



## Regular Board Meeting Minutes September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025

of the  
LEWIS PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION BENEFIT AREA  
(LPTBA dba LEWIS COUNTY TRANSIT)

*Held at the Port of Chehalis Board Room located at 321 Maurin Rd. in Chehalis.*

Chair Mark Westley called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.

Directors Present: Mark Westley, City of Centralia  
Tony Ketchum, City of Chehalis  
Debbie Lytle, Lewis County Transit, on behalf of the represented staff

Staff Present: Joseph Clark, Executive Director (remotely)  
Rebecca Towner, Director of Finance and Human Relations  
Tim Palmateer, Fleet Manager (remotely)  
Makenzie Wilson, HR Manager  
Allen Unzelman, Twin Transit Attorney (remotely)  
Megan Wirtz CWCOG (remotely)

### **A. Approval of the Meeting Agenda as Presented**

### **B. Discussion Only Items**

- **Call to the Public – Public discussion on any item not listed on the agenda.**
  - a. Carla Ostebury: Ms. Ostebury expressed concern regarding recent route changes that affect the bus stop near her location. She stated that while the bus stop itself remains the same, the route adjustment has created issues with pickup locations. She also raised concerns about the removal of service to the Scammon Creek/Colonel area, noting that the route no longer travels down Cooks Hill. Ms. Ostebury reported that residents from nearby apartments are now walking along sidewalks that are overgrown with blackberries, creating accessibility and ADA compliance issues. She requested that the bus stop sign be relocated in front of the apartment complex and that this be addressed in a timely manner.

- **Board Member Reports**

- **Staff Reports – Discussion**

- a. Construction Update

- i. POC H2 Project- Mr. Clark explained the project is progressing well. Conduit and water lines are being installed, and hydrogen high-pressure lines are being placed overhead. Concrete pads are scheduled to be poured at the end of next week, and once cured, equipment installation will begin. The compression unit will require a crane for placement. Staff are coordinating with the PUD to extend electrical service to the site and are still negotiating electric rate contracts. Utility installation for water and other systems is underway, and all components meet design specifications. Some equipment, including the storage tanks, will arrive later than planned, which may cause minor delays but will not impact the goal of getting hydrogen buses on the road. Efforts are also underway to secure a hydrogen tube trailer. A fire-dampening system will need to be installed above the storage tanks. This requirement is new and has not been previously applied to similar projects. The team is working with the Fire Chief and the City to develop a compliant solution. This additional step is not expected to delay construction. Mr. Ketchum asked if the concrete pads could be poured if it is raining. Mr. Clark responded Yes. The construction team has a tent system that allows them to continue work during rain.

- ii. Exit 77- Mr. Clark explained that it is unlikely the project will move forward within the current weather window. Once permits are received, an RFP will be issued, and the anticipated start date will be between mid-February and mid-March. Measures will be taken to stabilize the area and prevent mud during construction. The contract is expected to run 45 to 60 days, with completion targeted for June 1. Mr. Ketchum asked how long the permitting process has taken. Mr. Clark responded by stating that we began the process in May 2025 and held preliminary meetings with the City and contractors at that time.

- iii. Mineral- Miss. Towner reported that bids for the E Transit Station project were opened today. Barcott Construction was awarded the bid, and contract terms are currently being negotiated. The finalized agreement will be presented to the Board next month for approval. Given some concerns with fleet capacity, the team is reconsidering expanding service to Mineral until next spring. Mr. Nylander explained that the team is still assessing capacity to adequately service the Mineral route.

- b. Fleet

- i. Hydrogen Bus Update- Mr. Palmateer explained that the first bus has been completed and is currently in the commissioning stage. The remaining two buses are expected to be completed later this week. Mr. Palmateer will conduct an on-site post-build inspection next week, Monday through Friday,

to review all components, including the new expanded fuel tank. A delivery date will be scheduled following the site visit. Mr. Westley asked if the new buses be delivered by trailer or driven to our shop. Mr. Palmateer explained that they will be trailered and delivered from Alabama.

- ii. 4 New Cutaways- Mr. Palmateer explained that the new cutaway buses have arrived at the distributor's property and are ready for installation of additional equipment, including bike racks and cameras. Once these installations are complete, the buses will be prepared for delivery.

c. Operations

- i. Operational Data Analysis-On behalf of Mr. Zurfluh, Miss Towner provided a summary of the ridership report. Total boardings for August were **21,096**, which is consistent with July's total of **21,470**. Compared to August 2024, ridership increased by **18.1%** (up from 17,858 boardings). Overall ridership continues to trend upward compared to previous years, with only one month showing a slight dip.

- 1. **Route-Specific Highlights:**

- Green Route:** Recorded **2,137 boardings** in August, an **80% increase** from 1,185 last year.

- Service frequency on the Green Route has increased with the addition of a "Green A" and "Green B" route operating Monday through Friday, along with continued weekend service.

- ii. Fall Route Change Update- Miss Towner explained the Brown East Route, introduced during the most recent route change, has completed two full months of service. Ridership has shown steady growth, increasing from **60 riders in the first month** to **80 riders in August**. This gradual increase aligns with expectations for new pilot routes. Staff will continue to monitor ridership trends, particularly through the winter months, to assess seasonal differences that may influence service hours or scheduling.

