

CLACKAMAS COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Sitting/Acting as (if applicable)

Policy Session Worksheet

Presentation Date: 1/22/19

Approx. Start Time:

Approx. Length: 20 minutes

Presentation Title: Mt Hood Express- Operations Update

Department: Health, Housing and Human Services (Social Services Division)

Presenters: Richard Swift, Brenda Durbin, Teresa Christopherson

Other Invitees: Eric Machado, Laurel Butman

WHAT ACTION ARE YOU REQUESTING FROM THE BOARD?

Approval of a contract to provide transit services with Rojoy Services, LLC for the Mt Hood Express

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Since 2003 the Mountain Express, now called the Mt. Hood Express (MHX), has provided critical transportation services to county residents and visitors to Mt. Hood. The service has grown from a modest local shuttle to a Public Transportation provider, funded in part by a public/private partnership, that supports employment, recreation and access to services. The service has become a critical link in a regional transit system by coordinating routes and schedules with other local providers; the city of Sandy and TriMet. The development of the services has also spurred a larger regional conversations about transit with Oregon Department of Transportation, Hood River, and Sandy.

MHX was launched by local residents of the Hoodland area in 2003 to meet a need for public transportation, especially for students who were hitch hiking home from school when after school activities caused them to miss the school bus ride home.

When the service became eligible for public transit funding in 2005, the community sought support from Clackamas County since these funds are only available to public entities. . As a result of this request, the Department of Health, Housing and Human Services, Social Services Division, assumed the responsibility to manage the service. Since that time it has grown from a small, local shuttle to a seven day per week public transit service.

MHX provides commuter and point deviated fixed route bus service between the City of Sandy and various destinations along the Highway 26 corridor, ending at Timberline Lodge. MHX provides fully accessible public transit for employment, recreation and other needs to both local residents as well as visitors from the Metro area and beyond. MHX has expanded regional transit connectivity by linking with City of Sandy's service which connects to TriMet's light rail and bus service in Gresham. MHX underwent a significant redesign in Oct., 2013 to ensure continuity of service and to meet customer needs.

The MHX commuter service delivers six runs a day/seven days per week between Sandy and Timberline Lodge during the summer season (April 1 to November 1) and seven runs a day during the winter season. The Villages Shuttle provides point deviated fixed route service between Sandy and Rhododendron three times daily seven days per week. The Hoodland Senior Center provides a limited number of rides to senior and disabled residents in the area. .

MHX has maintained a solid ridership base over the last two years. The service appears to have reached capacity with its existing schedule but still provided over 67,000 rides the last two years. In a

survey conducted in November, 2018, MHX rider responses clearly show the need for the service in the Hoodland communities

- 61% use the service at least three times weekly
- 58% were commuting to work
- 53% report household incomes of less than \$20,000 per year
- 54% don't have a vehicle and 26% wouldn't have made the trip if the bus wasn't available

MHX is funded with local, state and federal funds. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) provides 5311 Rural Public Transit and FTA 5310. Federal funds also come from the Federal Lands Access Program. State funding comes through the Special Transportation Fund (STF). Local private funds also support the service.

Since the area served is not in a transit district, no payroll taxes or other fees can be collected to support the service. Instead, MHX is part of a unique public- private partnership with Mt Hood Ski Bowl and Timberline Lodge. They provide local funding to assist in meeting match requirements. MHX also partners with the City of Sandy's transit program to provide operational support and a facility out of which the services is operated. The City of Sandy and Clackamas County recently partnered on a Request for Proposal to identify a service provider. The provider selected for both services was Rojoy Services, LLC, a locally owned company with years of experience in transit operations. There were no other respondents to the RFP.

With the funding coming from the HB2017 State Transit Improvement Fund, MHX will have an opportunity to provide increased service levels, adding an additional run to both the Express and the Villages shuttle. These funds can only be used for expansion of service for projects included in an adopted local plan, so the Department of Transportation and Development is currently starting a Transit Development Plan that will cover all of Clackamas County outside of existing transit providers. Projects identified in this process will be eligible for future funding.

The Alternative Transit and Transportation Demand Management Study in the Mt Hood area (ATTDMS, USFS, 2012) and the Mt Hood Multimodal Transportation Plan (2014), both identified public transit as an essential component of short- and long-term transportation planning. A more recent study, completed in 2016 identified several options for long term governance, including forming a transportation district, forming a Transportation Management Association or creating a Transit Division under the Department of Transportation and Development. Since most of the funds received for public transit require a public entity to be the eligible recipient, the county would most likely continue to play a significant role in the operation of this service going forward, particularly with the HB2017 funds that will be available this year.

