



January 8, 2019

To: Executive Committee
From: Brenda Wilson
Subject: Rural Intercity Transit Routes

Action Recommended: Approve Submission of Application

Background:

Over the past nine months, LCOG staff has been conducting a feasibility study of a public transportation option connecting Eugene and Florence. This work originated out of public interest from Lane County residents, including testimony at the Lane Area Commission on Transportation, and was funded with an ODOT grant.

The study led to the following findings:

- Project support extends along the entire length of the corridor with interest from the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, Siuslaw Indians, Florence Area Chamber of Commerce, the City of Florence, Travel Lane County, Lane Community College, Trillium Health, Peace Health, Lane County Public Health Department, Lane Transit District and others.
- A public survey with over 1,500 respondents and stakeholder interviews found significant support for a public transportation route between Eugene and Florence. If a public transportation service was available, respondents cited recreation/entertainment, personal needs and medical needs as the top three trip purposes; followed by commute and school/education.

- Intercity routes statewide are largely managed by a Public Transportation Service Provider (PTSP) and either operated by the PTSP or by a private operator under contract from the PTSP.
- The greatest share of funding for intercity routes statewide come from federal and state grants. Contributions from local jurisdictions, Tribes and public service agencies are a common source of match funding.
- Statewide, operating costs of intercity routes range from \$45 per hour to \$120 per hour with an average of \$73 per hour.
- The challenge with operating a Florence-to-Eugene route is that it is outside of a transit district boundary. LTD's boundary extends as far west as Veneta. The area west of Veneta to the coast is not within a transit district boundary.
- By definition, LCOG is a PTSP and is qualified to manage state and federal public transportation funding.

Through this study, LCOG staff has forged partnerships with Coos County Area Transit (CCAT) and Lincoln County Transit. CCAT is pursuing funding for a Florence-to-Coos Bay route. Lincoln County Transit remains supportive of the Yachats-to-Florence route which LTD is currently operating as a one year pilot project. Neither Lincoln County Transit nor LTD have the capacity to manage the Yachats-to-Florence route once the pilot funding expires on June 30, 2019.

Discussion:

These routes have the opportunity to connect Lane County's more rural areas with urban centers, enhance mobility and access within and beyond Lane County, and support the economic development of Lane County.

As a PTSP that encompasses all of Lane County, LCOG would like to pursue funding to implement a two year pilot of the Florence-to-Eugene route and funding to continue the Florence-to-Yachats route by applying to the Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) Intercommunity Discretionary Grant program for these two projects.

Anticipated operating costs for a two-year pilot of the Florence-Eugene route are \$1,370,000. This cost is based upon the operating costs of similar routes throughout the state and assumes seven days/week with two (potentially three) round trips per day.

LTD is currently managing the Florence-to-Yachats route with a \$250,000 grant from ODOT. The route is operated by River City Taxi under a contract with LTD. This amount has been sufficient and the annual operating costs are not anticipated to change.

If awarded funding, LCOG would issue an RFP for a private operator to run these routes.

Given extremely tight timelines for multiple grant processes currently under way, LCOG has already applied to LTD for local match funding (to match the hoped-for State Intercommunity Discretionary Grant funding) for both of these projects from LTD's out-of-district (rural Lane County) STIF formula funding. LCOG is also coordinating discussions with other partners which may result in local match funding.

The application deadline for the State Intercommunity Discretionary Grant is February 1, 2019. This agenda item requests Executive Committee approval for entering into this role as an applicant for the grant funding, and potential manager of the funds and transit services.

Recommended Action: Approve applying for State Intercommunity Discretionary Grant funding to implement a Florence-to-Eugene Route and to maintain the Florence-to-Yachats Route.