

**Rogue Valley Transportation District
Accessible Working Group Meeting
June 19th, 2024, 3:00pm – 4:00pm – Via Zoom Video Conference**

Attended:

- George Adams
- Robin Kissel
- Stanley Littrell
- Stephen Slavik

Staff:

- Paige West, Planning & Strategic Programs Manager
- Edem Gomez, Associate Planner
- Cory Benton, Translink Operations Manager
- Tim Fountain, Accessible Transportation Manager
- Maria Carrillo, Accessible Transportation Coordinator

Absent:

- Adrienne Boutin
- Mickie Miner

Welcome:

Meeting called to order at 3:04pm

Roll Call:

Roll call conducted: 3 members were in attendance. Stephen Slavik joined the meeting at 3:12pm and Cory Benton joined at 3:05pm.

Review and Approve March 20, 2024 Minutes:

Stanley made the motion to introduce the March 20, 2024 minutes and Robin 2nd, all in favor, motion passed at 3:58pm.

Renewal Applications:

Maria gave an update that the Board of Directors has approved the renewal application for Stanley Littrell and George Adams.

2025-2027 STIF Solicitation:

Paige provided an update on the solicitation cycle and the plan for this fall and winter. We are looking at several funding sources from the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT). These biennium funds are federal funds known as 5310, allocated based on state population. ODOT then distributes these funds based again on population to urbanized areas throughout the state. We expect these funds to be available for the 2025-2027 biennium, from July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2027. Even though we are still shy of a year, the solicitation cycle is quite a long process. These funds will support Valley Lift and services for elderly, senior, and disabled individuals in our area.

Another source of funding is the Special Transportation Improvement Funds (STIF), introduced in 2019. These funds primarily support fixed-route public transit services. RVTD operates 14 routes and is hoping to expand our services. RVTD provides approximately 40% more service compared to other agencies statewide. Although these funds are primarily dedicated to RVTD services, we still need to prioritize other projects. A portion of these funds, around \$400,000, will also support Valley Lift operations, Community Volunteer Network, and Living Opportunities. To qualify for these funds, you must be a transportation provider, which limits the number of eligible candidates in our area. The process involves solicitation, review by our committees, and formal submission to ODOT.

The last funding source is called STIF Discretionary under the bracket of funds of Special Transportation Improvement Funds. Though these funds are competitive across the whole state, it's not formalized. Paige stated we must compete with other applicants statewide for these funds. Although we have been successful in the past, the application process involves coming up with project ideas, presenting them to our committees, and ultimately submitting them to ODOT.

Paige shared the timeline dates regarding the review of solicitation. On September 18, 2024, our next AWG meeting will review the 5310 formula and STIF projects. During the month of August, we will be going through the solicitation process such as publishing it in the paper, sending out application to anyone that's interested who are only transportation providers. Once we receive those applications, we will send them out to the committee so they can review them. Paige expressed how important it is to have a quorum at the September 18 meeting to review the projects and take action to forward them to the STIF Advisory Committee. In December, the Board of Directors will review the plan after the public comment period. Any revisions that have been made, we would present to them and then will ask for their approval.

Paige stated by law all these fundings sources must go through the full public solicitation process. When a solicitation goes through committees, they need to go through public comment, then the AWG committee, next through the STIF Advisory committee and the plan goes to the Board of Directors, then to the Public Transit Advisory Committee, and finally to the Oregon Transportation Commission for approval.

Paige asked Tim when the materials will be sent out to the members.

Tim stated he would need to look at the timeline and stated we will give them as much time as we can to prepare.

Paige stated we usually give a week, sometimes ten days to review materials. Paige stated she will try to submit the applications to the AWG committee by the first week of September.

George expressed how important it is for everyone to be present for the next AWG meeting.

Paige also stated we'll need to set aside 3 hours for this meeting and have a couple breaks in between.

Valley Lift Vans:

Robin expressed how dissatisfied she is with the new Valley Lift vans, noting several issues. She mentioned that the seats are uncomfortable, lacking back support during long trips, and the seatbelt system is a mess, failing to serve its intended purpose. She encouraged those who haven't ridden in the new vans to do so to experience these issues firsthand.

Stanley pointed out that vehicle selection is often limited to what is available.

Tim confirmed Stanley was correct. He explained a lot of the times we are tasked with finding the best vans that meet our service based on what's available. We don't always have the best selection. Sometimes we're purchasing off an agreement that another agency has purchased off. We try to select the best option based on what's currently available at that time because we must rotate every 5 years or up to 130,000 miles. Overall, it all depends on availability. Tim said he did speak with the maintenance manager regarding the concerns that clients are experiencing. They are trying to look at different options to better improve the experiences. He also

stated that we have made modifications to the software to better help the space on the van with ambulatory clients and mobility devices.

Robin also noted that the space designated for groceries in the vans seems underutilized and suggested it could be repurposed to add more seats or increase space between seats. Tim agreed that this was a good idea and will investigate the possibility of optimizing that area.

Additionally, Robin expressed the seats are more like bucket seats and the suspension on the vans are bad making the ride uncomfortable, particularly for individuals with disabilities. She also reported back pain from a ride from Ashland to Medford and found the seat belts to be a tripping hazard.

Maria agreed with robin on the seatbelt situation and could see it becoming a tripping hazard. Maria stated the only resolution would be the drivers having to buckle them together after each transport.

Robin stated that is exactly what they are doing after each use.

Stanley did agree the seatbelt situation is strange.

QRyde Update:

Tim provided an update on the QRyde software. He explained we rolled out QRyde live in mid-March, and encountered some challenges, leading us to pull back and fix the issues. After rolling out again it finally made the decision to move back to Novus software.

Tim mentioned that we are working with QRyde to resolve the issues, but there's a strong chance we may not return to QRyde. Bringing back Novus has been very positive. Their new product offers more functionality compared to the version we used in the past. Tim stated when we first applied for the QRyde software a couple of years ago, Novus had a different product and now two years later they've come up with new products that will better our service.

Valley Lift Application:

George stated the Valley Lift application is a bit frustrating to fill out. He stated it needs to be revised.

Maria said it's a good idea to meet with the committee at the Translink office and share input on the Valley Lift application.

George said he doesn't want any other consumers to have a hard time filling it out.

Tim stated the Valley Lift application was borrowed from a Minneapolis, Minnesota agency. It's a comprehensive application because we want to make sure that the individuals that are applying for the services do need the service. It becomes our responsibility to make sure that those people that are applying have a disability that prevents them from using the bus or sometimes it prevents them so we can give them the correct category. Since we have limited capacity, we want to make sure it's being used for those that really need the service. Tim did agree there's always room for improvement.

Maria stated she will be sending out a doodle poll for a date and time that works best with everyone to meet.

Next AWG Meeting Dates:

September 18, 2024 & December 18, 2024

Agenda Items:

No agenda items, only focusing on the solicitation applications.

Comments:

George stated it would be a good idea to send out notices to all Valley Lift clients when there are changes to the Valley Lift program.

Tim agreed with George.

George also mentioned all the call takers are upbeat and enjoys speaking with them when he schedules his transportation.

Adjournment:

Meeting adjourned at 4:11pm

Maria Carrillo

Maria Carrillo
Recording Secretary
