

**COLUMBIA COUNTY CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND
STATEWIDE TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT FUND COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES**

Meeting Date: April 21, 2026

Time: 4:00 P.M.

Place: Columbia County Transit Center, St Helens, OR

Present: Dennis Spitze, Denise Watson, Angela Rose, Nicolle Tasoulas

Absent: Pam Heimuller

Staff: Chris Wheatley, Transit Director; Heather Shaw, Admin Assistant

Guests: Aire Uusitalo (Virtual)

Call to Order (CCRTAC & STIFC): Vice Chair, Spitze, called the meeting to order at 4:00 P.M.

Approval of March Minutes: The Committee approved the March 17, 2026 meeting minutes unanimously.

Public Comments: The Committee paused for public comment, and none was given.

ODOT Compliance Review Report: Mr. Wheatley shared that he received the final compliance report and there were 5 findings. He mentioned that all the findings are simple and easy to fix. One includes ODOT wanting the County Commissioners to be more involved. Mr. Wheatley shared that there was mention of the Commissioners' meeting with department Directors to keep them updated. Mr. Wheatley shared that another finding is that the Finance department needs a new written policy. The other findings include changes to the Title IV and ADA policies to make sure that the two are separated. Mr. Wheatley shared that ODOT wants ride denials tracked. Tracking those will include when and why they were denied. Vice Chair Spitze asked what would cause a denial. Mr. Wheatley shared that a reason could include a full schedule. Member Watson stated that it is hard to have a review without a finding of some kind. Mr. Wheatley mentioned that the last audit had 10 findings. He shared that he would have a meeting with the Commissioners to get the Title IV and ADA policies changed. Mr. Wheatley noted that he has two months to have those changes put in place.

Rainier Days Event Participation: This year the Rainier Days event is July 10th -12th. Mr. Wheatley shared that he is going to have a resource fair on Friday, July 10th at the Rainier Transit Center. Mr. Wheatley shared that he talked to Jaime, the Director of Public Health, and she will attend the community event in Rainier. He shared that this is a great opportunity to connect with another county department. Mr. Wheatley shared that the next event is the NAMI walk on May 16th. Last year the event was at

McCormick Park. He shared with members that CC Rider has set up a walking Team for the event, and anyone can join to walk or donate.

Committee Roundtable: Member Watson asked about the grant that was discussed at the last meeting. Mr. Wheatley shared that the paperwork for those grants were due yesterday (4-20-26). Mr. Wheatley shared that he will soon apply for STIF and 5311 grants. He suggested that the committee should start thinking about what projects they would like to be considered. Mr. Wheatley describes how the STIF grant project voting works. Normal projects include Line 1, Dial-a-Ride (DAR), preventative maintenance, and contingency. Mr. Wheatley noted that some project additions include a flex route and more runs to Portland. Mr. Wheatley shared that those projects all depend on how much money he is given through the STIF grant. Vice Chair Spitze asked about the payroll tax increase. Mr. Wheatley shared that it will be voted on in May and shared that he doesn't think that it will pass. Members discuss what the payroll tax increase is and what it is used for/where it comes from.

Mr. Wheatley shared a document with members that focuses on reallocating the money from payroll tax that goes to other counties. Members discuss Line 1 and DAR, and some of the specifics of DAR. Member Tasoulas shared that DAR would have been a good option for a family member a few years ago. Mr. Wheatley discussed the possibility of connecting with Sunset Empire along Hwy 30.

Guest Uusitalo suggested that members add increasing the DAR service area to one of the future STIF projects. Member Rose asked what a flex route would be. Mr. Wheatley shared that it would be similar, if not the same as the previous flex route. Members discuss the possibility of a flex route downtown. Guest Uusitalo advocated for a few friends in Vernonia that would use the bus to go to Hillsboro and Portland if one was available. Guest Uusitalo asked about a bus stop sign at the stop in Downtown Portland. Mr. Wheatley shared that there has been a bus stop sign there in the past, but it has been taken down, stolen or destroyed. Guest Uusitalo shared that someone placed a bus stop sign downtown recently, but it has since been taken down.

Adjourn: Vice Chair Spitze adjourned the meeting at 4:30pm.