

**Rogue Valley Transportation District
Accessible Transportation Working Group Meeting
RVTD 5310 & STIF POPULATION GRANT FUNDING FY 25-27
September 18th, 2024, 12:00pm – 3:00pm – Via Zoom Video Conference**

Attended:

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

Staff:

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

Absent:

- Adrienne Boutin
- Cory Benton, Translink Operations Manager

Guest:

- Dee Anne Everson - United way
- Amber Robles - Living Opportunities
- Cassie Rose - Community Volunteer Network
- Dan Thorndike - Medford Fabrication & Board Member of United Way
- Dalia Silva - United Way

Welcome:

Meeting called order at 12:02pm

Roll Call:

Roll call conducted: 5 members were in attendance.

Review and Approve July 19, 2024 Minutes:

Stanley made the motion to introduce July 19, 2024 minutes and Robin 2nd, all in favor, motion passed at 12:05 pm.

Review & Discuss Grant Funding Requirements:

Paige provided an overview of the packet sent in advance, which includes the presentation and a table outlining the available and requested funds. She explained that there are three different funding sources, each with applications and corresponding scoring sheets.

By the end of this meeting, she stated everyone will have a clear understanding of each funding source, as well as the requirements set by RVTD and the applicants for compliance. We will also review each funding proposal, answer any questions we can based on the application information, and open a time for public comment. Afterward, we'll turn the discussion back to the committee to consider making a funding recommendation to the Board of Directors. The funding we're reviewing is for the 2025-2027 biennium, which starts in July 2025. It's based on STIF population funds and 5310 Federal Formula Funds.

Paige briefly described each funding source. STIF, was passed in 2017 by Oregon legislation under the "Keep Oregon Moving" bill, which is designated for transportation services that benefit older adults and people with disabilities. It is funded through the Oregon Transit Tax, a statewide payroll tax of 0.01%. Since 2019, RVTD has used these funds for six route enhancements. However, Paige mentioned that RVTD is seeking a funding increase next year because the current amount isn't enough to keep up with rising service costs, such as insurance, labor rates, and health insurance.

This funding must be reviewed by a stakeholder group, who is the AWG committee. The funds can only be allocated to transportation operators and must directly benefit older adults and people with disabilities. STIF doesn't require a match but can be used as a match for federal and state funds like 5310. There are two applicants for this funding, who are CVN (Community Volunteer Network) and Living Opportunities.

5310 is a federal fund distributed to each state for transportation services benefiting older adults and people with disabilities. Federal funds require stricter oversight, including compliance with Capital Asset Inventory, Drug and Alcohol testing, federal procurement requirements, and Title VI regulations. RVTD receives these funds from ODOT based on the percentage of eligible populations in the county, primarily using them for the Valley Lift service. 5310 typically requires a 20% match, but this was recently reduced to 10.27% as of last week.

Like STIF, this funding must be reviewed by the AWG committee and recommended for approval by the Board of Directors.

Paige asked if there were any questions, to which Robin answered no.

She went over additional details such as: RVTD is required to publish funding opportunities for eligible projects, which all materials are prepared by ODOT. The solicitation cycle was open from August 22 to September 5, 2024, with notices posted on the RVTD website and in the local newspaper. However, only four applicants submitted proposals.

The applications will be reviewed by the AWG, and the awarded recommendations will be presented to the Board of Directors. The submission deadline is the first week of November.

Review & Discuss Grant Applications:

Paige went over the available funds for STIF in-district and out-of-district, as well as the 5310 small urban and 5310 STBG funds. She stated that anything written in red indicates oversubscription, meaning there are more requests than available funding. Starting first with the STIF population funds, we have \$250,000 more in request for an in-district than what's available. The out of district, as you can see has \$295,464 left as a remaining balance, Paige suggested moving the remaining out of district funds into the in-district balance. Paige expressed this will have to be a separate motion in the agenda for us to do that.

Then we have the small urban funds that RVTD requested the full amount of \$926,375 which leaves the balance to zero. Additionally, STBG funds have two applicants, ending the balance to a shortfall of \$71,246.

