



**Thursday, August 13th, 2020**  
**Hood River County Transportation District**  
**Board of Directors Retreat**  
**224 Wasco Loop**  
**Hood River, OR 97031**  
**9:00am – 1:00pm**  
**Meeting minutes**

**Board Meeting Attendees**

**Board Members:** Darrell Roberts, Rob Brostoff, Leti Valle, Mark Reynolds, Lara Dunn, Bridget Bailey

**Public:** Heidi Venture

**Staff:** Patty Fink, Ty Graves, Amy Schlappi

At 9:11 Heidi Venture introduced herself and explained her role as the facilitator.

**Announcements**

Mark Reynolds announced that he will be resigning as the Board Chair and the Board as of today due to family health concerns. Currently, he needs to focus on his family. He supports the Executive Director (Patty Fink), CAT, and the direction that the agency is taking.

The group in general thanked Mark Reynolds for his service.

Lara Dunn announced that if there is support, she is willing to take on the Board Chair role. Bridget Bailey announced her support as she has seen Lara Dunn in action.

Rob Brostoff made a motion approve Lara Dunn as Board Chair, the motion was seconded by Bridget Bailey and unanimously approved by the Board.

Heidi Venture suggested that at the September 16th Board meeting the Board should appoint a Vice-Chair who could take on Board Chair responsibilities in case the Board Chair was unable to serve.

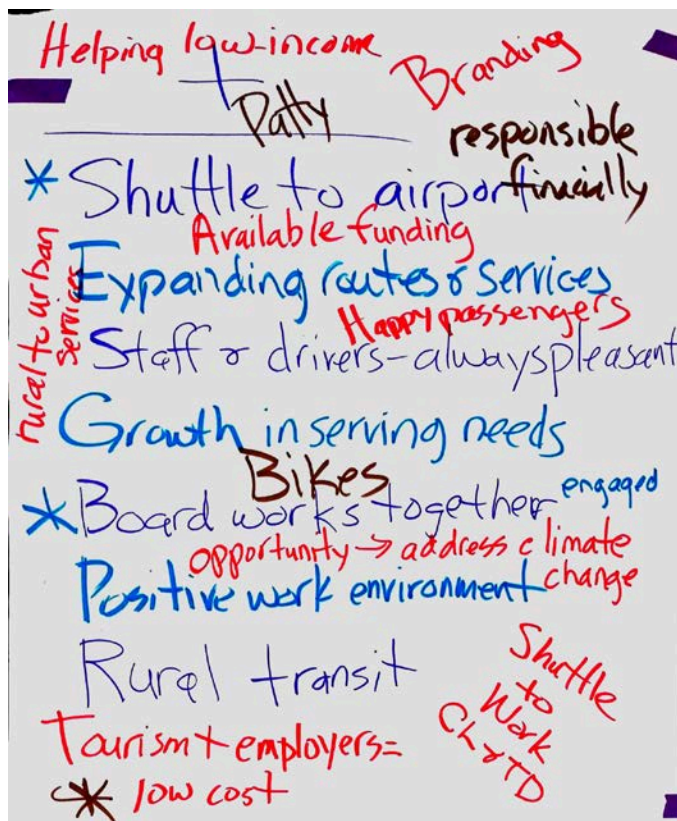
❖ At the September 16<sup>th</sup> Board meeting, Board should elect a Board Vice-Chair.

**Welcome & Icebreaker Activity**

Heidi Venture asked each person in attendance to write down their three favorite things about Columbia Area Transit at this time. She then asked each person to share their favorite things with the group. All items were written down on a large poster board so all Board Members could see. The following things were listed:

- Shuttle to airport
- Expanding routes and services
- Office staff & drivers – always pleasant
- Positive work environment

- Public transportation access to a rural community
- Board works together - engaged
- Branding
- Growth in serving needs
- Bikes
- Leverage larger employers so that locals who may not be able to afford transportation has access at low cost
- Rural to urban services
- Rural transit
- Tourism and employers = low cost
- Opportunity to address climate change
- Patty
- Responsible financially
- Helping Low-Income
- Available funding
- Happy passengers
- Shuttle to work CL & TD



Heidi Venture discussed where to find the bathrooms, general rules regarding COVID-19, and what health precautions were taken when setting up the meeting space.

The agenda for the retreat was reviewed.

### Board Member Introductions

Each Board Member was asked to share why they are on the Hood River County Transportation District Board and how their life experiences led them to value transit.

