PUBLIC HEARING
MARCH 11, 2004 – 6:00 P.M.
HOME ARTS BUILDING/COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS

Special Needs Public Transportation Benefit Area Board

Board members present: Bruce Coe, Commissioner District #2; Max Golladay, District #1; Perry Huston, Commissioner District #3; Linda Huber, City of Kittitas; Larry Susich, City of Roslyn; Jim Devere, S. Cle Elum; Beth Marker, City of Cle Elum; John Perrie, City of Ellensburg. Absent: Ed Barry, City of Ellensburg.

Others: Julie Kjorsvik, Clerk of the Board and approximately 100 members of the public.

CHAIRMAN HUSTON called the hearing to order and asked the Clerk for a roll call. He explained the public testimony process and asked for a presentation from Bruce Tabb.

BRUCE TABB, DIRECTOR OF ELMVIEW gave a power-point presentation on the special needs transportation proposal. He said they had a target date of May 18th to have it in front of the voters, which could be passed by a simple-majority.

THOSE PRESENT & TESTIFYING: MARK WIESEN said he was a teacher at Ellensburg High School. He said although he was disabled, he was independent and did not receive any governmental support. He explained several reasons why he supported a transportation system. EVELYN McCLURE representing the Senior Center Advisory Group testified in support of a transportation system. She said there are numerous activities and programs available for seniors and would like to see additional ways of getting them to participate. JACK CANORI commented on the road conditions on Water Street near Fred Meyer. He felt additional money was needed for transportation. CHRIS WALKER agreed with Bruce Tabb and said he would like to see more transportation within the County. VIOLA KOTA read a letter of support from Martha Pitts. She said she was also representing the Ellensburg Community Health Clinic, and felt transportation was critical. She felt access to the services was limited by lack of public transportation and urged the Board to put the issue on the ballot. CONNIE ZEHNER felt the proposed plan and documentation was flawed and did not have much substance. She felt the document confused the public and questioned if it was on purpose. She read from a letter entered into the record dated March 11, 2004, and urged the Board to study the proposal carefully. LIZ WHITAKER explained she would not be eligible for the services at this time, but still supported the proposal. She felt there were many in the county who could benefit from the services and not
just for medical appointments, etc. She presented comments on behalf of Janey Allen who has a motorized cart, and would love to also have the transportation service available. She also gave comments on behalf of Dorothy Sheldon, who supported the idea as well. Von Elison from the Central Washington Disability Resources, clarified the needs assessment survey and explained the basic concepts of a transportation system, noting they were not asking for a 24-hour a day service. She explained how she did not drive because of a seizure disorder and has to rely on Bruce Tabb for her transportation needs. Leslie Gammie explained how everyone needed a transportation system. Fran Robinson from People for People, supported the proposed transportation system and said there is a definite need for it in the community. Craig George felt a transportation system was good for seniors and disabled, but as a farmer, he was concerned it would eventually become larger. He explained how he pays higher sales tax when buying a tractor, etc. and felt the proposal should maybe consider a household tax. He asked if it were put on the ballot, how much would it cost and who would pay for it? Vincent Tomasso explained that anyone who visits the County spends money, and therefore, they help pay for it. He mentioned how there would be matching Federal funds available for a transit system. Dennis Anderson spoke of the benefits of the proposed transportation system and what it would bring to the community. He explained he was disabled and did not drive, or have family in the area. He said the only way to get food would be by a transportation program. Bill Zehner explained he was 80 years old and disabled. He questioned the validity of the statistics that were submitted. He said according to the County Auditor, it would cost between twelve and fifteen thousand dollars to hold a special election. He felt sales tax could be going down soon, due to many stores closing and the County should conserve to the best of their ability. Larry Jamies announced he was a nurse in the local emergency room. He explained transportation was a quality of life issue and supported the proposal. Madonna Konshuk said she was a graduate student, and felt the transportation proposal was a great opportunity to integrate the disabled into the community. Jim Hurson representing himself, felt most of the community would be in favor of a transportation proposal. He felt the direction was a good idea, but said the voters need to be knowledgeable of what they are voting for. He cautioned the Board to not rush to a vote, but don't delay it. Tom Colbery announced he owned a taxi business in town, and felt it was costly for the disabled to use. He spoke in favor of an affordable transportation system for low income, disabled etc. Kirk Eslinger, representing himself, said he agreed with Mr. Hurson, and even though some questions are difficult, it would be
worthwhile to have them answered. He felt a transportation system would give a sense of independence for disabled not having to rely on family, etc. MARILYN CHAPMAN felt the community should do something about transportation. She said Central Washington University has done many things to make their campus more accessible for people with disabilities, and the word is spreading. She said there is a great need for a transportation program, for those who work. She questioned why would someone go to college if they couldn’t work due to the lack of transportation, and having to live and rely on their parents.

THERE BEING NO ADDITIONAL TESTIMONY, THE PUBLIC PORTION OF THE HEARING WAS CLOSED.

PERRY HUSTON said according to the County Auditor, a special election could cost approximately $20,000, plus or minus 10%, and who pays for it would be up to the Board. He asked the Board if they would like to deliberate or continue the hearing to another date?

BRUCE COE said he would like additional time to get questions answered and was not ready to deliberate. It was a consensus by Board to have additional time to review the information. BETH MARKER agreed with the need of additional time in order to make an informed decision. She did not want to be rushed even if it meant not making the May target date.

MAX GOLLADAY moved to continue the public hearing to Thursday April 1, 2004 at 6:00 p.m. in the Commissioner’s Auditorium, Room 109, County Courthouse. LINDA HUBER seconded. Motion passed unanimously. It was noted that written comments would be accepted in the Board of County Commissioners office until April 1st.

PERRY HUSTON said the Board would not take additional public comment, only how/if to proceed; craft proposal for ballot; where election costs would come from, if it were put on a ballot and was not successful. He noted the Board could reopen public testimony at a later date for a more specific proposal.

CLERK OF THE BOARD

SPECIAL NEEDS - PUBLIC
TRANSPORTATION BENEFIT AREA BOARD

Julie A. Kjørvik

Perry D. Huston, Chairman

03/11/2004 MINUTES