

MINUTES

Special Meeting of the Citizen Advisory Committee
to the
Central Lane Metropolitan Planning Organization
Eugene Public Library – Singer Room
100 West 10th - Eugene, Oregon

December 8, 2010
5:30 p.m.

PRESENT: Dave Jacobson, Chair; Sarah Strand, Vice-Chair; Phillip Carroll, Wendy Butler-Boyesen, Alexandre Lockfeld, Eleanor Mulder, Bill Morganti, Richard Beers, Gary Gillespie, Edward Winter, Diana Alldredge, Jennifer Smith, Phil Farrington, members; Stacy Clauson, Byron Vanderpool, Kathi Wiederhold, Andrea Riner, Josh Roll, Lane Council of Governments; Mark Pangborn, Mike Eyster, John Evans, Tom Schwetz, Cosette Rees, Mary Archer, Lane Transit District; Sonny Chickering, MPC liaison; Kurt Yeiter, City of Eugene; Robert Rubin, Erin Ellis, Tim Schinivare, Bradley Waring, guests; Wade Hicks, LCOG Minutes Recorder.

ABSENT: Paul Adkins, Rosalia Marquez, members.

1. Welcome, Introductions, and Agenda Review

Mr. Jacobson called the meeting to order at 5:48 p.m. and briefly reviewed the agenda.

Mr. Jacobson noted that the election of officers for the CAC would take place during their meeting on December 16. He asked any members interested in serving as an officer to prepare a statement for that meeting.

Mr. Jacobson asked those present to introduce themselves.

2. Comments from the Audience

Robert Rubin noted his concern that the WEEE project if constructed along West 11th avenue would destroy the present LTD system. He questioned LTD's data and information regarding the projected operating costs for the West Eugene EmX expansion route and believed that those costs would result in additional service and staff cuts in other LTD areas.

3. West Eugene EmX Alternatives Analysis

Ms. Riner stated that the purpose of the discussion regarding the alternatives analysis for the WEEE project was to prepare the group for further discussion at its December 16 meeting. She stated that today's discussion should also help the CAC clarify its role in the alternatives analysis process.

Ms. Riner reviewed a diagram developed in conjunction with LTD staff that generally demonstrated past, current and future decision processes relating to transit, EmX, West Eugene and specifically to the WEEE project.

Ms. Riner briefly reviewed the alternatives analysis process for the WEEE project and the individual alternatives that still were being considered.

Ms. Riner reminded the CAC members that their primary charge was to serve in an advisory capacity to the MPO, and to consider the long range regional transportation needs of the community. She further noted that the CAC should to use the goals and objectives outlined in the Central Lane MPO's Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) as the guidance in determining recommendations regarding the final alternative alignment selection.

Ms. Riner noted that a discussion guidance document had also been provided to the CAC members in their meeting materials.

Mr. Eyster arrived to the meeting at 5:59

LTD General Manager Mark Pangborn discussed the community opposition elements that had recently been raised regarding the WEEE project. He noted that those opposition elements had questioned the necessity of the BRT system and expansions and the placement of BRT along the West Eugene corridor.

Mr. Pangborn theorized that transportation served as the "lifeblood of any modern city" and noted that while Eugene had the second highest per capita number of bicycle commuters in the nation, there currently existed very little of the infrastructure necessary to further develop alternative modes of transportation.

Mr. Pangborn provided further contextual analysis regarding LTD's services and noted that, considered as a computation of boardings per revenue hour, LTD's productivity was actually higher than that of other larger areas such as Portland or Indianapolis.

Mr. Pangborn noted that in 1970, the year that LTD was formed, the system had approximately 811,000 boardings and that current system-wide boardings for the District totaled approximately 11,500,000. This was an increase of 1,400%, while population growth in the LTD service area during the same time period was only 162%. Mr. Pangborn maintained that the consistent increases in ridership reflected the fact that LTD had positively responded to the changing public transportation needs of the community over the last forty years.

Mr. Lockfeld arrived to the meeting at 6:04 p.m.

Mr. Pangborn continued his contextual discussion of the long-term transportation planning needs of the community and how LTD planned to address those needs through the careful and considerate execution of public transit projects such as the EmX system. He further noted that BRT systems such as EmX were critical to the long-term transportation needs of the community over the next twenty years.

Mr. Schwetz responded to the previous comment from the audience and noted that additional budget information regarding the WEEE project and the alignment alternatives would be presented to the CAC at their meeting on December 16.

Mr. Evans provided an overview of the LTD staff presentations to be presented during the meeting.

