

MINUTES

Metropolitan Policy Committee Virtual Meeting via Zoom

February 1, 2024
11:30 a.m.

PRESENT: David Loveall, Chair (Lane County); Steve Moe (City of Springfield); Lucy Vinis (City of Eugene); John Marshall (City of Coburg); Kelly Sutherland (Lane Transit District), Vidal Francis (Oregon Department of Transportation), members; Jameson Auten (Lane Transit District), *ex officio* member.

Brenda Wilson, Paul Thompson, Dan Callister, Delaney Thompson, Ellen Currier, Kelly Clarke, Drew Pfefferle, Rachel Dorfman (Lane Council of Governments); Rob Inerfeld (City of Eugene); Drew Larsen, Sandy Belson (City of Springfield); Megan Winner (City of Coburg); Cassidy Mills, Becky Taylor (Lane County); Tom Schwetz, Jeramy Card (Lane Transit District); Bill Johnston (Oregon Department of Transportation); Sarah Mazze, Jack Blashchisen, Rachel Tochen, Brad Albee (Safe Routes to Schools); Paul Lutey (Nelson/Nygard); Tim Garner (Metro TV); Josh Kashinsky (guest).

WELCOME, CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

Mr. Moe called the meeting to order and welcomed those present. A quorum was not yet established and non-action items on the agenda would be taken up under a quorum when present.

ADJUSTMENTS TO THE AGENDA/ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM MPC MEMBERS

There were no adjustments or announcements.

COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

There was no one wishing to speak.

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO) ISSUES

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Update

Ms. Mazze introduced the other SRTS staff members present: Jack Blashchisen, Rachel Tochen and Brad Albee. A slide presentation was used to provide an overview of the SRTS program in the Eugene 4J, Bethel and Springfield school districts. The program was designed to make it easier, safer, more efficient, and more fun for students to use active transportation. The program was based on the six E's: Engineering, Equity, Evaluation, Encouragement, Education and Engagement. She said engagement was returning to pre-COVID-19 levels, programs were now working with middle and high school students and relationships with community partners and stakeholders were deepening.

Ms. Mazze said the goal around equity was to center equity in all SRTS activities, with particular attention to assuring outcomes were fair and increased safety and health for students in historically under-served and marginalized populations. The goal of engineering was to improve infrastructure around schools.

Ms. Tochen said education was focused on expansion and innovative curriculum in addition to delivery of bike/pedestrian safety classes. She described the classes being offered and the expansion of the fleet of bicycles being used by students and levels of participation in all three school districts.

Mr. Blashchisen described the learn-to-ride classes provided to kindergarteners and first graders in their

regular and adaptive physical education classes. The program was also offered during summer schools and to the migrant education program. The classes were provided with the assistance of community volunteers. He also described encouragement activities designed to provide organized activities to students and families to build a sense of community and increase participation. He encouraged MPC members to consider volunteering for SRTS.

Mr. Albee discussed the many partnerships developed in all three school districts and among jurisdictions, agencies, organizations and nonprofits throughout the region. Financial support was provided through the school districts' educational foundations to purchase equipment and supports for SRTS activities. SRTS participated in many organizations to provide the SRTS perspective. He said the SRTS program enjoyed great community support and thanked MPC members and the SRTS team.

Ms. Vinis and Mr. Vidal joined the meeting at 11:40 a.m. and a quorum was established.

Mr. Loveall asked if balance bikes were used in SRTS programs. Ms. Mazze said balance bikes were used and typically students learned to ride almost two years earlier with those bikes.

Mr. Francis commended the SRTS program and asked if students contributed to the program in their later years. Ms. Mazze said older students contributed by continuing to use active transportation and often participated in community events and provided feedback.

APPROVE December 7, 2024, MPC MEETING MINUTES

Ms. Vinis, seconded by Mr. Francis, moved to approve the December 7, 2023, meeting minutes as submitted. The motion passed unanimously, 6:0.

ELECTIONS OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR FOR 2024/APPOINT OMPOC MEMBERS

Mr. Thompson explained that only members from the jurisdictions of Lane County, Springfield and Eugene could serve as the chair and vice chair and those offices were typically rotated among those three. A representative from Lane County was scheduled to serve as chair and a representative from Eugene was scheduled to serve as vice chair for 2024.

Mr. Moe nominated Mr. Loveall to serve as MPC 2024 chair. There being no other nominations, Mr. Loveall was unanimously elected.

Mr. Loveall nominated Ms. Vinis to serve as MPC 2024 vice chair. There being no other nominations, Ms. Vinis was unanimously elected.

Ms. Vinis nominated Mr. Moe to serve as one of the MPC's OMPOC 2024 representatives. There being no other nominations, Mr. Moe was unanimously appointed.

Mr. Loveall noted that Susan Cox was currently the second OMPOC representative. She was not present, but would be contacted to determine if she wished to continue that role in 2024 and appointment of a second OMPOC representative would occur at MPC's March meeting.