- Lara Dunn used transit daily when living in The Netherlands and later in Portland. These experiences showed her the value of safe, reliable, efficient, and accessible public transit system

and bicycle infrastructure to individuals and communities. She chose to run for CAT because of the 2016 presidential election, as she felt it was important to serve on public boards to take part in democracy. She firmly believes that public transit enhances a community when it works well.

- Rob Brostoff has lived in Seattle and Portland where public transit options are prevalent. After retiring in Cascade Locks, he became bored and decided to get involved in his community through public boards. He feels public transportation is important and is an advocate for services for Cascade Locks residents.
- Leti Valle has been on the Board for the past 5 years since a Community Health Assessment highlighted transportation as the biggest need in the Region. She is very involved within the Latina community and has a passion for using her voice to speak for others who cannot.
- Bridget Bailey grew up in The Dalles on a cherry farm. She has lived in several places where there are many public transit options (Cambridge, Portland, Japan) and loved being able to take trains and buses to work. She is very excited about the different transportation options which CAT is providing and looking forward to helping staff with contracts.
- Darrell Roberts lived on San Juan Island and moved to Parkdale to open a small blueberry farm when he retired. He has a strong financial and business background. He became involved with CAT through Mark Reynolds who recruited him to be part of the Budget Committee. He applied to be a Board Member to learn more about the service to better assist with the financials.

Leti Valle discussed the changes that have happened since Patty Fink became the Executive Director, by highlighting:

- Columbia Area Transit was a Dial-A-Ride service only. 200 customers a month Monday – Friday.
- The Board did not receive an overview of operations at each Board Meeting, but only a list of what was spent each month.
- There was a larger emphasis placed on Fixed-Route once two Board Members expressed interest. Several temporary Executive Directors were hired, but there was not significant progress until Patty Fink was recruited. She brought a large amount of Public Transit management experience to the team.
- Dial-A-ride Services were restricted to be more oriented around Fixed-Route services.
- There were originally 0 Spanish Speaking staff, there are now 5.
- Service was expanded to serve low-income individuals, Upper Valley and Cascade Locks residents.
- CAT took over the Columbia Gorge Express from ODOT in 2019.
- Free summer Pink Trolley service between the Hood River waterfront, Downtown, and The Heights during the weekends.
- Free winter Gorge to Mountain service between Hood River, Odell, Parkdale, and Mt. Hood Meadows.
- Rebranding of CAT and broader outreach campaign.

### **Board Training: Training Opportunities, Communication Channels, Board Norms, Board Structure**

Heidi Venture shared that SDAO is offering a basic Board of Directors and Management Staff Training series on August 18th, 19th, 25th. SDAO also has great additional resources and encouraged Board Members to look at the SDAO website.

There was a general discussion around existing Board subcommittees. Patty Fink stated that there are currently Board subcommittees and a couple of citizen action committees. The subcommittees that continue will depend on the future agency direction that the Board wants to pursue. Heidi Venture discussed committees, by highlighting:

- A written charter should exist for each subcommittee or citizen action committee, which leads the work of that group.
- It is common for Boards to have a Budget, Executive, and Board Development Committee.
  - A Budget Committee oversees and advises on the budget process.
  - An Executive Committee consists of the Board Chair, Board Vice-Chair, and Secretary. The Executive Committee is available to staff to discuss and advise on appropriate issues.
  - A Board Development Committee keeps a lookout for potential Board and Committee Members in case there is an opening.
- ❖ Staff will provide a roster of subcommittees and citizen action committees

Heidi Venture stated that as the Hood River County Board of Directors it is their responsibility to keep an eye on the money, hiring and supervision of the Executive Director, and to set policy and future initiatives.

Typically, the Board of Directors only communicates with the Executive Director. There was a large amount of discussion regarding how Board Members have interacted with Staff on other Boards they serve and what is usually deemed appropriate. It was generally agreed upon that Board Members should contact the Executive Director with any projects or concerns. Amy Schlappi is considered the Executive Secretary and can be contacted with any Board Meeting Questions. Amy Schlappi and Ty Graves will not contact Board Members regarding projects unless it has been approved by the Executive Director.

- ❖ This topic will continue to be discussed for clarification as needed.

