



**Regular Board Meeting Minutes**  
**October 29<sup>th</sup>, 2024**  
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.*

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Chair Mark Westley called the meeting to order at 3:33 p.m.

Directors Present: Mark Westley, City of Centralia  
Scott Brummer, Lewis County  
Tony Ketchum, City of Chehalis  
Debbie Lytle, Lewis County Transit, on behalf of the represented operator staff  
Kurt Eckerson, Lewis County Transit, on behalf of the represented maintenance staff

Staff Present: Joseph Clark, Executive Director  
Rebecca Towner, Director of Finance and Human Relations  
Tim Palmateer, Fleet Manager  
Maleah Kuzminsky, Community Services Supervisor  
Makenzie Wilson, HR Manager  
Sonya Byrd, Operations Supervisor  
Allen Unzelman, Lewis County Transit Attorney  
Megan Writz CWCOG

**A. Discussion Only Items**

- Call to the Public – *Public discussion on any item not listed on the agenda.*
- Board Member Reports
- Staff Reports – Discussion

**a. Construction Update**

- i. **Exit #77 Property Negotiations**  
Mr. Clark provided an update on the property negotiations, noting that the property owners are not inclined to demolish the current building. Discussions will continue, with no immediate changes. Lewis County Transit does not require this section of property to complete Phases One and Two.
- ii. **Exit #88 – Meeting with Chehalis Tribe, November 20**  
Mr. Clark informed the board that he and Maleah Kuzminsky will meet with representatives from the Chehalis Tribe on November 20. The purpose of the meeting is to explore potential collaboration and assistance. Both tribes were involved with the site for the Fortescue project.
- iii. **POC H2 Facility Permitting/General Contracting**  
A meeting with JSA is scheduled for tomorrow to discuss the permitting and

completion timeline for the hydrogen facility, with a target completion date of March 2025.

iv. **LCT Fleet and Operations Center Renderings**

Mr. Clark explained how discussions are underway regarding the potential relocation of our fleet to the Port of Chehalis. The current shop requires significant updates to accommodate the changes needed for hydrogen fuel. Plans include constructing a new shop and facility for both drivers and administrative staff.

1. **Bonding Requirement**

Mr. Westley inquired whether bonding would be necessary for the new fleet operations facility. Mr. Clark clarified that a grant is being pursued to cover the full cost, with a 5% match required.

v. **16th & Market Bus Stop**

Mr. Clark stated that there is a minor issue with the old highway underneath the pavement at this location. There is a solution but Lewis County Transit awaiting the change order before proceeding with construction.

**b. External Transit Engagement**

i. **Tri-Met Transit**

Mr. Clark reported on his recent visit to Portland, where Tri-Met confirmed its commitment to purchasing 200 hydrogen buses.

1. Mr. Westley asked about the fueling sources for these buses. Mr. Clark responded that some of the fueling infrastructure would be Lewis County Transit, but Tri-Met will not be producing its own fuel. They will be purchasing hydrogen.
2. Mr. Palmateer shared his experience visiting Ballard in Bend, OR, where hydrogen fuel cells are integrated into the buses. He noted that Ballard is currently capable of producing 200 fuel cells annually, with plans to increase production to 500 over the next two years.

ii. **RHA Transit Sub-Committee**

Mr. Clark and Maleah Kuzminsky have been actively working with the Renewable Hydrogen Alliance (RHA). RHA is working on creating a Transit Sub-Committee which will include the following initiative.

1. **H2 Transit Network**

It is a monthly webinar that talks about the transition to hydrogen. The current staff doesn't have the bandwidth to continue the webinar, so Lewis County Transit, will be handing it off to RHA. Further discussions are ongoing regarding the development of the hydrogen transit network.

iii. **Pacific NW Hydrogen Hub**

A board meeting for the Pacific Northwest Hydrogen Hub is scheduled for November 19. Project meeting with the office of clean energy office to talk about how the group is going to be moving forward.

### c. Operations Update

#### i. **Route Change Implementation & Ridership**

Mrs. Byrd provided an update on the recent route changes. The addition of stops on the Green Line has led to an 11% increase in ridership. One of the stops was relocated for safety reasons. The Brown Line's extension to Packwood has not seen the desired growth, with service currently limited to two trips per day. To boost ridership, additional services are being considered. The Orange Line, however, is experiencing significant growth, driven by college students and commuters.

#### ii. **Stop Improvements on Highway 12**

Mr. Clark discussed safety concerns regarding certain stops on the Highway 12 route, particularly during winter months when visibility may be poor due to fog. Mr. Palmateer suggested the installation of "transit solar" signs—solar-powered lights equipped with buttons that passengers can activate to alert drivers of their presence at the stop.