Ms. Rees reviewed the extensive public involvement processes that had been conducted regarding the WEEE project in general and the selection of the locally preferred alternative (LPA) in particular. She briefly described how the public involvement process had been designed to ascertain the community's needs and priorities with respect to public transit systems in the West Eugene area.

Ms. Rees summarized several of the public comments that had been offered during the development of the scoping, purpose and needs phase of the WEEE project. She further described how both that phase and the extensive ongoing public involvement process had ultimately led into the current alignment alternatives analysis phase of the project which had begun in January of 2010.

Mr. Rees noted that the report on the alternatives analysis included a summary of over 3000 public comments that had been received regarding the alignment alternatives and the WEEE project. She further noted that information developed through the public engagement process would be presented to the Joint Locally Preferred Alternative Committee (JLPAC) to assist that group in its decision making processes.

Ms. Rees noted that the public involvement process for the WEEE project had helped articulate many of the community values for the project as well as many of the public's concerns that had been raised.

Ms. Rees described the most recent public involvement activities and noted that LTD staff had continued to hold ongoing meetings with property owners, business leaders and residents in the West Eugene corridor. She further noted that public involvement efforts had most recently been used in the development of certain aspects of the proposed mitigation activities for the alignment alternatives. They have met with 140 property owners in the corridor.

Ms. Rees further noted ongoing public engagement meetings with groups such as the Eugene Chamber of Commerce and the Climate Justice League.

Ms. Rees listed the upcoming meetings during which public comment and involvement opportunities would be offered.

Ms. Rees noted that information regarding the proposed mitigation concepts for the alignment alternatives would be presented on LTD's website in the near future.

Ms. Rees noted that the public involvement process would be incorporated into the work of several groups affiliated with the WEEE project including the JLPAC, the MPC, the MPO CAC, and the CLUTAC (Coordinated Land Use Transportation Action Committee).

Ms. Rees noted that the CLUTAC had been formed by the City of Eugene to provide recommendations to the Eugene City Council regarding the WEEE project and the alignment alternatives. Mr. Schwetz added that the CLUTAC was comprised of three representatives from the City's Planning Commission and three representatives from the City's Sustainability Commission.

Ms. Rees noted that the EmX Steering Committee, in conjunction with the West Eugene EmX Corridor Committee was expected to make a recommendation to the LTD Board of Directors.

Mr. Evans provided a reminder of the general layout of the alignment alternatives for the WEEE project. He further noted that the analysis process used to consider the alternatives in more specific detail also functioned as a high-level community transit planning tool that was required by the FTA

Mr. Evans, responding to a question from Mr. Morganti, described how bus stations might be laid out near the Commerce terminus area for the WEEE project. Mr. Pangborn further described that the terminus stations for the West Eugene EmX route would likely be similar to those used for the recent Gateway EmX expansion.

Mr. Evans briefly described the process by which the eight primary objectives for the WEEE project had been defined. He noted that the alignment alternatives were being considered in relation to their respective ability to meet those objectives. He noted that the eight objectives had served as the basis for the eight evaluation criteria and related measures of effectiveness that were currently being used in ongoing discussions regarding the merits of each alignment alternative.

Mr. Evans referred to a table that demonstrated the key results of the alternatives analysis report. He proceeded to briefly outline the key results for the benefit of the CAC members.

Mr. Lockfeld asked if any specific information was available that described the total number of boardings for the West Eugene area of LTD's entire transportation system. Mr. Evans noted that he would be able to provide Mr. Lockfeld with the information he had requested and briefly described how such data might be calculated for the West Eugene corridor.

Mr. Pangborn referred to Mr. Lockfeld's comment and described how, in terms of ridership, the positive effects of enhanced transit systems such as West Eugene EmX route would be felt throughout the entire LTD system and not just in the West Eugene area.

Mr. Evans, responding to a question from Mr. Beers, briefly explained for the Committee members how the term boardings represented each individual LTD rider's entry onto each vehicle regardless of the number of exits or transfers that resulted from a person's travel.

Mr. Evans described how the data regarding travel times for each of the alignment alternatives had been determined in the report.

Mr. Evans, responding to a question from Mr. Beers, noted that the travel time estimates in the alternatives analysis report did not assume any significant roadway alterations or major unplanned widenings before 2031. Mr. Schwetz added that the alternatives analysis report contained no assumptions that were not already in the adopted transportation system plan.

Mr. Evans described the capital construction costs and the operating cost estimates listed in the key results of the alternatives analysis report.