### **Board Training: Financial Statements and Budget**

Patty Fink provided an overview of how to review the monthly financial statements and the budget, by highlighting:

- Different state, federal, and local funding sources that Hood River County Transportation District receives money from and what services they are used for. Discussed what local match means for the grants that have been awarded to CAT.
- Types of accounts CAT has, what they are used for and roughly how much is in each account.
- Executive Director can move money between the Columbia Bank operating and savings account without Board approval.
- Staff must plan a year in advance when applying for grants.

- Financial Audits are important as they will tell the Board of Directors what staff is or is not doing appropriately.
- Each month Board Members will receive a Financial Report.
- The Board made the decision to keep an external bookkeeper to continue to do the accounting for CAT.

### **Equity and Transit**

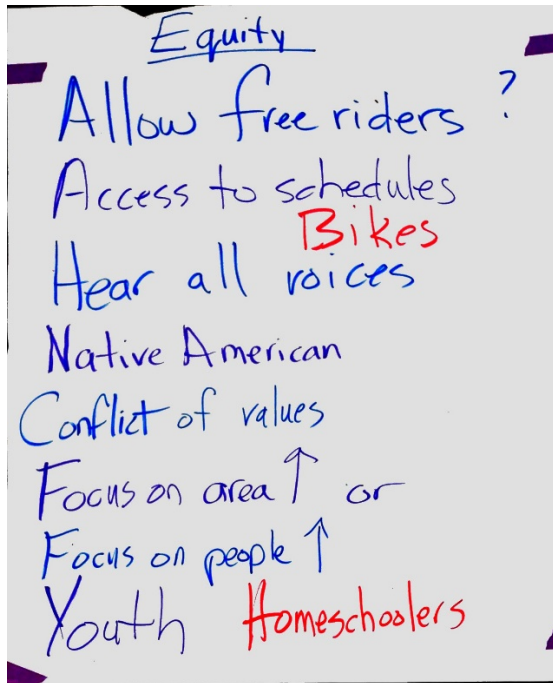
Leti Valle discussed that it is important to recognize that our society was built on systemic racism and we live in an area where people of color have been discriminated against for many years. To build ridership within these demographics, there will be fear of discrimination that needs to be overcome. She urged the group to think about Essential Workers and how we can help serve them while understanding that there are stigmas against people who use public transportation and do our best to help overcome those stigmas.

There was general agreement that equity issues are important on many different levels, which should be considered when making decisions and through operational policies. The group came up with several high-level goals to ensure equity in transit:

- Increased outreach to Native American Communities within Hood River County to identify transportation needs.
- Ensure adequate digital communication about route and schedule at each bus stop. Reduce reliance on mobile devices for riders to get most of the route information.
- Larger emphasis on selling GORge Passes at different locations. Make it easier to get GORge Passes.
- Add a Native American voice to the Board.
- Offer incentives to make it easier for various demographics to be Board Members to allow for diversity.
- Ensure bicyclists can easily access transit.
- Enact best practices for bringing unheard people to the Board and Committees.
- Engage Hood River County youth and provide needed transportation options.
- Create a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan.

There was general discussion regarding potential conflict in values depending if we want to concentrate on growing ridership, low-income individuals, or other groups that need increased access to transportation. Patty Fink stated that this one of the biggest debates within the public transportation community.

Heidi Venture asked the group as to what new committees the Board Members would like to have. There was interest in Board Development and Diversity Committees.



#### Values, Mission, and Vision Review

Heidi Venture referred to the Values, Mission, and Vision handout when describing what had been identified in the past as the Values, Mission, and Vision for the Hood River County Transportation District. They were also written on a large poster so that all participants could see what had been previously stated. She felt there was opportunity to make these statements more specific. The Board has the option to expand role regionally or focus more locally (tourists versus locals).

## Our Values

- Safety
- Customer Service
- Sustainability
- Integrity
- Community Driven
- Collaboration
- Teamwork

