

TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

SEPTEMBER 13TH, 2016

Transit Advisory Committee members in attendance were Jason Edmiston, Rod Hardin, Doug Primmer, Dean Fialka, Juli Gregory (arrived at 5:07 pm), Krisi Avery, Barb Martin, Jennifer Roberts, and Cindy Schaan. Also present were Assistant City Manager Mark Morgan, City Planner Clint Spencer, CTUIR Planning Director JD Tovey, and Lilly Alarcon-Strong.

Assistant City Manager Morgan opened the meeting at 5:00pm and stated the Committee will meet three times before presenting the City Council with its final recommendation and adoption in November and implementation in January of 2017. The Committee will be presented with and work on:

- Background information- Current program setup and costs
- Current and Potential Costs and Funding
- System Potential for the fixed-route system based on a \$250,000 threshold
- Identify high-usage origination and destination points to be able to develop a fixed-route system
- Develop a name for the fixed-route bus system

Background information- Current program setup and costs

Mark presented the Committee with information on the current subsidized transit system, The Taxi Ticket Program. Hermiston city residents of at least 62 years old and those with disabilities qualify to purchase taxi tickets at \$2.00 apiece. The City subsidizes the remaining \$4.60, of which the County pays about \$1.00, for a total of \$6.60 being paid to the taxi company for each one-way trip within City limits.

Mark stated the Umatilla County Transportation Board will not release additional funding because the taxi rides stay in city limits, unlike Pendleton where the taxi tickets can be used outside of city limits. The challenge with doing something similar to Pendleton is that, although the size of the two cities are very similar, Hermiston, unlike Pendleton has a large population outside of its city limits and Hermiston city resident tax payers run the risk of subsidizing people who live outside of the city and don't pay city taxes. This program originally started in the 1960's when Hermiston's population was about 4,000. Due to the City's growing population, the City has not only outgrown this system but it's also overloaded the system as well.

Mark stated some of the program challenges are:

- Only seniors and those with disabilities qualify for the program
- There are unrealistic expectations for taxi response time. Taxi riders can expect to wait 5 to 45 mins depending on the number of riders that have called in before them expecting rides
- Not enough transportation options, costing the community through inefficiency.

Mark showed the Committee a graph of the taxi ticket program costs throughout the last 9 years with City subsidy ranging from \$97,791 to \$145,013; explaining that the lower costs were due to a competing taxi company who was offering \$2.00 taxi rides, and higher costs that could be related to fraud of the taxi ticket program.

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Program participants from 2014 to 2016 were surveyed on what time frames they most often need transportation services. Those percentages of participants stated:

- 42% from noon to 5:00pm
- 25% from 8:00am to noon
- 19% from 5:00pm to 9:00pm
- 7% before 8:00am
- 6% after 9:00pm

Those same participants stated their destinations were:

- 34% Wal-Mart
- 24% Good Shepherd
- 17% Safeway
- 12% Other
- 7% Lifeways
- 5% Fiesta Foods

Mark stated the City was looking into proposing a Dial-a-Ride system but the challenges with that system is it is still only for seniors and those with disabilities, requires advances planning on both the rider and the system planner, and still increases costs by \$110,000/ year. ODOT also preferred a fixed-route system as well and offered funding for a fixed route option in lieu of a Dial-a-Ride system.

Cindy stated that the problem she and Juli see the most with fixed-route systems is that some clients have a difficult time being able to reach the fixed-route sites.

Barb asked if the current KAYAK system from Pendleton, to Hermiston, to Stanfield, etc is not working and that's why this Committee is being formed.

Mark stated no. The system that Barb described is an inter-city system and will continue to run. This Committee will be working on an intra-city fixed bus system that will have various fixed bus stops throughout the city.

Doug stated from what he understands so far is that, the taxi ticket program will continue to run and the fixed-route bus system will supplement this so that the taxi ticket program can run more efficiently, take the load off of the peak times, make the taxi more accessible, and enhance the KAYAK system.

Mark stated yes. The benefits area also that the general public would be able to use the bus system and all riders would have guaranteed pick up and drop off times and could still provide Para-Transit service. KAYAK would also take care of all aspects of the bus system to include: bus maintenance, insurance, employment, etc.

JD stated the Para-Transit system allows the pick-up of a permanently disabled rider that cannot access the stop system at no cost, provided that the rider calls with at least a 24 hour notice.

Current and potential funding

JD gave a brief over view of the KAYAK system that has been in operation for the last 16 years. JD stated because KAYAK is run through the tribes, they qualify for state and federal funding programs that most other jurisdictions do not have access to. Currently, KAYAK has about 12 to 13 different funding sources. JD explained these funding options and others would be accessible for this fixed-route bus system. Riding the bus would be free as if riders were charged fares, these fares would be used against these grants along with a “handling charge” for the fares and the grants received would be reduced, so they would end up losing money in the form of grants by taking fares. The only time it would make sense to charge fares is if there were over 200,000 riders per year.

Mark presented the Committee with expected revenues and expenses of the taxi ticket program based on \$2.00 and \$3.00 tickets, as well as costs moving forward with the fixed-route bus system including signage for bus stops, with additional funding for both these systems.

Mark stated factored into the above scenario is an increase of the County grant from the current \$27,000 to about \$50,000 as the City of Pendleton receives about \$80,000 because their service area reaches outside of their city limits, which this new transit plan for Hermiston will do just that.

System Potential for the fixed-route system based on a \$250,000 threshold

JD and Mark explained additional funding options including a 5311 Grant, and Mobility Management Fund that could be obtained with careful planning.

Mark stated with the funds mentioned above and a lump sum amount each year from the City, the City would contract with KAYAK to create a specific fixed-route system. The lump sum would be about \$150,000/ year, which would be financially feasible.

Rod confirmed that the City would only contribute the \$150,000 to the fixed-route system and the rest of the funding would come from grants and outside resources.

Mark stated yes.

Identify high-usage origination and destination points

JD stated the Committee can decide how many days and stops the bus makes. The route can also be changes throughout the year as the bus system in Pendleton changes quarterly.

JD stated depending on the bus stops the Committee chooses, a draft route will be created and presented at the next meeting.

Mark stated the Committee received orange and green stickers. Mark asked that each Committee member place a green sticker on where they believe stops should be and orange stickers on where the Committee member believes the individuals are traveling from on a map of Hermiston. At the next meeting, the Committee will be presented with a drafting routing

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option and time frames, and at the last meeting a final draft will be presented with the recommendations from the prior meeting.

Dean asked if one stop could go to downtown Hermiston with another stop added later to accommodate EOTEC during the Fair and Rodeo.

JD stated yes, KAYAK makes similar changes during the Round Up.

Jason stated KAYAK is great to work with and listens to concerns.

The Committee took a break from 6:40pm to 7:00pm to place the stickers where they felt were the most appropriate places.

After the Committee finished placing their stickers Mark stated the Committee will meet again on Tuesday, October 18th at 5:00pm and take a short field trip on where potential bus stops could be based by what was noted on the map.

Develop a name for the fixed-route bus system

Mark asked that the Committee think of potential names that the fixed-out bus system could be named and present those at the next meeting. Mark stated he had developed the temporary name of HART for Hermiston Area Regional Transit, but emphasized HART could be changed

There was no other business and the meeting was adjourned at 7:02pm.