



Wednesday, May 5th, 2021

**Hood River County Transportation District
1st Meeting of the Budget Committee
224 Wasco Loop, Board Conference Room
Hood River, OR 97031
4:00pm – 5:30pm**

Meeting Minutes

Budget Committee Meeting Attendees:

Committee Members: Joella Dethman, Elizabeth Garber, Greg Pack, Jeremy Hull, Darrell Roberts

Staff: Patty Fink, John Andoh, Ty Graves, Amy Schlappi

Patty called the meeting to order at 4:01pm. Committee members and staff introduced themselves. This will be Joella's and Elizabeth's last year serving on the Budget Committee.

Election of Budget Committee Chair

Joella made a motion for Jeremy to be Budget Committee Chair, the motion was seconded by Greg and unanimously approved by the Budget Committee.

Reading of Budget Message FY 2021-22 by Executive Director

Patty read the Budget Message for FY 2021-22. The Budget Message covered the purpose of the budget, the accomplishments of the past fiscal year, the impact of COVID-19 on CAT and other transit providers in Oregon, Board goals for the upcoming fiscal year, and an overview of the FY2021-2022 proposed budget. Based on community feedback staff changed the format of the proposed budget to highlight and call out specific new revenues or expenditures on the operating, administrative, and capital line items.

Initial Review of Budget FY 2021-22

Patty reviewed the FY2021-2022 proposed budget and discussed the revenues and expenditures for operating, administrative, and capital line items. Major additions to the budget that were included this this year were:

- Service hour additions enhancing service in Cascade Locks, Upper Valley, and the City of Hood River evening & weekend service. Additional service in Cascade Locks was planned for the current fiscal year but implementation was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff has been working with the Native American Community to identify and provide appropriate service to in lieu sites within Hood River County.
- Addition of yearlong Assistant Executive Director position, as part of the District's Executive Director Transition Plan.



- The implementation of updating the Transit Master Plan and the resources needed to conduct the appropriate outreach and land use pieces.
- Capital projects that were identified by the community as part of the Hood River County Coordinated Transportation Plan Update 2020 and included in the FY 22-24STIF Plan. Vehicles were expected to be purchased during the current fiscal year, but they will not be delivered until the next fiscal year. Digital signs will be purchased to provide real time bus information at bus stops. Staff will be working with the city to create ADA improvements in appropriate areas to make it easier for people with mobility devices to get to bus stops.
- Gorge-to-Portland Dial-A-Ride Medical Services van that was funded by CARES Act. This will operate a couple of days a week.

Joella asked how the current ridership demographics compares with county demographics. Staff does not track that level of ridership detail, but there has been an increase of Spanish speaking individuals who have been calling the office and an increase of student ridership. Commuter ridership is still not at pre-covid levels but is increasing. Jeremy asked if there is any anecdotal evidence that service industry workers are commuting from Portland on the bus. Staff is working with the City of Hood River to provide downtown workers with bus passes and Mid-Columbia Housing Authority to help provide transportation options to residents. Amy stated that pre-covid businesses like Pfriend and Thunder Island Brewing Company had employee's commuting but unaware if that is still the case. Staff is very excited about the 4-agency GOrge pass that will be starting July 1st and allows individuals to use the pass on CAT, Mt. Adam's Transportation, The Link, and Skamania County Transportation fixed route services. This should make it easier for workers to commute to the different communities via public transit.

Patty stated that the largest increase in revenue over last year are due to direct service and administrative personnel, and fuel. Additional drivers were added to operate the additional service hours. There was discussion regarding the amount of administrative personnel and if that was an industry standard. The administrative personnel budget is higher than previous years due to the Executive Director Transition Plan and the Transit Master Plan Update. The Transit Master Plan will be done mostly in house by staff except for some pieces where a consultant is required. After Patty has retired the amount of administrative staff will be reduced. Transit Master Plans are typically done by consultants, but because both Patty and John have transit master planning experience it will be managed by staff. Joella asked why there were discrepancies under the other administrative expenses line item for FY20 compared with what was provided to the Budget Committee last year. Staff will need to investigate this to understand if an error was made on the LB-20. Budget Committee members asked for more clarity as to what was rolled into the different line items.



There was a large amount of discussion regarding the beginning fund balance, end of year balance, and what the appropriate amount of reserve funds is for a public agency. Patty will work with the accountant to provide more clarity to the Budget Committee as to how much money is being carried over, what the bottom line will be, how much is designated for a specific purpose, and how much is cash carry over that will be undesignated at the end of the FY22. Joella suggested that the Board review the current reserve funds policy and decide if the current amount of reserve funds is the appropriate amount for a public agency. She is concerned having that much cushion when there are low-income individuals who need public transit services. John and Patty discussed the difficulties on spending reserve funds on service since the funding is not ongoing. Typically, agencies will use funds like this for capital expenses or projects that are for a defined amount of time and expense. As a district it is important to reserve funds to cover unexpected operational costs.

Staff will send Budget Committee Members the following information before the next meeting:

- ❖ A budget with line items unrolled.
- ❖ Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) Plan which details how STIF Formula rollover funds will be spent.
- ❖ Updated LB-20 based on investigation into issues that were raised.

There was discussion regarding if the scheduled 2nd Budget Committee Meeting was needed for additional discussion. Patty will follow up via email with the Budget Committee about if we still need to have the 2nd Budget Committee Meeting. The 3rd Budget Committee Meeting where Public Comment will be heard will be June 2, 2021.

At 5:26PM Greg made a motion to adjourn the meeting, the motion was seconded by Joella and unanimously approved the by the committee.