nkoj-okz

Phone Number:
(US)+1 530-456-6109; PIN: 509 565 247#

MINUTES

PRESENT:	Rick Hartwig, Chair; Roberto Coho, Vice-Chair; Davis Dyer, Member; Laurie
Members	Dougherty, Member; John Hammill, Member; Mitchell Juul, Youth Member; Mark Knecht, Member; Patrick Schwab, Member; Maria Hinojos, Member; Erin Ross, Member.
ABSENT:	Mary Sarabia, Member
Members	
Board	Colleen Busch, Liaison
Staff	Allan Pollock, General Manager; David Trimble, Deputy General Manager/COO; Karen Garcia, Security and Emergency Management Manager; Don Clifford, Interim Transportation Manager; SueAnn Coffin, Contracted Services Manager; Melissa Kidd, Operations Programs Administrator, Gregg Thompson, Maintenance Manager; Chris French, Planning Manager; Steve Dickey, Dir. Of Strategic Initiatives and Program Management; Kathy Martens; Executive Assistant
Guests	Sign Interpreters: Christine Davis and Ben Caveletto

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

5:30 PM

Chair Rick Hartwig called the meeting to order. A quorum was present. Since we have three new members and we haven't met since last November, Chair Hartwig asked each member to tell a little about themselves and why they wanted to serve on this committee.

a. Safety Moment

Safety Moment presented by Deputy General Manager, David Trimble: We are moving into summer and as the temperatures increase, please remember to stay hydrated, check on the elderly, or any of those that may not have access to air coolers and don't forget your pets. Help them stay cool as well.

2. ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Member John Hammill requested the OTA sponsor a bill in the 2020 legislator. Chair Hartwig suggested this be brought up later as an action item.

This concludes announcements and additions to the agenda.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT – None at this time.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. Minutes of November 19, 2019

Motion: Moved to approve the meeting minutes of November 19, 2019.

Motion by: Member Davis Dyer

Second: Member John Hammill

Discussion: None

Vote: Motion passed with ten votes in favor; Absent: Mary Sarabia

5. PRESENTATIONS

a. Cherriots Update

Presenter: Allan Pollock, General Manager

General Manager Pollock thanked everyone for their commitment to being on this committee and involved in the Cherriots organization. General Manager Pollock went on to give the committee an update on Cherriots.

In the June Board meeting, the Board did adopt the budget for the FY2020-2021 and it was approved based on full levels of service. We are not yet able to provide full levels, but we are focusing on rebuilding our service and restoring ridership. We were recipients of the CARES act, which has allowed us to continue to be in operation even though we are losing revenue by not charging passengers fare. We will have funds available to build our service. Last quarter was devoted to COVID, but for Cherriots it was defined by the service we were able to provide our community. Last year we added extended service, Saturday service and we reduced our youth fares. These all resulted in a 10% increase in ridership, which is significant in the transit world.

While we are focusing on increasing our ridership, we are also moving forward with other projects. We are installing technology that will allow improved operational efficiencies, which will enhance our service. We are looking for a location for a transit center in south Salem and looking at bringing commuter service between Albany and Salem.

We should hear soon on the funding from ODOT and if the payroll tax funding will be changing so we can make adjustments, if needed, and we are hopeful the STIF reserves we have will be able to fund any needed adjustments.

As a result of COVID-19, our landscape and way of life has changed. Ridership plummeted, but it is growing and how we do our work has changed, and it may be changed forever. There are three phases of major changes; Ending, Neutral and Beginning. The ending is that of transit services as we knew it. We adapted and changed our services, started a disinfecting protocol, had employees working from home, and started wearing masks. We are now transitioning to the neutral phase, which we call the recovery and restoration phase. We are moving from a reactionary phase to a responding phase and making sure the service we can provide is financially sustainable. Next is the beginning, or "new normal" and 'normal' might not happen until a vaccine is available. Our success was based on a bus full of passengers, but now we can only offer limited seating. How can we maintain our cleaning protocols, make most everything touchless, attract riders back and helping them understand that we are safe? We are using this time to define opportunities, for example, telecommuting. Before now we would have needed to have policies in place, but instead we just made it happen and we are working out any issues as they come along.

b. COVID-19 Related Activities

Presenter: David Trimble, Deputy General Manager/COO

Mr. Trimble discussed what Cherriots has been doing to keep both our riders and employees safe during this pandemic. First, Cherriots takes no political stand on matters regarding COVID, but we do follow the guidelines set forth by the Governor, Oregon Health Authority and the CDC.

