CITIZEN PARTICIPATION ORGANIZATION 3
General Membership Meeting
September 16, 2010

1. Citizen Participation Organization 3 (CPO-3) held its monthly general membership meeting at the Garden Home Recreation Center on Thursday September 16, 2010. BJ Cone, CPO-3 Secretary, facilitated in the absence of Chair Mike Lilly and called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM. For a list of attendees, please refer to the sign-in sheet.

2. Minutes of the June meeting were approved as written by unanimous voice vote.

3. TVF&R was not yet here so BJ Cone read the flyer about the upcoming open house for the new fire station on October 1st.

4. Charlie Conrad gave the CCI report. He explained what the CCI is for the benefit of those who may not know. August 17th was the last CCI meeting. They held a presentation on running a successful candidates forum. It should be informative and neutral allowing all candidates an equal opportunity to respond to questions and state their positions.

5. TVF&R crew arrived and Lt. Gately discussed the open house. It will be held from 10-1 on Saturday, October 2nd. There will be a ribbon cutting ceremony at 10:30. If anyone is unable to attend but would still like to tour the station, they are welcome to stop by at another time. They currently have 3 rigs: the regular fire engine, a medical unit, and a hazmat vehicle with a crew of 4. In January, they will be joined by a battalion chief (he directs activities during big incidents). The building is built to hold 30 people (10/day). With population growth the number of calls is expected to increase. They have a few fires but the majority of their calls are medical.

6. Tom Mills, Service Planner for Tri-Met, helps decide where buses go, how often, and when. Lately they have had to cut services way back. They try to do it to have the least impact. Please refer to the handout for statistics on bus lines (hours, frequency and ridership). WES ridership is up (~1400-1500/weekday right now) but still not as high as hoped.

7. Lift vehicles carry ~1 million people/year. Bus lines all go downtown.

8. The current service reduction is the 4th in 2 years, mostly as a result of the recession. They are primarily funded by payroll taxes so as people lose jobs etc. there is a reduction in revenue. Tax revenues have fallen by $58 million. They have also reduced the number of employees by 120.

9. They received $14 million in stimulus funds. A lot of that is to build so other funds are freed up for administration. They had cut administrative budgets as well. No matter what they do, $58 million is a big loss. They have tried to consolidate runs when feasible, especially midday when ridership is low. They try to preserve service during peak times. In some cases they have reduced the span of services though they try not to do this as they recognize that some people work late. If frequency is reduced, at least people know another bus is coming. The most recent reductions were September 5th. They hope to restore service when the economy improves. However, some lines had such low ridership that it doesn't make sense to ever restore them. They are hopeful that they will not need to have any more reductions.

10. The Accessible Transit Program provides service as required by the ADA for those who are unable to use the fixed route bus. They provide alternate service which picks up riders at the door. They do require 24 hr. advance scheduling and there is a ½ hr. window for arrival. The person must be within ¾ mile of a bus stop. Tri-Met exceeds the Federal guidelines (they go door-to-door even though regulations only require curb-to-curb.) They also provide service during normal bus hours, even if your route stops running earlier. If the lift vans are fully booked, they will send a taxi. The average cost of a lift ride is $28.71 vs. $2.50 for a bus ride.

11. Tri-Met is trying to be more aggressive in training people to be more independent and ride the fixed route buses or Max. They have a downtown Mobility Center. They used to be more lenient where
disabled riders were allowed to self-declare but people were abusing the system and it was not financially sustainable. The goal is to help people become more independent.

12. There is a ballot measure in November to renew the bond which has been in place to extend Max to Hillsboro since the 90’s. If it is renewed, they could use the money to buy new low floor buses which would allow the disabled to board more easily. They would also improve bus stops and buy more lift buses.

13. Ruth Robinson noted an error in the fact sheet re: end time for the 54 bus should be 12:03 AM not PM. She also asked if, with reference to the bond renewal, there are any plans to extend the Max out to Forest Grove. No, this is not in the bond. Max extensions are not determined by Tri-Met. That is a regional decision by Metro. There was a high capacity plan put out by Metro last year, but the Forest Grove extension didn’t make the top 3 or 4.

14. Ben Marcotte asked if an alternative like WES was discussed for a Forest Grove extension since there are already train tracks out there. Apparently Forest Grove did do some analysis of this idea.

15. Ruth stated that she rides the 45 and the level of service is not good. If she elects to use the 54 instead, she has to walk 1.2 miles to the nearest stop as there is nowhere to park. At the recent BHOS realignment update, a Tri-Met rep was present and stated that there were no plans for a Park and Ride. What determines if there is a Park and Ride? The majority of them are not owned by Tri-met but are shared use. Most are church lots which tend to be empty on weekdays. The lots that Tri-Met does own are the larger lots on the Max and WES lines. They would have to spend a lot of money to expand their Park and Ride lots. Outside of shared lots and Max lots, they are not planning on expanding.