Mr. Evans described how the amount of transit priority lanes had been established in the alternatives analysis report and further described how business access transit (BAT) lanes might be constructed for certain alternatives so as to not impede vehicle access to businesses in the West Eugene corridor.

Mr. Evans stated select portions of the alternatives analysis report had inadvertently used the term "trips" when the intention had been to use the term "boardings" to describe LTD ridership data. He noted that with respect to the FTA's review of the alternatives analysis report the two terms were generally considered to be interchangeable in their description of transit ridership levels.

Mr. Evans stated that the technical teams charged with reviewing the alignment alternative analysis data had ranked the West 11th/13th Avenue alternative the highest primarily due to its increased operating efficiencies and its significant overall cost savings. He further noted that the technical teams had determined that the West 11th/13th Avenue alternative represented the most opportunities for increased safety and mobility for vehicle traffic. He noted that the technical teams had determined that the West 11th/13th alignment alternative also supported the region's adopted land use plans.

Mr. Evans noted that while the projected ridership for the West 6th/7th alternatives was higher than that of the West 11th/13th alternative, that alternative was ultimately ranked below the West 11th/13th alternative in terms of effectiveness because it conflicted with certain elements of LTD's other long-term BRT system planning strategies.

Mr. Evans noted that the West 6th/7th Place alternatives had been ranked the lowest of the build alternatives because of its lower ridership projections, the number of trees affected, and its conflict with long-term BRT system planning and regional land use planning strategies.

Mr. Evans noted that the TSM alternative had scored very low with the technical teams because of the significantly high operating cost per boarding associated with that alternative.

Mr. Evans, responding to a question from Mr. Morganti, noted that the terminus point for the TSM alternative would likely be at Commerce Avenue.

Mr. Evans stated that the no-build alternative represented the "do nothing" scenario for the WEEE project and was not generally considered viable because, over time and in relation to anticipated increases in traffic congestion, it would cause the regular bus service to become prohibitively expensive to operate.

Mr. Evans noted that while the no-build option was considered the worst-performing alternative the option would continue to advance through the environmental analysis phase of the WEEE project.

Mr. Schwetz commented on how funding approved by the MPC from surface transportation program funds might be applied to a West Eugene transit strategy in order to reduce regional greenhouse gas emissions.

Mr. Evans commented that the alternatives analysis had indicated that the TSM alternative was not generally consistent with the nodal development concepts outlined in the TransPlan document.

Mr. Beers asked how the City's population projections had been considered with respect to the alternatives analysis report. He maintained that the City's population was not likely to increase beyond the urban growth boundary. Mr. Schwetz responded to Mr. Beers comments and noted that LTD was required to adhere to the City's established population considerations and that the alternatives analysis report did not incorporate any increases beyond what had been recognized by the City of Eugene.

Mr. Evans briefly discussed how the number of charter and landscape trees affected by the alignment alternatives had been determined. Mr. Evans noted that charter trees were generally defined as trees that were more than 25 inches in diameter, more than 50 years old, and located within the 1915 City limits.

Mr. Evans noted that while the West 11th/13th alternative was the only one to potentially impact as many as 33 charter trees, LTD was highly motivated to disturb as few charter trees as possible with respect to any transportation projects in the West Eugene area.

Mr. Evans, responding to a question from Mr. Farrington, briefly discussed how charter trees might be avoided as part of the West 11th/13th Avenue alignment alternative.

Mr. Evans introduced the proposed mitigation concepts developed by LTD staff and described how they had been generated in response to concerns raised by residents, property owners and business leaders in the West Eugene area. He further noted that LTD staff was currently working with the JLPAC to review the proposed mitigation concepts and make additional adjustments.

Mr. Evans, responding to a question from Ms. Smith, briefly described how the proposed mitigation concepts would affect the estimated travel times for the alignment alternatives to which they had been applied.

Mr. Evans summarized the basic principles of the proposed mitigation concepts for the benefit of the CAC members.

Mr. Evans, responding to a request for clarification from Ms. Mulder, noted that certain facets of the proposed mitigation concepts had been predicated on the assumption of various design options related to the frontage alley design of the West 11th/13th Avenue alignment alternative.

Mr. Evans described how the number of property acquisitions, parking spaces and trees had been affected by the proposed mitigation concepts. He further noted that the proposed mitigation concepts substantially reduced the capital construction costs for the alignment alternatives to which they were associated.

Mr. Evans, speaking with regard to the proposed mitigation concept for the West 6th/7th Avenue alignment alternative, said LTD staff had not been able to completely eliminate the need for full property acquisitions because there were two intersections where road widenings would be required for compliance with ODOT standards.