Paige then turned the discussion over to George to review the score sheets and address any questions.

Robin asked if United Way was only an outreach education program.

Paige said that United Way does not provide transportation. Their primary goal is education, outreach coordination, and travel training for individuals who wish to learn how to use fixed-route buses, Valley Lift, and work with employers and schools to reduce ride alone trips. They've partnered with COG and Senior and Disability Services to survey people with disabilities and understand the gaps and the need for additional assistance. United Way also has a transportation impact committee that meets monthly.

Robin then asked who United Way reports to.

Paige explained that they report to ODOT on a quarterly basis. United Way provides detailed quarterly reports and narratives describing their outreach activities, meetings, and travel training completions. This process applies to all applicants, including CVN, Living Opportunities, and RVTD, who must also report to ODOT quarterly.

Robin further questioned if United Way's work was considered valuable.

Paige confirmed that the work is valuable.

Paige stated that United Way had requested less funding for this biennium, about half of what they typically request.

Stanley asked if there's any reason why United Way was wanting less this biennium?

Paige stated there was no specific reason.

Robin stated as a charity they probably have other sources of fundings to continue to program as it runs now.

George requested to bring Dee Anne (United Way) into the meeting.

Robin asked Dee Anne if United Way is going to continue to run the program with less funds or will they need to cut the program. Robin also asked if they have other resources to keep the organization running as it does now.

Dee Anne stated they reviewed other sources and did request one year's funding because they were told to. Not because they didn't want to request it for two years, it's possible we were confused. So far, they have found 3 grant sources whom they've reviewed have potential fundings for their efforts.

George then turned to Amber from Living Opportunities and asked if their service area extended beyond RVTD boundaries and if they expected an increase in requests.

Amber confirmed that Living Opportunities had only applied for in-district funding, though they do serve a few clients outside RVTD's boundaries. However, this is not enough to justify an out-of-district request. Amber explained that they were requesting the same amount as last biennium because their costs continue to rise.

Cassie (CVN) added that she also serves out-of-district clients, such as those in Butte Falls and Ruch, and that these services are critical to the community network's transportation services

George then asked Tim why they applied for all three funding sources.

Tim explained that they are eligible and qualified for all three.

Robin inquired where the funds would go if RVTD were awarded the requested funds.

Tim stated that all funds would support transportation services, though as of right now they are experiencing a gap in funding. They currently are about a million-dollars short.

Stanley asked why RVTD was requesting the funding they were given and why the group should approve it.

Tim explained that the funds would be used to support Valley Lift services. When funds fall short, they pull from the general funds, which impacts the district's ability to expand or maintain other routes. The goal has always been to have the accessible transportation department fund itself as much as possible through grants and other resources, but lately, they have had to rely more on the general funds, which may limit expansion or route maintenance.

George asked if the need for funding was expected to increase between 2025 and 2027.

Cassie (CVN) confirmed that they are seeing an average of 10-20 older adults and individuals with disabilities calling in each day. Yes, they expect the demand to grow.

Public Comment:

Dan Thorndike (United Way) entered the meeting stating he is a board member of United Way. He expressed how the programs that are at risk with the proposed cuts serve the most vulnerable members of the population. Frankly, we don't see any easy way to find alternative funding for those programs.

Dee Anne wanted to give a thank you to everyone serving on the committee.

Stanley made a comment stating that he has followed Dee Anne for many years and has done a lot for our community.

Cassie shared that she's fortunate to be part of the Transportation Impact Committee, where she works alongside George and Dan. She has witnessed the concerns that come from active public servants at those meetings regarding our vulnerable population. Cassie also expressed the importance of diversity, inclusion, and accessibility values that are important to the committee's work.

She also wanted to highlight that CVN utilizes volunteers to perform their service. This allows us not to have the cost of maintaining a fleet or paying drivers. She stated approximately 5,000 rides will be provided for this service, which is a huge return for investment. The large federal grant helps us support these efforts by recognizing volunteers, covering mileage reimbursements, and providing insurance for drivers while driving. Cassie pointed out that without this funding, they wouldn't be able to operate effectively.