Partnership efforts around transportation on Mt Hood continue to have considerable energy. The Oregon Department of Transportation, Columbia Area Transit (Hood River), the City of Sandy and Clackamas County have formed a partnership with Western Federal Lands around completion of a new study "Vision Around the Mountain" which will closely examine long term strategies, including operations and government, to link transportation services in a coordinated manner from the Columbia River Gorge up Highway 35, then along Highway 26 to Sandy. This plan will be starting in the spring. The Mt Hood Transportation Alliance, which formed back in 2013 to address public transit on Mt Hood, continues to meet regularly and address current and future operational and planning issues.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS (current year and ongoing):

Is this item in your current budget? ☒ YES ☐ NO

What is the cost? \$

What is the funding source?

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

- How does this item align with your Department's Strategic Business Plan goals?
This project increases the self-sufficiency of individuals and families by providing affordable public transit service in a rural area of Clackamas County, including enhancing access to work and other essential needs. The service also aligns with the Department goal of providing efficient and effective services.
- How does this item align with the County's Performance Clackamas goals?
This project ensures safe, health and secure communities by providing fully accessible, safe public transportation service to rural residents of Clackamas County who would otherwise have no transit options.

LEGAL/POLICY REQUIREMENTS:

N/A

PUBLIC/GOVERNMENTAL PARTICIPATION:

N/A

OPTIONS: In the most recently completed RFP, Rojoy Services LLC was identified as the most appropriate operator for the service. They bring many years of expertise and experience operating public transit vehicles in inclement weather situations. Both the County and Rojoy have experienced considerable barriers in obtaining commercial auto insurance for the vehicles, which are presently covered under the county's self-insurance policy.

Other possible options considered for operations of the service include:

1. The formation of a Transportation Management Association (TMA). A TMA is a private, non-profit corporation created by a public-private partnership of businesses and local entities that are interested in working together to address local transit concerns. While this may be an option in the future, additional investments in time and organization would be needed to create a TMA. TMAs are not eligible to be direct recipients of the federal funds currently used to support the system. The county would still own the vehicles and there would most likely be a contractor providing service for the TMA.
2. Moving the service to another eligible entity, such as the City of Sandy. At this time, there are no other public entities who could receive funding to operate the service that have jurisdiction in the Hoodland area. While the City of Sandy is an invaluable partner, the city boundaries do not cover the entire MHX service area and the City would not be eligible to establish a payroll tax or other fees in the Hoodland area to provide local support for the service.
3. Transferring the vehicles to the operator so the county doesn't have to be involved as a vehicle owner. All of the vehicles were purchased using federal and state funds and have ODOT as a lienholder. We are unable to transfer public assets to privately owned, for-profit companies. We could potentially lease the vehicles to the operator but, to date, they have still been unable to obtain a quote for reasonably priced leased vehicle insurance.

4. The County could run the program themselves. The County would still maintain ownership of the vehicles and may still have issues obtaining commercial auto insurance for this small fleet. The County does not currently have staff expertise to provide operations internally and some of the positive benefits gained by operating concurrently with the City of Sandy's service may be lost.

5. The County could terminate the program. As the only public transit service for these communities, county residents would experience hardship and loss as a result of this decision. In addition, there would be negative economic impacts to local businesses who are dependent on recreational riders for revenues flowing into the community.

6. The County could agree to a shorter term contract. The County could agree to implement a short term contract (17 months) to provide additional time for county staff to conduct analysis around insurance and governance options as well as complete studies that may inform the future of public transit in Clackamas County. The contract can include renewal language in the event that this situation is resolved to the satisfaction of the County. The extension of their current contract is not an option at this time as it is out of compliance with federal transit standards.

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve a short term 17 months contract with Rojoy Services LLC to allow County staff to fully address insurance and governance issues and to keep the Mt Hood Express operating as these issues are resolved.

ATTACHMENTS:

SUBMITTED BY:

Division Director/Head Approval _____
Department Director/Head Approval _____
County Administrator Approval _____



For information on this issue or copies of attachments, please contact Teresa Christopherson @ 503-650-5718