#### iii. **Travel Training**

Mrs. Byrd shared that the Operations team has taken over responsibility for travel training, as they have direct interaction with passengers. The program has been effective, with schools engaging students and encouraging them to use public transit. For example, Chehalis School recently took a group of students on a bus trip to downtown Chehalis and back to school, utilizing the regular bus route rather than arranging a special trip.

### d. Fleet Update

#### i. **Cutaway Bus Update**

Mr. Palmateer stated the 2024 cutaway bus has been received and is currently being outfitted with necessary signage, radio equipment, and other features. It is expected to be operational and on the road by early next week, supporting our corridor routes.

#### ii. **Toyota Mirai Delivery**

Mr. Palmateer explained that the three additional Toyota Mirai vehicles were delivered this month to further expand our fleet.

#### iii. **Oklahoma Site Visit Recap**

Mr. Palmateer shared insights from the recent Oklahoma site visit, highlighting an interesting product for compressing that can be connected to a storage tank or tube trailer. The team is awaiting an update on the estimated delivery date, which is expected early next month, though they are still waiting for a necessary nozzle.

#### iv. **Bus Washing Tool Commissioning**

Mr. Palmateer shared that a new, battery-powered, stand-driven bus washer has been commissioned. This machine can clean 35-foot buses in 5 to 10 minutes and is capable of washing full-route vehicles in about an hour. The washer was commissioned last week and is currently undergoing testing.

#### v. **Bus 229 – Engine and Transmission Replacement**

Mr. Palmateer explained the engine in our 2015 cutaway bus, Bus 229, has experienced a failure due to rapid oil loss. To extend the vehicle's service life,

both the engine and transmission are being replaced. Three quotes have been obtained for the repair work.

**e. Communications Update**

**i. Community Events**

**1. Trick or Treat Transit**

Mrs. Kuzminsky explained that this event will take place this Thursday from 3:00 to 5:30 PM, at the same location as last year, across from the fairgrounds. Thirteen administrative staff members will be involved. Two themed shuttles will be operating: a Harry Potter shuttle and a Superhero shuttle.

**2. H2 Con-Fab at Intercity – November 12th, 9:30 AM – 11:30 AM**

Mrs. Kuzminsky explained that the H2 Con-Fab event aims to generate awareness about the regional energy supply market. This critical conversation will focus on the next steps needed to support this growing market. Mr. Clark shared that PSE's Puget Sound Energy requested this event, which initially started as a staff demonstration and later expanded to include Intercity.

**ii. Grants**

**1. Governor's Budget**

Updates on the Governor's Budget were discussed.

**2. Consolidated Applications**

Two applications have been submitted for the operating TOWN route. Lewis County Transit has identified a clear need for service in these communities. The request also includes funding for four cutaway buses and a boom lift for the shop. And then another application for funding gaps that exists for the electrolyzer, compression equipment, dispensing equipment, etc. Mr. Clark explained that this ask is mainly for expansion.

**3. Bus and Bus Facilities**

**Lewis County Transit Operations & Fleet Center at Port of Chehalis**

Mrs. Kuzminsky explained that a grant request for the development of the LCT Operations & Fleet Center at the Port of Chehalis has been submitted.

**Mineral e-Transit Station**

Mrs. Kuzminsky stated this facility will provide bus services along with charging stations, though it will not be a large-scale development. Mr. Clark shared that the Economic Alliance approached Lewis County Transit regarding charging systems, and Miss. Towner has identified funding sources for this project.

**Bus Pullouts**

Mrs. Kuzminsky explained the focus is on improving facilities in East County as ridership continues to grow. Specific sites for bus pullouts include:

- a. Harrison and Reynolds– Mr. Clark is working with Mark Burch to ensure these stops fall within the current right-of-way, minimizing the need for relocation.

- b. City Hall
- c. Exit 88
- d. Espresso Stand, Randle
- e. Arbor Health, Randle
- f. Tatoosh Market, Packwood
- g. Stanley Store
- h. Bus Stop Lighting & Signals

**f. HR Update**

i. Mrs. Wilson explained how there had been some recent movement in the staff area. Marty Hendrickson, who previously worked as an operator on the operations team, has transitioned into the role of demand response specialist. In this new position, Marty Hendrickson will be collaborating with Sonya Byrd and Joe Zurfluh. With his extensive experience, Marty Hendrickson has already been a tremendous asset, and the team is excited to see how he contributes in this new capacity. Lewis County Transit hired Michelle Wheeler as a new operator to fill Marty Hendrickson's previous position. Michelle Wheeler started this Monday and brings valuable experience from her time with River Cities Transit and her background driving school buses.