- 1. **Discussion:**

- 1. Mr. Nylander stated that the team plans to analyze ridership data to determine whether adjustments are needed based on seasonal patterns.
    - 2. It was noted that having real operational data allows for more accurate evaluation and planning.
    - 3. As summarized by staff: *"Analyze, evaluate, and adjust."*

- iii. **Service Performance and Upcoming Changes:**

- 1. The recent fall route changes have largely achieved their goal of improving on-time performance. Staff continue to assess routes for additional optimization opportunities, including possible stop relocations such as those mentioned during the public comment period.
  - 2. For the **March 2026 service changes**, route modifications may be required to support the **40-foot hydrogen buses** on all in-town routes. The goal is to have these buses operating on the four in-

town routes—potentially including the Green and Purple routes—pending further testing and operational review.

d. HR Update

- i. Recruiting Update-Mrs. Wilson explained that the recruitment process for the Assistant Operations Manager position is ongoing, with final interviews scheduled for Friday. A decision is expected next week to allow for onboarding and training of the selected candidate.
  1. **Candidate Pool:** Six internal candidates applied, demonstrating strong interest in career growth and leadership development within the organization.
  2. **Impact:** Since this is an internal promotion, filling this role will create additional opportunities and adjustments within other positions.
  3. **Facilities Technician Hire:** Michael Jacques will join as the new Facilities Technician on October 13, replacing the outgoing technician.
  4. **Role Overview:** Michael brings mechanical and maintenance skills to assist the Facilities Manager and support Mr. Palmateer's team with tasks such as oil changes, tire rotation, and light maintenance. This will help balance workload and provide additional support for the facilities team.

e. Finance

- i. Updated Revenue/Cash Flow Presentation- Miss. Towner explained that a new sales tax report was included in this month's packet, comparing collections to the current budget and last calendar year. Key points include:
  1. **Overall Performance:** Sales tax collections are trending above budget, currently **1.2% over** projections.
  2. **Category Highlights:** Some service-related categories, such as the Morton office lease and the GTL lease, are contributing to over-budget expenditures.
  3. **Capital Activity:** Activity in capital-related areas remains low but is beginning to increase for the POC hydrogen fueling station.
  4. **Auditor Billing:** Final billing from auditors has been received.
  5. The report indicates positive trends in revenue collection while highlighting areas to monitor closely for any potential variances.
- ii. Financing Update- Miss. Towner explained that the contract has been under review by legal for the past two weeks, with Foster Garvey handling the process. Legal has been thoroughly reviewing all terms and conditions.
  1. **Next Steps:** A special board meeting will be scheduled to address the contract.
  2. **Timing:** The meeting is tentatively planned for around **October 13th**, as noted by Miss Towner.

- iii. General Update- The new Executive Director Mr. Nylander provided an overview of activities and observations during their first weeks on the job:
1. **Onboarding and Facility Review:** Week three is underway, including time spent riding routes and touring the facility to understand operations and fleet plans, with a focus on maximizing the use of the four new cutaway buses.
  2. **Team Integration:** The ED is getting to know coworkers, aligning with leadership on expectations, and reviewing the budget to ensure organizational priorities are met.
  3. **Project Updates:** Updates on ongoing construction projects were provided, including the upcoming online activation of Douglas PUD's electrolyzer, with planned attendance at the ribbon-cutting event.
  4. **Fleet Observations:** It became evident that the fleet is aging, with some vehicles failing and gaps in service due to the timing of new vehicle deliveries and fueling challenges. Addressing these issues is a primary focus for the final quarter.
  5. **Engagement with Staff:** The ED has spoken with operators during route rides to gather insights into operational improvements and opportunities to enhance service.
  6. **Leadership Assessment:** The executive team is strong, and there are no significant gaps identified between policies and legal requirements.
  7. Mr. Westley asked if there was an "aha" moment during onboarding. Mr. Nylander explained that the condition of the fleet and the operational gaps it creates was the most notable realization, guiding immediate priorities for him.

### C. Review of Claims

- a. Review financial warrants #32884-32929 including Capital and Operating expenditures for August 1-31, 2025.

i. Capital Warrants	\$	59,054.10
ii. Operating Warrants	\$	264,324.76
iii. Operating ACH	\$	129,180.24
iv. <u>Payroll ACH</u>	\$	<u>210,825.72</u>
Total	\$	663,384.82

#### D. Action Items

1. Approval of Board Minutes

- a. Adoption of minutes from August 26, 2025, Regular Board Meeting.
- b. Adoption of minutes from September 11, 2025, Special Board Meeting.
- c. Adoption of minutes from September 15, 2025, Special Board Meeting.

**Secretary Tony Ketchum moved, Board Chair Mark Westley seconded, motion passed 2-0**

2. Approval of the Employment Agreement between Lewis County Transit and the Technical Advisor to the Board.

**Secretary Tony Ketchum moved, Board Chair Mark Westley seconded, motion passed 2-0**

#### Adjournment

The Board recessed the regular meeting at 4:12 p.m. No action to follow.

*The next regular meeting is on October 28<sup>th</sup> 2025 at 3:30 p.m.*

APPROVAL

LEWIS PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION  
BENEFIT AREA AUTHORITY

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Mark Westley, Chairperson

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Scott Brummer, Vice Chairperson

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Tony Ketchum, Secretary

Respectfully prepared by:

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Makenzie Wilson