In March we suspended service for 6 days, which was a hard decision to make. In mid-March all riders had to enter through the rear door of our buses and we suspended all fare collection. The only exception to rear door boarding was mobility devices, or those with a disability. The Executive Leadership Team (ELT) had planning meetings 2x a day to discuss all events/topics related to COVID and issues internally and externally. Those meetings still take place, but the frequency is now once a day. We implemented a COVID-19 Task Force, which was multi-

divisional and it has served as a planning entity to discuss service levels, PPE availability, and policy updates. A working document was created that will cover our response to any pandemic going forward. We have added directional arrow decals and notifications in our office common areas regarding physical distancing to help employees. We've also added decals, along with signs at all our transit centers.

We've limited vehicle seating capacity and added signage to vehicles showing we require passengers to wear masks. Our overhead signage stated "Essential Trips Only" and we have now moved to "Limited Seating" trips.

We have ample supplies of PPE for all frontline employees and employees throughout our organization. We implemented a robust hand washing campaign, issued gloves, goggles, face coverings, and face shields. We also have an inventory of face coverings for riders if they have forgotten one, or theirs is damaged. Inventory is taken weekly and we have a steady supplier of both PPE and sanitizer. There are daily and evening cleaning protocols and additional cleaning is done in the operator cab areas. Cleaning crews clean and disinfect buses, especially high touch point areas when they are at the transit centers between routes. We have had a deep cleaning crew in twice to sanitize Cherriot's offices and common areas.

We are seeing a gradual increase in service and we are presently running at about 80% of our pre-COVID week day service. We are looking at another service increase in September. Our contractor partners, i.e., our security team are being customer advocates and explain about wearing masks, distancing, and helping with routes.

Mr. Trimble had the privilege of serving on a sub-committee for the Governor's office to make recommendations around transit service in the state to help with the state's economy. Part of that was getting PPE supplies moving through a seemingly stuck pipeline. The group was able to help get some collaborative guidelines out.

Cherriots will continue to focus on customer and employee safety. Operator shield barriers are now in place on our Local service buses and soon to be installed on our Regional service buses as well. These barriers will help protect our operators from passenger exposure and also any disruptive behaviors. Seats on our vehicles are also corded off to help with distancing. We will still continue to bring up-to-date information to our employees, riders, and community.

c. Ridership and Service Changes Update

Presenter: Chris French, Planning Manager

Up until March of this year, we had good ridership. Prior to the dramatic effects felt by the COVID-19 pandemic in the months of January and February, Cherriots Local buses averaged 12,638 weekday boardings. There was an average of 5,502 boardings on Saturdays during this period. Total ridership for January and February was 579,829. March showed a considerable drop in overall ridership, down to 298,292, which was a 17.2% drop compared to March 2019.

All service, except Cherriots LIFT, were suspended from March 31 through April 6. In April, due to the Governor's office issuing a shelter in place order, service was only allowed for essential workers, or for essential trips. Because of that, we had our lowest point for ridership, which was a monthly total of 27,196, representing a 91% decrease compared to April, 2019.

Since service began again on April 7, it has increased twice in an effort to meet the demand of customers. Maintaining physical distancing is a requirement that has continued to have a major impact on ridership. Restrictions started to lift a bit in May and ridership saw a slight upward trend. May had a total ridership of 54,529.

Similar to Cherriots Local, there had been a significant drop in ridership for the Cherriots Regional system. The span of service (hours of service per day) for Cherriots Regional was set to match that of the Cherriots Local buses. Therefore, a few Regional trips in the early morning and later evening were suspended, however, all other trips on both weekdays and Saturdays have remained in service for essential trips.

The Polk County Flex was temporarily suspended in Mid-March due to the lack of reservations. This service has remained closed through April and May; however, staff is re-evaluating the service based on current demand.

Ridership on Cherriots LIFT matches the trend of Cherriots Local in March, April, and May. Ridership fell dramatically in mid-March and was low in the months of April and May. Cherriots LIFT was the only service in operation during the temporary suspension of Cherriots Local service. Those rides were maintained for life-sustaining trips such as rides to Dialysis clinics. January's total monthly ridership was 11,959, whereas April had our lowest ridership with only 1,759 riders.

When we started service back up after our 6-day temporary shutdown, we were at about 25% of our regular pre-COVID-19 pandemic service. We are now up to

about 80%. We do continue to see where service is needed and then evaluate to determine how to increase the needed service.