**ii. Finance, HR & Events Specialist**

Mrs. Wilson stated Timi Johnson's role has undergone some adjustments recently. Her job title now reflects a combination of Finance, HR, and Event Specialist duties, as HR and the Admin team redefined her responsibilities to better align with the team's needs. In this updated role, Timi Johnson is primarily focusing on event coordination, taking on many of the responsibilities previously handled by an event specialist. Initially, the travel trainer and events specialist's role was combined, but it wasn't the best fit for the team. As a result, the Admin team reassigned travel training back to the Operations team, where it has been more effective. Timi Johnson has since been providing support to Maleah in her new role, further strengthening our team.

1. Mr. Westley asked if this change was voluntary, and Mr. Clark explained that after reviewing her job description, her job duties didn't fill the full-time hours, so her position was restructured.

**iii. Performance Evaluations**

Mrs. Wilson explained that Performance evaluations are approaching, and the team has a series of meetings scheduled to begin next week. It's an exciting time, especially as this marks Mrs. Wilson's first year overseeing the process. She is looking forward to seeing how everything unfolds, and is confident it will be a productive experience for all LCT administrative staff.

g. **Finance Update**

i. **Updated Revenue/Cash Flow Presentation**

The budget remains consistent, with a 3% overage; however, this includes REVIT. Excluding this factor, the actual overage is between 1-2%. A few categories have exceeded expectations:

1. **Other Paid Absence:** This has increased due to higher PTO usage and additional PTO cash outs, particularly related to terminations.
2. **Increased Number of Assets:** The expansion of assets has led to higher insurance costs.

- ii. **Bus 229 Repair:** The repair for Bus 229 has increased the budget. Originally, funds were earmarked for AC repairs, but these funds were reallocated to cover the 229 repair costs.
- iii. **New Cutaway Bus:** The purchase of the new cutaway bus was fully covered by grant funding.

- iv. **Capital Budget Movement:** Payments for capital projects are being deferred to 2025, as we will begin working with the Treasurer's Office starting in 2025.

v. **Financing Update – Resolution 2024-04**

The resolution was reviewed by the Lewis County Treasurer's office and request for approval will be made in the Action Items portion of the meeting. This resolution will authorize Lewis County Transit to access LCIP funds for temporary financing of capital projects. This two-year agreement with the County permits deficit spending to cover the costs of large acquisitions, with reimbursements managed through incoming grants. Mr. Clark discussed implementing a safeguard plan to ensure positive fund balances at year-end, utilizing the LCIP loan as a contingency measure. This collaboration provides the necessary flexibility to manage funding gaps until federal or state grants reimburse the costs.

1. **Key Input from the Treasurer's Office:** Representatives from the Treasurer's Office confirmed that while accessing LCIP funds is not typical, it is a viable strategy for managing significant but reimbursable transit-related expenses.

vi. **Union Negotiations**

Union negotiations are nearing completion. The final redline version of the agreement will be reviewed shortly, and the document will be brought to the next board meeting for approval. Mr. Clark explained that during these negotiations, Lewis County Transit really wanted to focus on what could be done for the staff that wasn't just compensation.

**B. Consent Agenda**

- a. Request to approve financial warrants #32112-32146 including Capital and Operating expenditures for September 1-30, 2024.

i. Capital Warrants	\$	1,041,480.00
ii. Operating Warrants	\$	135,708.91
iii. Operating ACH	\$	134,893.65
iv. <u>Payroll ACH</u>	\$	<u>186,991.91</u>
Total	\$	1,499,074.47

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

**C. Action Items**

- 1. Approval of Board Minutes

- a. Adoption of minutes from September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2024 Regular Board Meeting.

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

- 2. Approval of Resolution 2024-04 authorizing financing of capital projects through the Lewis County Investment Pool and temporarily waiving minimum fund balance requirements.

- a. Mr. Westley asked- “Why have the two-year time frame?”
  - Mr. Clark explained that in two years the larger items will be completed, like the facility and electrolyzer.
  - Mr. Westley asked if this was a commonplace situation.
    - The Treasurer’s Office explained that it isn’t very common, but it does occur.

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

**D. New Business**

- 1. **Approve first reading of POL-314.**

- a. POL-314: Conditions for Change of an Operator Job Assignment
  - New policy as a result of Union negotiations; to be referenced in 2025-2027 Collective Bargaining Agreement.
  - Acknowledges Lewis County Transit’s right to assign Operators to different routes or job assignments based on the following criteria: OTP performance, policy/procedure violation, creation of an unsafe situation, and physical demands of the job.
  - Creation of new procedures for the analysis of OTP performance and the decision- making process and documentation of change in an operator job

assignment based on the above criteria.

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

**Adjournment**

The Board recessed the regular meeting at 4:45 p.m. No action to follow.

*The next regular meeting is on November 26<sup>th</sup>, 2024, 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