



**Benton County**  
**Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund**  
**Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**December 11, 2023**

*Madison Avenue Meeting Room, 10:30 am – 12:00 pm.*

**Committee Members Present:**

Chair Heidi Henry - Environmental Advocate  
Vice-Chair Janeece Cook - Representative of Low-income Persons  
Kate Hunter-Zaworski Representative of People 65 and over  
Greg Gescher - Public Transportation Service Provider  
Sarah Bronstein - Representative of Educational Institutions  
Kristen Jocums - Representative of People with Disabilities  
Nick Meltzer - Representative of Local Government  
David Rabinowitz - Bicycle and Pedestrian Advocate  
Gary Stockhoff - Ex-officio

**Committee Members Absent:** None

**Staff:** Lisa Scherf - Public Transportation Services Supervisor  
Brad Dillingham - Special and Rural Transit Coordinator  
Tiffany Plemmons - Transit Program Assistant

**Guests:** Tim Bates – City of Corvallis

**1. Call Meeting to Order**

Janeece Cook ran late to the meeting and Heidi Henry volunteered to Chair the meeting, until Cook arrived. Henry called the meeting to order at 10:35 am and attendees introduced themselves.

**2. Public Comments**

Sally Utt – Ms. Utt relies on ADA paratransit provided through BAT Lift. She said she has been using these services less frequently because it is becoming harder to schedule rides to appointments. She said she worries that when she gets to an unfamiliar destination, she will no longer get the same help from the driver that she is accustomed to getting, as far as getting from the curb to her destination inside a building. It used to be that the driver would help her to the location and make sure she were set up. She is now relying more on other kinds of rides and if she cannot get one, she has to reschedule her appointment. On her most recent paratransit ride, she said that there were several others passengers in the vehicle and the driver dropped off passengers in a non-linear fashion, resulting in a longer-than-necessary trip. She said that rides cannot be requested more than one week in advance.

David Rabinowitz said that these types of issues should be dealt with outside of this meeting, as it is not the purview of the STIF Committee.

**3. Election of Chair and Vice Chair**

Rabinowitz motioned that Janeece Cook be nominated to continue her role as Vice Chair and Heidi Henry be nominated as Chair of the Benton County STIF Advisory Committee. Jocums seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **4. Approval of January 23, 2023 Minutes**

Rabinowitz motioned and Gescher seconded approval of the minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **5. Review of Benton County Updated Title VI Plan (see Staff Report)**

Lisa Scherf said Benton County is required to have a Title VI Plan and update it every three years. The County's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Coordinator was consulted on this Plan update.

Scherf said that within Benton County, the number of Cantonese and Mandarin language speakers have joined Spanish language speakers as exceeding the threshold established by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Therefore, "vital" documents, as defined by FTA, will be made available in written form to Cantonese and Mandarin language speakers. The DEI Coordinator provided more updated and appropriate terminology for the Plan. County Commissioners will review the Plan in late January.

Jocums asked if the inclusion of the phrase "individuals with disabilities" should be uniform throughout the Plan. Scherf said language in the Plan was taken verbatim from FTA regulations, but that she would make sure that the language included is the most current language provided on the FTA website. Rabinowitz asked if phone surveys are to be used, as stated in the Plan. He is dubious of them, citing the historical unreliability of phone surveys, and opined that written surveys are a better method of receiving input.

Jocums motioned for approval of the Plan, subject to updating previously-discussed language. The motion was seconded by Meltzer. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **6. Request to Transfer from Reserves to Philomath Connection Project (see Staff Report)**

City of Philomath was not able to complete its 2021-23 STIF project titled "Bus Stop Amenities", in the amount of \$63,000, before June 30, 2023. Philomath was delayed in completing this project due to having to wait for ODOT to complete its work on the same streets as the planned Philomath work.

Rabinowitz motioned, seconded by Meltzer, to approve the request to transfer \$63,000 from reserves to the 2023-25 Philomath Connection project titled "Bus Stop Amenities". The motion passed unanimously.

#### **7. Update on FY23-25 Benton County STIF Projects**

In Barry Hoffman's absence, Meltzer reviewed the City of Albany's Loop Expansion project. It began in 2023 and the Loop Technical Advisory Committee is considering recommending making the expanded summer service hours operate year around.

Dillingham reviewed Benton County STIF projects:

99W Service – This service will operate from McMinnville to Junction City and is still awaiting its debut. Benton County has received the necessary vehicles. Yamhill County, Benton County's partner in this project, is awaiting receipt of their vehicles. A service plan will then be agreed upon by both agencies and drivers will be hired. A definite start date has not yet been identified.