As we learn about COVID funding, we do have plans for Sunday and Holiday service expansions, but this is currently an unknown.

Committee member Coto asked with the increase of ridership and the requirement for physical distancing, how do we plan on maintaining appropriate numbers of riders on our buses. Manager French explained how we have set bus capacities based on the style of the bus and the number of riders in order to maintain physical distancing. If a bus has reached that max capacity, additional riders are told they will need to wait for the next bus. However; this is why we have increased service by bringing back our 15 minute service for most bus routes.

Committee member Busch asked how the district is handling families when they want to ride the bus. Interim Transportation manager Clifford said we are marking off seats where people cannot sit in order to maintain the physical distancing, but if a family were to load the bus, they are allowed to sit together.

6. DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. How to get riders back – during and after COVID-19?: Deputy General Manager Trimble started off this conversation by letting the committee know we are looking for feedback from our committee members on what their concerns are about riding the bus, what have you heard from community members, how can we ease concerns, etc. Not only suggestions for our operational plan, but now would be a good time for educational opportunities, too. Students going back to school is still an unknown and the continuation of employee teleworking could all have an impact on our ridership.

Committee member Ross said she has only used the bus a few times since the start of the COVID pandemic, however she did have a suggestion. It would be nice to have the local lines stop at the most used stops (example Bus 19) and not at every single stop, then have another bus that does stop at all the stops. This might encourage others to ride the bus knowing they could get to their destination quicker.

Committee member Hammill – has been taking scheduled routes for paratransit, the 12 and 13, and so far the ridership has been so low that it's not been a concern. He has also used Cherriots LIFT and it has so few scheduled riders that he's only once had to share a vehicle with someone else and there was plenty of room to do that.

Deputy General Manager Trimble asked the committee to think about if we moved to phase three and schools reopened, what would you want to see if you were to use Cherriots for your transportation needs, what would be the tipping point that would cause you to rethink getting on the bus?

Committee member Coto asked if schools do open are there any of our staff that could do presentations to students that live along heavily used routes, letting them know it is their civic duty, per se, to wear a mask? And to also keep physical distance. It seems it is youth that tends to not follow these protocols. This would be a great idea to incorporate with Cherriot's outreach program.

Deputy General Manager Trimble asked Committee member Schwabe what he's heard from the individuals he works with at the organizations he is affiliated with. He said he works with blind skills and the Oregon State Commission for the Blind. Right now there isn't a lot of enthusiasm to ride the bus. Most have multiple disability conditions that put them more at risk. But, there are others that are getting really tired of this and he's been helping them get out and about within their neighborhood. He's confident they will come out of this, but right now there is too much skepticism and this is not just with transit, more overall.

Committee member Ceci mentioned within her communities there is concern about getting to a person's job safely. This is not centered on transit, but more around farm owner issues. They offer ride share for their workers, but they are piled into a van with no room to allow for physical distancing. She has not heard much around public transit issues.

Committee member Mitchell, who represents our youth population, believes that people in his age category are going to need to use the bus. There is a high portion of kids that rely on transit to get to school as well as a number of family members that use bus transportation. It's important to have enough buses to run more routes in order to accommodate the physical distancing.

Committee member Hammill mentioned most of his group are seniors and fall into two different categories. One group is more aware of the need to physical distance, but since they have not been out since March, they are willing to take some risks in order to be around others. The other group really monitors the number of infections and that dictates if they go out. If the infection rates continue to rise, and if buses started to reach over half capacity, then the willingness to ride the bus would come into question for this group.

7. ACTION ITEMS

a. Special Transportation Fund Advisory Committee: Committee member Hammill also serves on this advisory committee. He would like the OTA to support a bill that would tax vaping products in the same manner cigarettes are taxed. This would allow monies to be directed to the STF. At present, the success of the cigarette tax in cutting down the number of cigarette users and is actually cutting into the funding of programs for seniors. Taxing vaping products would help replenish lost revenue. He does have wording suggestions he will email to the Chairman. This will be put on the agenda for our next meeting in September.

9. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- a. Work Plan
- b. Quarterly Updates
- c. Board Member Presentation on Sustainability Interest
- d. Presentation on Electric Vehicles

9. ADJOURNMENT

6:55 PM

Motion:	Moved to adjourn the meeting.
Motion by:	Member John Hammill
Second:	Member Roberto Coto
Discussion:	None
Vote:	Motion passed with ten votes in favor; Absent: Mary Sarabia