16. Charlie asked what the projected ridership of WES was when funding for it was decided upon. They wanted ~2500/day but have not met that goal. WES is in a difficult area. It travels to Wilsonville, an area projected to have a lot of workers. Unfortunately, several of the companies expected to supply riders have gone out of business or reduced employees so the expected riders are not there now.

17. Ken Cone asked if they were going to get hybrid buses when they purchase new ones. They have 2 hybrids now. They chose not to increase the number of hybrids because of the cost. They chose to retrofit particulate traps on the tailpipes. They were able to decrease a lot of the exhaust through lower cost measures. Earl Blumenauer did get funding for hybrid buses but they don’t know how many or if all future buses will be hybrids. They have been working to get more fuel efficiency.

18. What about using smaller buses for less full routes? The primary cost of the bus is the driver so the size of the bus is negligible. It is preferable to have the larger bus for when ridership is increased. They do have some old smaller buses but not many.

19. The screens downtown showing bus schedules seem to be inaccurate and don’t agree with the schedule on the web. The screen is actually a Transit Tracker. It is real time. All the buses have GPS so they can be tracked all the time. The Transit Tracker taps into that, locates your bus and estimates when the bus will get to you.

20. Margot Barnett asked about the process used to determine which lines are cut. Some areas have very strong advocacy groups which speak out more than others. Does this give them a better chance than areas that do not? How do they work on equity issues? They do try to balance everyone’s needs. The General Manager is the one who makes the final decisions.

21. Ruth asked about their funding sources. 55% comes from payroll taxes. Only 22-25% comes from fares.

22. BJ Cone asked why the Max lines don’t have turnstiles as it seems that would reduce the chance for people attempting to ride without paying. With above ground stations it is hard to have turnstiles unless you build a giant structure. There is not room. Cost was probably also a factor. They probably also assumed they would have more fare inspectors.

23. Ken asked about the larger structure near the Green terminal. It appears to be some sort of artwork. Couldn’t they have saved money by not putting it into something like that? That structure
was actually built to house a large bank of solar panels to help power the system. Funding cuts forced them to cut back on this but they are actively looking for a solar company to supply them.

24. Ben asked if in addition to ridership numbers they use surveys to determine what routes to delete, add or cut back. They do talk to riders and try to get a feel for what people’s needs are. There is a Transit Investment Plan for the future which can be viewed on line. Most service improvements are to increase frequency or hours of service rather than adding lines. Increasing frequency is the most effective way to increase ridership.

25. Deputy Duenas gave the sheriff’s report. BJ asked about enforcement of the cell phone law. There are some exceptions such as utility workers etc. whose phone use is considered essential for the performance of their jobs. Speeding and running stop signs in residential areas are still concerns.

26. Aggressive sales people are a problem. Most of them are young men brought in from out of state selling magazines. They often refuse to leave even after being told to do so repeatedly. He just arrested one today. Ben asked if a “No Solicitors” sign would be binding. Probably not. You might try “No Trespassing”. There have also been some scammers out lately trying to collect money for an “oil relief fund” and a phony veterans group. He recommends never giving money to anyone coming door-to-door.

27. He also reminded everyone that school is back in session and we need to remember to slow down in school zones. He also reminded everyone that children should wear bike helmets.

28. There was some discussion about the recent influx of adult businesses in the area along Canyon. Unfortunately, there is not much they can get them on. Just because what they are doing is offensive to most of us, it is not illegal and the police can’t stop them unless they catch them doing something illegal. Charlie said that the owner of Pussycats apparently has a medical marijuana license and there have been reports of the smell of marijuana from some of his establishments. It is very easy to get a medical marijuana card.

29. Margot mentioned that Metro is seeking citizen input on the Community Investment Strategy. There is an article about it in our latest newsletter. Several public open houses on scheduled this month. For those who cannot attend, there is an on line questionnaire available. Margot encouraged everyone to either attend or fill out the survey on line. It is important to our future. It will impact livability issues and how our money is spent.

30. Charlie suggested that we consider inviting the candidates (Greg Malinowski and Mike Niehauser) for County Commissioner (the position Desari Strader is vacating) to the October meeting. Margot suggested that the Executive Committee meet and discuss how to conduct this. We currently are planning to have representatives discuss the 2 levies on the ballot in October but it may be possible to host the candidates as well.

31. The meeting was adjourned at 8:44 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
BJ Cone, Secretary