Coast to Valley Expanded Service – Several connections to Amtrak have been added and ridership numbers indicate it is successful.

Camera System Upgrade – This upgrade began and has already been useful in several onboard incidents. 5311 Formula Match – Used to match federal grants for 99 Express to Adair Village and Coast to Valley service.

Bus Stop Amenities – Bus stop improvements have been made to the 99 Adair Village bus stop at Knoll Terrace Mobile Home Park on Highway 99.

Service Advertising – Used to advertise new services and service updates to the public.

Bates updated Corvallis and Philomath STIF projects.

Transit Support Position – This project funds the position that is currently held by Tiffany Plemmons. Tiffany is a vital part of supporting both Corvallis Transit System and Benton Area Transit.

Bus Stop Amenities – This project will fund as-yet-identified shelter locations that may receive a replacement shelter or a bus stop location that will get its first shelter. The bulk of the project in the previous STIF biennium was used for the transit plaza at Kings Blvd. and Monroe Avenue, a site that is the de facto OSU Transit Plaza.

Meltzer reviewed the Council of Governments (COG) STIF projects:

Seamless Transit Continuing Operations – Ongoing and used to support real-time vehicle information.

OSU Mobility Hub Construction Match – 60% design has been completed and the COG is awaiting 90% design from the contractor.

## **8. Meeting Notices**

Jocums said that the Oregon Attorney General's recommendation is to provide a two-week notification of a meeting for those persons who have requested a notification. Scherf said the STIF Committee discussed this issue at a previous STIF meeting and the Committee voted to approve a one-week notification period, which is standard for other public meetings in Benton County. Scherf and Stockhoff agreed to speak with Benton County Counsel on the legality of notification timelines. Jocums committed to providing Stockhoff with a list of interested parties that she is aware of. Scherf said the Committee could ask for a two-week notification on meeting date/location and a one-week notification for the full meeting packet.

## **9. Paratransit Discussion**

Jocums said that she and some others she knows did not approve of the merger between the former Special Transportation Advisory Committee (STAC) and the STIF Committee. Scherf reminded the Committee that merging these committees was the result of ODOT merging two funding streams and writing new Oregon Administrative Rules describing Committee requirements.

Jocums voiced her displeasure with the County's recently-implemented scheduling software, saying that it has been a "nightmare" for users to navigate. Jocums made a motion to create a working group or task force to discuss issues with the City's paratransit service and the County's BAT Lift service. She suggested that the task force would be comprised of a Dial-A-Bus representative, several members of the STIF Committee, and others to be determined by the STIF Committee. Scherf said the STIF Committee was never meant to address operational issues; however, it is possible to form a separate

task force. Meltzer asked if it were appropriate for the County Commissioners to be the entity to form a task force to deal with operational issues.

Stockhoff said the dispatch software that was implemented in September has been the culprit for the ride scheduling issues. Along with Dial-A-Bus schedulers, Scherf and Stockhoff met with the software contractor in an attempt to resolve these issues. Some, but not all, of the issues were resolved at the meeting. Jocums said it was her understanding that the software was purchased without input from Dial-A-Bus, the County's operations contactor. Stockhoff strongly refuted this, stating that two Dial-A-Bus supervisors were involved, gave their input and supported selecting the chosen vendor. Jocums asked why the former system was replaced. Stockhoff said the former software was too old to be supported. The vendor for the former software did not submit a response to the County's RFP for new software. Henry said that it needs to be decided who community members can contact with their scheduling issues. Scherf said that for operational and access issues with the software, users should contact Dial-A-Bus staff with their issues, because they use the software on a daily basis. For more general concerns and complaints, users should contact Brad Dillingham.

Jocums asked for clarification of the pickup "window" of paratransit passengers. Dillingham described this window. Rabinowitz, himself a former Dial-A-Bus driver, said it is incumbent upon the passengers to be ready at the scheduled time so as not to throw off the schedule of other passengers.

Scherf said that regarding Ms. Utt's disappointment with drivers no longer accompanying passengers to their appointments, the County has been strictly advised by the FTA that drivers are not permitted to lose sight of their vehicle or go into buildings, known as "through the door" service. If a passenger needs that level of assistance to get to their appointments, they need to provide their own Personal Care Attendant. Hunter-Zaworski stated that this is also her understanding of FTA regulations.

**10. Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 12:10 p.m.