



Benton County
Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund
Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
October 14, 2024

Hybrid Meeting, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm

Committee Members Present:

Chair Heidi Henry - Environmental Advocate

Vice-Chair Janece Cook - Representative of Low-income Persons - Virtual

Kate Hunter-Zaworski - Representative of People with Disabilities

Greg Gescher - Public Transportation Service Provider

Sarah Bronstein - Representative of Educational Institutions

David Rabinowitz - Bicycle and Pedestrian Advocate

Gary Stockhoff - Ex-officio

Absent: Kristen Jocums – User of Transportation Services

Staff: Lisa Scherf - Public Transportation Services Supervisor

Charlene Pech – Special and Rural Transportation Coordinator

Tiffany Plemmons - Transit Program Assistant

Guests: Corum Ketchum – Oregon Cascade West Council of Governments

1. Call Meeting to Order/Introductions

Chair Henry called the meeting to order at approximately 10:05 am and attendees introduced themselves. Chair Henry outlined the purpose of the committee: to assist the Benton County Board of Commissioners in 1) carrying out the purposes of the Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF); and 2) prioritizing projects funded by STIF monies, as per Oregon Administrative Rules (OAR) Chapter 732 Division 040.

2. Public Comments

No public comments were received.

3. 5310 Project Plan Review and Public Comment

Scherf provided an overview of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) 5310 funds designated by the Federal Transit Administration for transportation services for elderly

individuals and people with disabilities. This funding is administered by the State of Oregon to entities around the state and Benton County is the recipient of those funds for our area. These funds are used by Benton County to provide countywide demand-response services and by the cities of Corvallis and Philomath to provide mandatory ADA paratransit associated with fixed route services.

Staff proposes two projects:

- BAT Lift Countywide Special Transportation
- City of Corvallis and City of Philomath ADA Paratransit

The deadline for submitting applications is mid-November.

4. STIF Discretionary Grant Application Review

Scherf stated that per Oregon Administrative Rules, STIF Advisory Committees are asked to provide a “fund/do not fund” recommendation to the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) for each STIF discretionary project application. This input, as well as input from the Area Commission on Transportation, is reviewed by ODOT staff, which provides a recommendation to the Public Transportation Advisory Committee. Final decisions on funding are made by the Oregon Transportation Commission.

Benton County Public Works Director Gary Stockhoff presented Benton County’s discretionary grant applications:

1. Security Fencing at Sunset Facility
 - Request is for \$200,000 for a total project of \$250,000.
 - Would install fencing, electronically operated gates, enhanced lighting, and security cameras.
 - Addresses ongoing fuel theft and vandalism
 - Protect existing fleet and prepare for electric buses and charging infrastructure.
2. Vehicle Replacement
 - Request is for \$320,000 for a total project of \$400,000.
 - Requests four vehicles, two Category D (medium, light duty bus) and two Category E (small, light duty bus or minivan). These will replace vehicles that will age out for mileage or age prior to the next funding cycle.

There was a discussion about how old vehicles are disposed of and who determines what sizes and types of vehicles Benton County buys. Scherf stated that Benton County buys vehicles using the State price agreement, which greatly simplifies purchasing but also allows the County to configure the vehicles based on need. Several Committee

members expressed interest in having community input on these purchases.

Transportation and Economic Development Planner Corum Ketchum presented one application on behalf of the Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments:

1. Oregon State University (OSU) Mobility Hub
 - Request is for \$800,002 for a total project of \$1,000,002.
 - While there are two mobility hubs planned, one at Linn Benton Community College and one at OSU, this request is for the OSU one only.
 - Provides gap funding to address significantly rising project design and construction costs since the pandemic.

Albany Transit System staff was not available to present and answer questions about its discretionary applications, but staff noted those projects are described in the staff report. The Committee discussed project details, including timeline, community engagement, sustainability, maintenance costs, and collaboration opportunities.

5. STIF Formula Payroll-Based Funds Suballocation Method Affirmation

Scherf reviewed OARs 732-042-00103D and 732-042-00103E which govern STIF Formula Fund allocation. The suballocation methodology must be reviewed and updated every six years. The OARs state (emphasis added):

732-042-00103D: Qualified entities shall work collaboratively with public transportation service providers and other potential subrecipients as relevant to develop a method for sub-allocating STIF formula fund monies to public transportation service providers.

732-042-00103E: To the extent possible, using the best available data **the suballocation method used by qualified entities must be proportionate to the amount of employee payroll tax revenue generated within the geographic territory of each public transportation service provider.**

Scherf called attention to the language in OAR, stating the starting place for suballocation should be the payroll number. However, it's not an entitlement and the Committee is expected to evaluate projects on the merits rather than focus on the suballocation. Using data provided by our region's State Economist, the percentages by Public Transportation Service Provider geographic territory are:

- North Albany - 1.3% (service by Albany Transit System)
- City of Adair Village - 0.3% (service by Benton County)
- City of Corvallis - 83% (service by Corvallis Transit System)
- City of Monroe - 0.31% (service by Benton County)

- City of Philomath - 2.45% (service by Philomath Connection through City of Corvallis)
- Unincorporated areas of Benton County - 13% (service by Benton Area Transit)

Scherf said staff recommends staying with these figures as the starting place and noted this is different from the formula that we've been using historically. That formula considered job sites and numbers of jobs within geographic territories, along with several other factors, though those inputs aren't in OAR. Scherf noted the importance and historical practice of collaboration that exists between Benton County PTSPs, including making "space" to fund PTSPs that aren't associated with a geographical territory, such as the Linn Benton Loop and OCWCOG, for important area projects.

The Committee briefly discussed regional transit trends and needs. It was noted that payroll figures don't account for remote workers or retirees, nor commuter traffic between communities. Pech noted that with the language in OAR, it's difficult to justify straying from that direction. To date, the formula allocations and project review have worked well for area PTSPs in Benton County. It was suggested by a Committee member that we stay with the payroll formula but look at how regional needs can be better represented in future.

Cook expressed concern about a lack of coordination between Lane Transit District (LTD) and south Benton County residents, who desire to travel into Eugene. Scherf said staff hopes to connect the 99W pilot service to LTD for those residents. Pech has already contacted our partner in Yamhill County to begin service planning.

The Committee took the following action on all three agenda items:

- Hunter-Zaworski made a motion to recommend approval of the 5310 projects to the Benton County Board of Commissioners; Cook seconded and the motion passed.
- The Committee agreed by consensus to provide a thumbs up to the STIF Discretionary projects submitted by Benton County, OCWCOG, and City of Albany.
 - Hunter-Zaworski made a motion to recommend to the Benton County Board of Commissioners approval of the STIF Formula Payroll suballocation formula, with the caveat that staff ask ODOT to look at revising the formula moving forward to reflect regional change in regional characteristics. Bronstein seconded and the motion passed.

6. Adjournment

Chair Henry enlisted Vice Chair Cook to take charge of the next meeting and adjourned the meeting at 11:30 am.