

**Rogue Valley Transportation District
The Special Transportation Advisory Committee Meeting
Zoom Video Conference, August 18, 2021 @ 3:00 pm**

Attended:

George Adams
Sue Slack
Julie Ormand
Louise Shawkat
Lynette Kersey
Stan Littrell

Staff:

Tim Fountain, Accessible Transportation Manager
Paige West, Senior Planner
Stacy Chaplin, Recording Secretary
Cory Benton, Operations Manager

Absent:

Brooke Anderson-Bonner

Guests:

Mike Flores

1. Welcome

Meeting called to order at 3:01 pm.

2. Roll Call

Roll Call conducted; 6 members were in attendance.

3. Review and Approve June 16, 2021, Minutes

Sue Slack Motioned and Louise Shawkat 2nd, All in favor, motion passed.

4. Welcome New Members

George welcomed New Members to the STAC

5. New Applicant Q&A

Julie asked Mike Flores if he is a transportation provider?

Mike - Yes, retired after 42 years. Has been dealing with Seniors and people with disabilities and being aware of how we conduct ourselves and teaching others about how to treat them.

Sue - thought his application looks great and would be a great asset.

*All in favor, motion passed to forward Mike Flores Application to the RVTB board for approval.

6. RVTB COVID-19 Update

Paige – Gave an introduction on her role at RVTB for the new members.

It's changed within the last week. There was no limit requirement on vehicles for about 5 weeks. Effective Monday going back to limited passenger capacity. Face masks still required, never lifted. Sanitizing at least daily mid-day, and others every 4 hours. Starting to see covid cases again within our employees. Taken it upon ourselves to try and minimize exposure to passengers. Half of staff is tele-working, minimizing interactions. Drivers eating on buses. Employees cannot eat in break rooms. Public not allowed into buildings. Hoping it keeps our workforce safer. Hoping to do ridership campaigning but scaled back in person events and free fare Tuesdays. Encouraging free fare may exceed our passenger limits. RCC/SOU makes up of 10% of our ridership 500-600 trips anticipating. Adding routes in Sept 13. 1X to Ashland. Route 21 Biddle/Poplar going back into service. Slightly adjusting route going to Table Rock RCC. Route change instead of using Bullock, going down Hilton, Rogue retreat and others established a house approx. 400 households which are primarily transit dependent. Changing route to go in front of the urban camp. Vaccination rate 60%. Seeing some breakthrough cases. Want to minimize the risk. Taking the cautious route, minimizing interactions, has helped.

Sue - Applauds RVTB for taking early action.

George- Are you going to require employees to get vaccines?

Paige – No at this point. Waiting to see the Federal Government requires us to do. Has been some discussion FDA endorsing the Vaccines which leads to assumptions that would require Federal Employees to be vaccinated. If that is the case that there will be push back. We will have to follow suit with whatever is resolved on the Federal Level.

George - A lot of people are scared that RVTB/Valley lift will at some point require a vaccine id to board. Is that something that is likely to happen?

Paige – No, has not heard much discussion how or if that would ever be required.

7. Valley Lift COVID-19 Update

Tim – We do similar to what RVTB does. Sanitation, in between passengers when able. Working on getting more physical barriers. Only had about ½ of fleet. Will have other half as soon as have resources. Half of call center is working from home. Wearing masks, sanitizing 4 times a day. Going to monitor capacity.

8. Ridership Graphs

Paige shared her screen – Fixed route ridership weekly ridership. Last 14-15 months it's been consistent until April -July. Red dot indicated back into extreme status. Large increase after restaurants opened back up in May. Off and on ridership around 10,000 and a sharp increase between the first and last weeks of July. Tracking ridership, looking at what the new patterns are. Because of the current covid cases, assumes ridership will go back down.

August 2020-July 2021 monthly data. Feb-July including Call-A-Ride and Living Opps since they are funded by state dollars. Combined with VL and STF and seeing slightly higher numbers.

YTD Change in Ridership June 2020 already entered pandemic and saw ridership decline. 45% less than what we would have seen. July 2021 it was only 9% difference because we were already at half of our ridership at that time in 2020.

George - Is that saving RVTD money or is that putting RVTD in a negative budget?

Paige – Definitely not in a negative budget. There are 3 COVID stimulus bills that we benefitted from. Not feeling the same pressure of loss of revenue that the larger transit agencies are. Small to middle Transit Agencies across the country are doing well because of those 3 packages and a strong financial support from our communities. Very Large systems have been seeing more of a financial decline because they are paid for through other taxes that are not being received right now.

