Special Transportation Fund Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
STIF March 28th, 2019 - MCOA&CS Conference Room

In Attendance Advisory Members:
Lorinda DuBois – STIF Chairperson
Laurie Smith, Lifeway’s
Brittany White, SRT Malheur Express
DHS Alternate – Dan Ramirez
Adam Brown, Ontario City Manager
Ed Susman, WorkSource Eastern Oregon

Excused Absence:
Heidi Ragsdale, EOCIL
Sue Robinette, MCCDC
Judge Dan Joyce

Guest:
Melissa Gonzalez, DHS

Administrative Ad Hoc Members:
Loni Thomas
April MacKenzie

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Lorinda DuBois followed by introductions. A quorum was established.

Lorinda opened the meeting by reviewing the agenda as presented. Then reviewing and approving the previous meeting minutes from February 21st, 2019. Ed Susman made a motion to accept the previous meeting minutes as presented, Laurie Smith seconded the motion. All were in favor, and motion passed.

At this time, the meeting was opened for public comment. Melissa Gonzalez, resource officer from the Ontario schools was inquiring about the options that SRT Malheur Express might have to assist students who are having difficulties getting to and from school due to a variety of transportation issues. Melissa explained that depending on the location of the student’s residents would determine which means of transportation through SRT would be the most beneficial whether that be the Fixed Routed Service or Demand Response (Door to Door). There was discussion on the STIF Funding will support student transportation for grades 9-12.

Loni presented the Proposed – Four year STIF Formula Plan for Malheur County and showed that with the STIF funds, she restated that assists with public transportation for students grades 9-12 is one of the expectations of the grant. At this moment there is not a definite plan as to how to complete that expectation, the plan is to first find out the need by updated the coordinated transportation plan. The needs of students accessing school activities is a focal point with this funding. SRT Malheur Express plans to assist students with transportation. Brittany explained the general public transportation services that SRT Malheur Express currently has that could be offered to those students now.
Dan Ramirez stated that if there are parents of those students who are working parents that receive SNAP benefits, however not TANIF, that they may be eligible for support services to pay for fuel for the parent’s transportation to work, which would allow the parent to reallocate their funds that they currently use to pay for fuel to get to work, to now use to transport their child/student.

Loni also mentioned that if there are any grandparents raising grandchildren, there are services available through the Family Caregiver program provided by Malheur Council on Aging. There is an application process and she encouraged Melissa to refer them to see if they meet eligibility. Melissa stated that she has been working with the Senior Department in order to make those connections in the Family Caregiver Program.

Dan stated that in July 1, 2019 with the new funds coming to DHS, they may be able to assist in certain situations if the parent is in jeopardy of losing their employment due to having to transport their child to and from school for reasons such as missing the bus.

Melissa has nothing else to ask of the committee, nothing else was discussed on this topic at this time.

Committee moved on to review the previous new business item from the previous meeting; Proposed – Four Year STIF Formula Plan Malheur County. Loni and Brittany presented the proposal to the Malheur County STIF Advisory Committee. Brittany shared with the group the hand written comment cards that the agency had received from riders regarding the SRT Malheur services. There were a number of comments that extending the fixed route is needed for those who work. They requested SRT Malheur Express consider expanding a route after 5:00 p.m. as well as more frequent bus stops of the existing fixed route.

There was a question by Laurie, she asked if the plan is approved and accepted, can it be modified as needs change throughout the years based on community ridership needs. Loni stated that we need to follow the plan as awarded, the first priority of the plan is to update the Malheur County Coordinated Human Service Transportation Plan. We anticipate that this will provide us with information on where service is needed. The grant application will refer to this updated coordinated transportation plan throughout the grant process. This will allow some leniency to be able to service the community depending on the need.

Loni also stated that the STIF application is for a 3 year plan and in the next application, there will be public comment and feedback to develop the new STIF funding priorities to use with the grant application. This process allows the public and Malheur County STIF Advisory committee to review and update the needs and make changes accordingly.

Brittany also added that with the update of the Malheur County Coordinated Human Services Plan that will allow us to target the greatest transportation needs in our community. After the updated plan is complete we anticipate to have a clear view of the community’s transportation needs for planning purposes.

Loni also stated that to update the coordinated transportation plan, we proposed funding to hold community meetings, surveys, and outreach for general public participation into developing the next STIF funded projects.
There was a slight discussion on the Workforce Travelshed analysis that was completed by the City of Ontario that Adam Brown had shared with Loni. It documents that the majority of workers travel into the City of Ontario from the surrounding area.

There were no other comments or input for the plan. Laurie made a motion to accept the Four Year STIF Formula Plan Malheur County as presented. Ontario City Manager Adam Brown seconded the motion, all were in favor, and none were opposed. Motion passed unanimously.

Adam mentioned that there is new money for the Transportation Growth Management Plan (TGM) and this will allow Ontario to look at road lanes and road improvements. Adam suggested that the bus routes and stops should be identified by then so then TGM can plan around that as well when deciding improvements. Loni has been invited to participate as a stake holder in this process to represent public transportation.

There was a question as to when the STIF Formula funds would come in, which fiscal year. Loni stated that during the July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020 fiscal year the funds will be available for the first wave. The STIF Formula fund grant application is for the 2019, 2020, and 2021 years.

Dan inquired when MCOACS anticipates to take action with the items presented in the plan. Specifically when those changes will be made. Loni stated that MCOACS operating SRT Malheur Express would have to wait until they receive the award letter for the grant before setting time lines. Updated the coordinated plan is the foundation of all the other planning. Updating the coordinated plan will provide information to determine transportation needs and after that is complete they will be prioritized and a plan of action with timelines and completion dates will be developed. There is not a set time line to complete the proposed projects as of yet. Loni did state that since we have documentation that those that use the current SRT Malheur Express Transportation Services want us to expand the hours of the fixed route and more service stops, which will be one of first expansions.

There was nothing else to be discussed during this meeting. Lorinda moved to adjourn the meeting by consensus.