



Wednesday, November 30th, 2023
Hood River County Transportation District
STIF Advisory Committee Meeting

224 Wasco Loop, Board Conference Room
Hood River, OR 97031
4:00pm – 5:00pm
Meeting Minutes

1. Call Meeting to Order:

Amy called the Statewide Transportation Improvement Funds (STIF) Advisory Committee to order at 4:05 p.m.

2. Roll Call:

Committee members present: Kevin Liburdy (City of Hood River Planning Department), Lexi Stickel (PacificSource), Taylor Engel (Providence Dethman House)

Staff: Amy Schlappi, Tiah Mayhew, Tim Ravins, Sara Crooks (Mid-Columbia Economic Development District)

Absent: Rachelle Begay (CRITFC), Ivy Collins (Student), Gisela Ayala Echeverria (CAT Board Member), Meghan Larivee (CAT Board Member), Eleazar Reyes (CAT Board Member).

Note: Staff continued with meeting even though quorum was not met since the agenda did not include any decisions that needed to be made. This was an informational meeting only.

Introductions for Sara Crooks, our Travel Trainer for Hood River and Wasco counties and Tim Ravins, the new Administrative Assistant.

3. End of Year Report Highlights

Amy shared highlights of CAT's Fiscal Year 2023 (July 1st 2022 – June 30th, 2023) programs. The low-income fare program distributed 2,300 student passes. Also, with Sara's contributions the Gorge Transit Connect Program has expanded. Free and discounted fares through our partners have been popular. Targeted service to low-income Individuals has continued with the same frequency to Cascade Locks, Upper Valley, and Dial-a-Ride. Outreach to Vulnerable Populations was highlighted by our introduction of bilingual brochures, Gorge Vets, Dial-a-Ride and Gorge Transit Connect programs. Videos were produced that show helpful instructions and topics for riders. The Maintain Existing Services Project helped with maintain existing service levels even with inflation, unexpected costs, and grant fluctuation. Our Capital & Replacement Program has seen us replace 3 vehicles with more to come. ADA Access Improvements project has remained on hold.



Kevin asked about the City of Hood River's role with concern to the location of bus stops and if there was any hold up on the City's end. Amy replied it is not being held up by the city but dedication of time and resources on CAT's side have held up official route changes that will determine ADA needs.

Vulnerable Populations Outreach "new users" data point from meeting materials was clarified for Kevin by Amy.

5. Project 1 - Service Operations

Amy introduced the first project for this current biennium. Strategies for using these funds have us creating tasks within the projects allowing for more flexible distribution of funds.

Task 1: Targeted service to vulnerable populations within Hood River County, this funds Cascade Locks, Upper Valley, Dial a Ride and Portland Medical Shuttle service. Approximately \$10k under budget. We are looking at potentially making Medical Shuttle Service an on-demand service, currently it is only available on Tuesday and Thursday. Kevin agreed that scheduling medical appointments around days we offer the service could be difficult. Taylor asked if the time frame to book Medical Shuttles and their price were still the same (2 weeks in advance and \$20 each way) and described some experiences with her residents and medical shuttles. Moving the program under the Gorge Transit Connect program was mentioned by Sara. Lexi asked if we are contracted with *Modivcare*, which we are not currently. Lexi offered to help with that. Discussions with CAT and *Modivcare* have begun to potentially supplement our one Dial a Ride driver. Amy has experienced some difficulty with the process.

Cascade Locks used to have a deviated fixed route, separate from Columbia Gorge Express, but that was removed due to low ridership. Cascade Locks residents who need custom pick ups and drop offs are encouraged to use the Dial a Ride service. Contacts for Sara are needed in Cascade Locks of people who work with vulnerable populations.

Upper Valley has the same level of service but comments from the community have expressed concern with deviated stops delaying regular service. Amy is hoping by spring or summer of 2024 to provide weekend service, transition deviated fixed route to fixed and continue to offer on-demand service.

Task2: Maintain Existing Services funding for Hood River City route, Hood River Connect and match for Gorge to Mountain and Columbia Gorge Express. These services have remained unchanged and are roughly \$50k under budget. Some of which will be used for our HVAC system replacement in the office. But also, the introduction of Upper Valley additional services soon. Splitting the Hood River city route will divide the circular



route into an East and West sections requiring bus stops on both sides of the road.

6. Project 2 - Mobility Services

Task 1: This project funds the free fare Student Program and Gorge Transit Connect free and discounted fares. This past quarter we handed out 310 free student passes and 48 low-income fares have been distributed. Currently \$700 under budget. Sara has been working on changing the approach of educating the students on how to use our system. Also marketing material and flyers are being used to help with this.

Task2: Vanpool and Mobility Services is to implement a vanpool program; we have contracted with *Commute Options* to manage the program for us. Under budget by \$5k. Local organizations will get compensation for their use of the program.

CAT is finalizing an agreement for our E-bike lending library. The bikes will be housed here at the CAT facility and be available to community members and riders will be able to rent e-bikes from us for free. Kevin had a question regarding bike maintenance and if that was included in the grant funding currently. The initial grant is just for getting the project started, but riders may be asked but not required to pay a nominal fund to offset maintenance. STIF funds should be able to contribute to maintenance. More information on maintenance funding will come from Amy.

Task 3: Outreach and Awareness of Services is targeted outreach, marketing material and travel training to vulnerable populations. Increasing community awareness of our services and a match for our Travel Trainer salary. Increasing outreach to schools, seniors and LEP individuals making it more user friendly. New, useful swag will be coming. Updating and reviewing brochures and combining schedules to streamline the understanding of our services.

7. Project 3 – Capital Expansion and Replacement

Task 1: Used for match of capital grants for vehicle replacements. We have received 2 proposals for new Columbia Gorge Express buses, under budget by \$7k. Optimistic delivery time of new buses is by end of 2024. New grant applications include one for a new, dependable trolley and a Gorge to Mountain bus with dedicated gear storage areas.

Task 2: ADA improvements are on hold until we have new bus stop locations finalized. Under budget by \$25k. A federal grant for electrification of fleet and improve bus stops could be used for this.

8. Project 4 – Program Reserve

Task 1: We have not had to use this yet, but we are anticipating using some funds to match grants and cover unanticipated costs.



The meeting was adjourned at 4:50 pm.

The Hood River County Transportation District STIF meeting minutes are prepared and presented in summary form. Video recordings of the meetings are on file at CAT and are part of the approved minutes. If you would like to watch the recording of the meeting, please contact Tim Ravins tim@catransit.org, or call (541) 386-4202.

Prepared by: Tim Ravins, Administrative Assistant