George –Did the funding come from bill 508?

Paige – Money came from Cares Act, Carissa from Trump Administration, and 3rd Biden Rescue package. There is an Infostructure bill (5-year Transportation reauthorization bill) that has all our formula funds, it doesn't have a name yet, but currently working under Fast Act which expires in September. The Big infostructure bill that you've heard about is 1.2 trillion dollars. It is very important to RVTD, includes annual money that we receive money from the formulized pot of money. Not the same as the rescue bills.

George - Will that help put out more routes/hours?

Paige – No, doesn't think so. We would receive same that we are now through our formula grant. There is more money being put in for bus and bus facilities to replace aged buses. They are calling it the Plus Up program.

Tim - Shared screen with ridership graphs. Can see where dropped from 4300 to 1500. Pattern slowly increased but no where near where we were pre-COVID. Avg miles, and fare. Demographic detail. More riders are female. Cost of trip and client. Can see dip from 26,000, to 6100. Probably will see a reduction in miles, number of riders and trips. Big difference from pre-COVID numbers.

Julie – Has your staff been affected?

Tim - Have not have any cases here since April or May. Even on Paratransit side it's been very minimal. Lost some drivers who didn't want to get exposed. It's hard to find drivers. Ashland Connector ridership has been great. Breaking records. Free fare traveling to/from cooling centers. No one has taken advantage of it yet.

George - Make recommendation to alert/reassure riders that Vaccination Card not required. Tim - right now we are providing service as we have. Don't want to put anything out there stating there's no possibility since we have no idea what may be mandated.

Stan – Vaccine mandates are a very slippery slope with who has a right to impose them. Don't want to bring forth a situation when you don't need to.

George – People with Disabilities are scared that they may be denied transportation without having a passport.

Julie – Even when mandates are in place there will be reasonable modification requests available. Not sure that RVTD can make the promise that it won't ever happen.

Lynette - Feels shouldn't worry about it and if it happens, discuss it at that time.

Louise – What are you doing to do about the people who are scared about being around unvaccinated. There are so many things to be scared of right now.

Paige – starting to get into an undefined area. Do not have enough information and we aren't there yet. There just isn't enough information yet.

9. Top 5 Areas for Improvement

Moved to next meeting.

10. Next STAC Meeting Date – October 20, 2021 @ 3:00 pm

11. Agenda Items for next meeting

Top 5 areas for improvement – email to Stacy before next meeting.

12. Other Business / Comments, Questions, Concerns

Lynn Lowe resigned due to conflicting schedules.

Paige - ODOT STF/STIF Funding Consolidation. STIF funds 2017 House bill that was passed, required consolidation process with STF. Continue to use STF only for older adults and people with disabilities services and programs. Consolidation process because they have had to take out general funds to sure up losses for STF and 5310 dollars. Legislatures thought great way for new STIF to help fill the gap instead of using general funds. Oregon revised rules and nuances have to be ironed

out because taking 2 separate types of funds and putting them together. That is what the consolidation committee is doing. They have met 3 times. Large diverse group of people. Goal is to have process finalized by spring of 2022. ODOT will start implement new rules because 2023-24 Biennium we start a whole new application process and procedures etc. for the STIF program. Will be finished by end of 2022. Will be changing the role of the STAC. Several providers left STF to regional STAC. RVTD created separate STIF committee and left STAC intact. Other agencies will need to create a STIF committee. Needs to be a relationship between STAC and the STIF committee, which already have with George. Doesn't think it will be a difficult transition. Will maintain integrity of STAC and recommendations for 5310 and STF. If interested in following it, you can get with George for additional information. Next STIF Meeting late Sept/early Oct.

Tim – Will we get new requests from agencies we haven't seen before?

Paige - Both programs require being a public transportation provider. Think the 5310 and STF will slip over to general public not private transportation. Not 100% sure yet. Likely the amount of funding won't increase or decrease too much. Streamlining the application. If dip into STIF too heavily, means less money for new routes. If Valley Lift is not fully funded, it could jeopardize new routes from being put in place.

Misty Rose's submitted a request for funding a fire cart. Stacy will write return letter to include the suggestions from STAC. Start a Go Fund Me, Check with United Way of Jackson County, and check with local Kiwanis Clubs.

Discussed having RVTD and Valley Lift share ridership reports quarterly.

George – Portal giving incorrect times. Stacy is working with software company to resolve the issue.

13. Adjournment

Mr. Adams adjourned the meeting at 4:43 pm

Stacy Chaplin

Stacy Chaplin,
Recording Secretary