Amber from Living Opportunities explained that their funding goes directly toward covering mileage costs, as they maintain a fleet of vehicles and employ staff to provide transportation. The funds help cover expenses like fuel, insurance, and maintaining vehicles, but they don't support administrative costs.

Dee Anne shared that their administrative costs are not covered by the grant but are funded through in-kind donations and cash donations to the United Way. She mentioned that their organization recently launched a wheelchair charging station program, completing the goal of installing 100 stations across the county in just six weeks.

Tim stated all the funding is focused on purchase services meaning they go to Paratransit services and does not cover any administrative cost either. Tim stated after covid there has been a 43% increase in ridership, and it continues to grow. As well as receiving about more than 40 applications a month for the Valley Lift.

George stated it's super important to take every scoring into consideration.

Recommend awards to RVTB Board of Directors:

Paige stated we have several different motions that need to be made. Two of them are pretty easy to make. We have the out of district funds in the amount of \$295,464 that are able to be moved into in district. And that would fully fund all of our STIF population request, including Community Volunteer Network, Living opportunities, and RVTB under that funding source. It would also leave approximately \$45,000 dollars of funds that we would request go towards RVTB's Valley Lift service.

Paige stated we would need a motion to that effect.

Stanley made a motion to approve the funds of \$295,464 dollars to be transferred to the in-district under STIF. Robin 2nd, all in favor, motion passed.

Paige stated instead of \$906,664 dollars we now have \$1,202,128 that we can allocate to all the projects. That leaves a balance of \$45,464 dollars.

The next motion to be made was to transfer that remaining balance to the Valley Lift program. Robin made the motion to transfer the funds Stanley 2nd, all in favor, motion passed.

Paige stated this has balanced us out with the allocation for RVTD which would be \$952,128 leaving no funds out of district or in district and all applicants have been funded to their full request.

Paige stated the next motion is the 5310 Small Urban funds. RVTD was the only applicant for \$926,375 dollars and because we're the only applicant, we're asking for all the funds, and we just need a motion to that effect.

Stanley made a motion to permit that funding. Robin 2nd, all in favor, motion passed.

The last motion was the most complicated one Paige said. Paige mentioned that she noticed United Way didn't ask for the full amount they thought they could or should have. She wanted to bring it up before the motion because she had reached out to the applicant directly. When Paige reached out she wanted to confirm the application was filled out correctly and that the funding request total at the bottom was clear. She got confirmation that the amount they requested was for the entire 2025-2027 biennium. The confirmation is stated in an email, with Dan also included in the email. The response was that the requested amount was correct for the biennium.

Stephen then asked Paige how much they were short from their full request and whether it was too late to amend it.

Paige explained that it's a little out of order for the solicitation cycle to go back now since we didn't allow any other applicants to amend their requests. As the solicitation administrator, she had already verified the available information.

Stephen agreed and said it was fair to move forward.

Dee Anne said she appreciated the effort to get clarity on the amounts. She mentioned that all three staff members were confused. She understood that it was too late to change the request now, but it's something they'll have to work with and reassess in a year.

George, Robin, Mickey, and Stanley scored the full amount of \$71,246 to rating of 9, and Stephen scored it as 10. The motion passed with all in favor. This leaves a balance of \$678,987 for RVTD and \$71,246 for United Way under the 5310 STBG fund requests. Paige mentioned that this covers everything that needs to be addressed today. The recommendations will go to the STIF Act Committee in early October and then to the Board of Directors for final approval.

Next AWG Meeting Date:

December 18, 2024

Next Meeting Agenda Items:

No agenda items, notified to email Maria for any add ons.

Comments, Questions, Or Concerns:

Robin stated how happy she's been with the call center but seems like she dropped off too early for her appointments though understand waiting is part of the process.

Goerge asked Edem if he's still seeking anymore committee members.

Edem said there are members whose membership is expiring and will ask them if they would like to renew it and if not it will open up spots for new committee members to join.

Adjournment:

Meeting adjourned at 2:01pm

Maria Carrillo

Maria Carrillo
Recording Secretary