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO) ISSUES (continued)

Lane County RAISE (Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity) Grant Letter of Support

Ms. Mills explained that the RAISE grant would allow Lane County to construct the 30th Avenue Active Transportation Corridor Plan. Lane County was pursuing the grant in partnership with the City of Eugene. She said the project would improve safety and connectivity along the corridor. The current configuration restricted access by any non-vehicle transportation and had many high-risk features and vehicle crashes. A preferred design concept was developed in collaboration with the community and approved by the Board of County Commissioners in 2022. The project was now construction ready. She said the project was consistent with the intent of the RAISE grant program and believed the grant application would be competitive. The estimated cost was approximately \$15 million. She described the project area and the benefits that would be derived from its completion and said it enjoyed community support as design concerns were addressed during the planning process.

Mr. Loveall commented that there had been objections to moving from two lanes to one lane along the corridor and asked if people were now supportive of that design. Ms. Taylor replied that most people were now comfortable with the proposed design, although some thought there were other, higher priority projects the County should address. She said there were no resources for other projects at this time and the 30th Avenue project was the best fit for the RAISE grant program.

Ms. Vinis, seconded by Mr. Moe, moved to approve a letter of support for the 30th Avenue Active Transportation Corridor Plan RAISE grant application. The motion passed unanimously, 6:0.

Lane Transit District (LTD) ATAIN (Advanced Transportation Technology and Innovation) Grant Letter of Support

Mr. Schwetz said LTD was exploring broader mobility management as a tool to support the community and the ATAIN grant would facilitate the development of a user app and the operation of a pilot Mobility on Demand service available to high school students within the Bethel School District boundaries. It would allow LTD to organize and coordinate the services that were available and users could determine the best way to get to their destinations. A pilot project would begin with Willamette High School. The Bethel School District had provided a letter of support for the grant application. He asked for MPC's support.

Mr. Moe, seconded by Ms. Vinis, moved to approve a letter of support for Lane Transit District's ATAIN grant application. The motion passed unanimously, 6:0.

Lane Transit District System Review Update

Mr. Card introduced Paul Lutey from Nelson/Nygard, consultants on the LTD project. Mr. Lutey provided an overview of the project to date. He said the system review was timely given the impact of the pandemic and the need to determine how ridership and service patterns have changed. It had also been difficult for LTD to return to pre-COVID-19 service levels due to the lack of operators and maintenance staff. The review would provide a roadmap for building service back and match it with changes in the travel market experienced after COVID-19. He emphasized it was not a major system redesign, but rather an opportunity to better align services with community needs.

Mr. Lutey said information resulting from public outreach activities and data analysis to date identified the following top priorities:

- Community - bus stop improvements, increased frequency, restoration of EmX service
- Riders - more frequency on Saturdays, Sundays and weekdays

Mr. Lutey reviewed statistics on ridership patterns and invited MPC members to share LTD's survey and provide their own feedback.

Mr. Moe commented that paying bus drivers more and the resources to hire more drivers would address the problems. Mr. Card said LTD was working to hire more drivers, revamping its hiring strategies and revisiting training opportunities and schedules to increase hires.

Mr. Auten said LTD had signed a new labor agreement in 2023 and its operators were at or above industry pay levels. LTD was looking at other issues that could be affecting hiring, such as seniority and work schedules. The entire organization was focused on recruitment and retention.

Mr. Loveall said it appeared that ridership was about 20 percent lower. He said that a desire for more frequency could also translate into being able to reach the rider's destination faster. Mr. Card said overall system ridership was down, although it varied from route to route with some being almost up to pre-COVID-19 levels and ridership continued to increase with each service change. He said the biggest problem with traveling faster was congestion and being able to get more people out of cars and on to buses helped, along with looking at infrastructure projects along corridors to speed up buses.

Electronic Transportation Improvement Program (eTIP)

Mr. Callister presented a demonstration of the online TIP (eTIP) designed to facilitate easy access and maintenance for staff and provide the public with straightforward, easily understood information about transportation projects and activities within the region. He said there would be two portals: one for credentialed staff to modify and update information and a public portal for people to view information. Features of the eTIP included searching for projects by jurisdiction or location, tracking of revisions and an interactive map. He said the eTIP was still under development and it would be launched soon.

Mr. Francis commended the project and its interactive aspects. Mr. Callister said that ODOT was an active partner in its development.

Follow-up and Next Steps

- **ODOT Update**— Mr. Francis thanked MPO jurisdictions for their patience during ODOT's mitigation of damage from the recent ice storm. Roads were now open and debris removal continued. He said Highway 126 had been hit particularly hard and debris removal would likely take four to five weeks to complete. Due to extensive damage in outlying areas, response times within the metro area were slower. He said ODOT was preparing for the upcoming construction season. He said bids for the Theona Drive project in Springfield would be let soon. He said ODOT was working with the City of Springfield on the Mill Street project from A Street to Centennial Boulevard was expected to go out to bid in June 2024. He announced that the Portland area interstate bridge replacement project over the Columbia River had just been awarded \$600 million in federal funds.
- **Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Project Changes**—There were no questions.
- **Next Meeting/Agenda Build**—March 7 - Virtual, April 4 - Virtual, May 2 - Virtual

Mr. Loveall adjourned the meeting at 1:24 p.m.

(Recorded by Lynn Taylor)