Mr. Gillespie pointed out that the proposed mitigation concept for the West 6th/7th Avenue alignment alternative had reduced the overall capital construction cost to the point where that alignment could be considered more seriously. Mr. Evans agreed with Mr. Gillespie's statement and stated that the initial capital construction cost for that alternative before mitigation had exceeded the amount of funding that might be available.

Mr. Evans referenced the other municipal agencies and community groups that currently served in an advisory capacity regarding the WEEE project. He further noted that the West Eugene EmX Corridor Committee had met on December 7 and would meet again to discuss their final recommendations. He further noted that the Corridor Committee had engaged in a weighting and ranking process by which they had attempted to ascertain which of the eight primary evaluation criteria might need to be considered more heavily than others. Mr. Evans further noted that the EmX Steering Committee continued to meet quarterly and were expected to provide a recommendation regarding the selection of the locally preferred alternative. Mr. Evans noted that the Transportation Planning Committee of the Central Lane MPO, the LTD senior staff project management group, the Eugene Chamber of Commerce, and various neighborhood associations continued to review and advise LTD regarding all areas of the WEEE project.

4. Next Steps

Ms. Riner hoped to collect all of the CAC members' questions regarding the alternatives analysis report and further stated that staff would work to respond to any questions that had not yet been answered during the meeting. She further noted that due to the short timeline, additional information would not be able to be included in the packet of materials for the CAC's regular meeting on December 16.

Mr. Pangborn, responding to a question from Ms. Butler-Boyesen, noted that the capital cost for each of the build alternatives included the cost of the new EmX vehicles themselves.

Mr. Pangborn, responding to a question from Ms. Butler-Boyesen, noted that the new EmX buses to be used in the WEEE project were gas/electric hybrid vehicles. Mr. Pangborn noted that the new EmX buses represented the most "green" transit technology currently available but noted that even more environmentally friendly buses would be available in the future.

Mr. Pangborn, responding to a question from Mr. Lockfeld, noted that the new EmX buses to be used in the WEEE project could eventually be modified to run using biodiesel fuel technology.

Mr. Carroll requested further information regarding the use of business access transit (BAT) lanes and how such lanes might be incorporated into existing land use policies along West 11th/13th Avenue. He further requested updated information regarding how the City's access management policies would be regulated with respect to the construction of BAT lanes.

Mr. Carroll requested further information regarding how pedestrian access along West 11th Avenue would be addressed under the current alignment alternatives.

Mr. Carroll asked if LTD planned to address current zoning regulations regarding buildings constructed adjacent to roadways in the West Eugene area. Mr. Schwetz responded that the Eugene City Council had recently taken action to address those zoning regulations. Eugene Planning and Development staff member Kurt Yeiter reported that the Eugene City Council had given direction for City staff to initiate a process to adopt a wider setback from the existing right-of-way in the West Eugene corridor along West 11th Avenue to allow for future roadway widenings and improved pedestrian walkways.

Mr. Yeiter, responding to a question from Ms. Mulder, noted that the City Council's direction regarding the right of way matter had been specific to West 11th Avenue and would not necessarily pertain to other areas of Eugene.

Mr. Carroll asked if any potential changes to the City's land use code provisions from the Envision Eugene initiative would be incorporated into the alignment alternatives and the WEEE project. Mr. Yeiter stated he did not know what code changes from the Envision Eugene process, if any, would affect the selection of the locally preferred alternative and the execution of the WEEE project.

Mr. Carroll briefly noted his concerns for how the City's current zoning restrictions might affect the selection of the locally preferred alternative.

Mr. Beers discussed his general concerns regarding the affordability of the WEEE project and his more specific concerns relating to the operational costs for the alignment alternatives.

Mr. Beers noted his concerns that the payroll taxes from jobs in the West Eugene area would not be enough to pay for the operational costs of a West Eugene EmX route. Mr. Pangborn responded that payroll taxes were not computed specific to West Eugene and that it was the payroll taxes of the entire District that contributed to the operation of LTD's regular bus services and EmX systems.

Ms. Riner confirmed that Mr. Beers comments had indicated a request for more information regarding the amount of payroll taxes necessary to fund the operating costs of the West Eugene EmX route.

Mr. Farrington asked that LTD staff provide maps that would demonstrate how each of the alignment alternatives would be blended with LTD's existing transportation services. He maintained that such information would be helpful in demonstrating to the public the successful integration of the EmX system with LTD's existing services.

Mr. Farrington requested additional information regarding how the data for the number of employees, residents and businesses in the West Eugene corridor had been derived and calculated, particularly with respect to how such figures had been compared to the City's nodal land use development policies.