## Mission

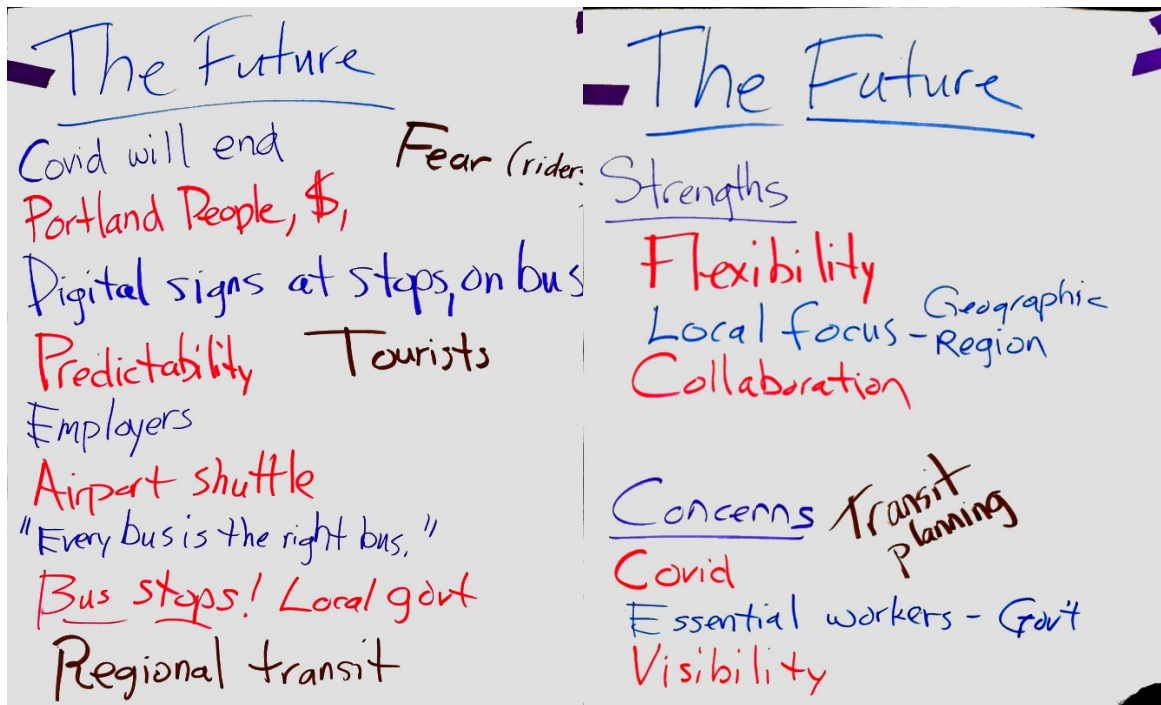
We provide  
safe, reliable, accessible  
and efficient  
public transportation  
services  
in Hood River County

## Vision

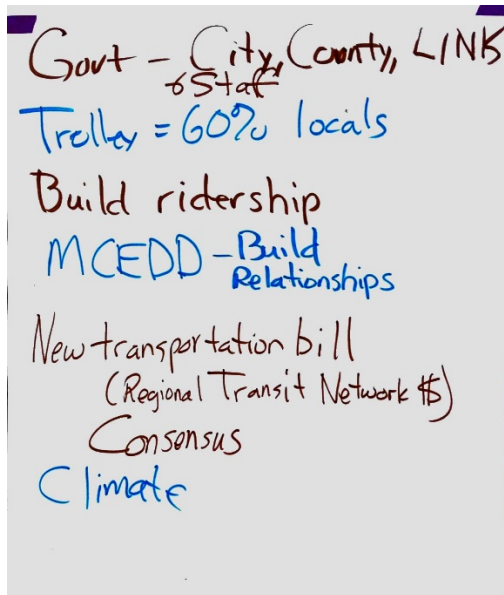
To connect  
the people and communities  
of Hood River County  
with an accessible and  
more sustainable  
future.

The group discussed what the focus of the Agency should be, by highlighting:

- What is the definition of "local"? Does "local" mean Hood River County or include all Gorge Communities?
- Difference between COVID-19 related issues and long-term thinking. COVID-19 will not always be an issue and it is important to look to the future.
- Utilize technology to better communicate services to riders (digital communication at stops, real-time information, etc.).
- Easy connections to other services. Make sure users know how to transfer to other services services.
- Focus on essential workers.
- Create easy connections for bikes.
- Tourists who travel to the region via the Columbia Gorge Express allows CAT to provide other opportunities (more transit services, money spent at local businesses, etc) for locals and helps with congestion issues within Downtown Hood River. Local ridership increased once CAT started providing frequent regional service. There is a large crossover between what transit services are needed for locals and tourists.
- Staff should be at the table when regional transit is discussed and part of regional public transit boards.
- Visible bus stops and shelters around Hood River by Staff working with the City Staff.
- Building relationships with MCEDD Board Members and Hood River City Council.
- Fluid transit connections for Wasco County and Hood River County residents.
- Supporting the Regional Transit Network Transportation bill that Earl Blumenauer's office is working on.
- Improving environmental issues within the Gorge.