Mr. Farrington asked if it would be possible to extend the terminus point of the alignment alternatives in the event that the needs for such extensions became necessary.

Mr. Farrington asked how the alignment alternatives had been considered in relation to land use development strategies outlined in the Central Lane MPO's Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and the State of Oregon's Transportation Planning Rule (TPR).

Mr. Winter asked if the LTD bus from Veneta would continue to travel into downtown Eugene or if it would stop at the terminus point for the West Eugene EmX route.

Mr. Winter asked if the increased ridership for the West 11th/13th Avenue alignment alternative would cover all or part of the operational costs for the West Eugene EmX route.

Mr. Winter referred to Mr. Lockfeld's earlier comments and noted that data representing the corridor ridership increases for each of the alignment alternatives had been presented on page 25 of the alternatives analysis report summary.

Mr. Lockfeld hoped that further information regarding the West Eugene corridor catchment area for each station in each alignment alternative would be provided.

Ms. Mulder asked if the LTD planned to reconfigure any areas of the Franklin Avenue EmX route near the University of Oregon where left turns to the south were sometimes prohibited. Mr. Pangborn responded that no such plans had been incorporated into any area of the WEEE project.

Mr. Farrington, responding to a request for clarification from Ms. Alldredge, noted that area hospitals contributed significantly to LTD's payroll tax revenues.

Ms. Alldredge requested further information regarding how the implementation of a West Eugene EmX route would affect bus feeder lines in the West Eugene corridor. She further requested more detailed information as to the distances between EmX boarding platforms for each of the alignment alternatives.

Ms. Strand requested clarification on the means that would be used to address any safety hazards present on the West 6th/7th Avenue alignment alternative.

Ms. Strand responded to concerns raised by certain CAC members and reminded them that it was necessary to adopt a long-term perspective with respect to their consideration of the WEEE project and the alignment alternatives.

Ms. Butler-Boyesen commented that the long-term outlook for the no-build alignment alternative was that it would be prohibitively expensive when taken in consideration of the future transportation needs of the community.

Mr. Jacobson asked how the West Eugene EmX route's benefits to the entire LTD system had been determined and further asked what measures had been taken to quantify the system-wide benefits. Ms. Riner responded that LCOG staff had undertaken efforts in conjunction with various consultant partners to quantify the regional benefits of BRT systems in general and the WEEE project in particular.

Mr. Lockfeld requested information on how new trees would be planted as part of the alignment alternatives and any associated mitigation strategies. Mr. Schwetz noted that the number of trees affected by the alternatives had been demonstrated in the analysis report and that staff would return with additional information regarding how certain trees might be replaced. He further noted that more trees had been planted than had been removed during the Franklin and Gateway EmX projects, and expected that principle to be applied to the WEEE project as well.

Mr. Lockfeld requested information regarding traffic congestion patterns and how automobile travel times would be affected by the implementation of the various alignment alternatives.

Ms. Smith maintained that West 11th Avenue was not a pedestrian-friendly roadway and asked how the West 11th/13th Avenue alignment alternative would improve the roadway for pedestrians and cyclists.

Mr. Gillespie responded to Ms. Smith's comments and noted that one of the additions to the West 11th/13th alignment alternative called for the inclusion of two or three bicycle/pedestrian bridges to connect Amazon Channel bike path with West 11th Avenue and the Commerce Avenue terminus. Mr. Schwetz added that other bicycle/pedestrian connections had been planned as part of the alignment alternative.

Ms. Butler-Boyesen noted that the EmX vehicles were very quiet.

Mr. Pangborn noted that the inclusion of BAT lanes along West 11th/13th Avenue as part of the alignment would slow down car traffic at the sides of the road and would therefore make sidewalks much less intimidating for pedestrians.

Mr. Pangborn, responding to a question from Mr. Lockfeld, noted that bicyclists were allowed under State law to travel in BAT lanes.

Mr. Morganti noted that there had been significant opposition to the removal of certain trees that had occurred for previous transportation projects back in 1997.

Ms. Strand requested further information regarding the manner in which the concerns of under-represented populations in the community would be addressed with respect to the WEEE project and the alignment alternatives.

Mr. Jacobson noted that LTD staff would be presenting information regarding the alternatives analysis report at the MPC meeting on December 9 at the Springfield City Hall. He further noted that the CAC's discussion regarding the WEEE project and the alternatives analysis would continue at their regular meeting on December 16.

Mr. Jacobson adjourned the meeting at 7:28 p.m.

(Recorded by Wade Hicks)