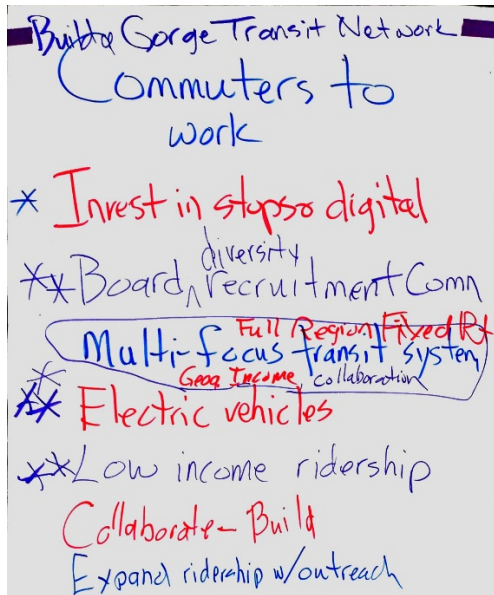






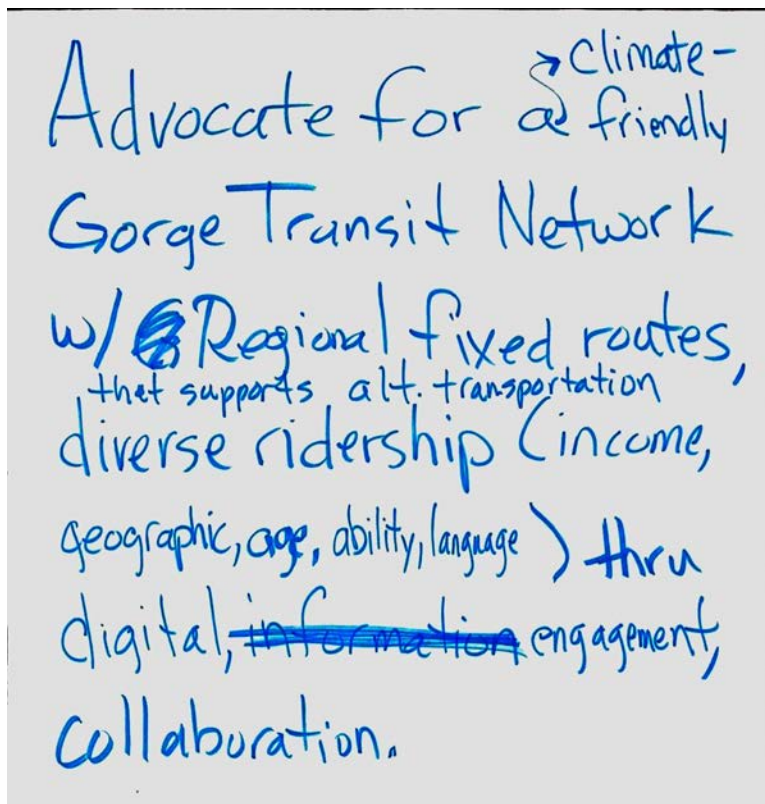
Heidi Venture asked each Board Member to list their aspirational goals for the next 2-3 years. These were discussed and written on a large poster.

- Commuters to work
- Invest in bus stops and digital communication
- Board recruitment committee – Add diversity
- Multi-focused transit system
- Expansion of electric vehicles within fleet
- Increase Low-income ridership
- Collaboration between agencies
- Outreach and education to expand services and connecting services. (expand ridership with outreach)
- Build a Gorge Transit Network



These were combined and a draft mission statement was created:

Advocate for a climate friendly Gorge Transit Network with Regional Fixed-Routes that supports alternative transportation, diverse ridership (income, geographic, age, ability, language) through digital engagement and collaboration.



Heidi Venture stated that it would take several meetings to fully flesh out the values, vision, and mission. She would love to be a part of the process as deemed appropriate by the Board.

#### **Housekeeping Items**

Patty Fink discussed the Blue-Sky Grant for solar panels at the CAT facility. To move forward staff would need Board approval as it is not in the budget. The solar panels will be 100% funded by Pacific Power. No local match will be needed except for unforeseen costs. This would offset our electrical costs. Leti Valle made a motion to move forward with the Blue Skies grant, this was seconded by Lara Dunn and unanimously approved by the Board.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:18pm.