



Date: April 4, 2011

To: Metropolitan Policy Committee
From: Tom Schwetz and John Evans, Lane Transit District
Subject: 5.b: Locally Preferred Alternative for LTD's West Eugene EmX Extension

Policy Background on EmX

The 2001 adoption of the TransPlan by the cities of Eugene and Springfield, Lane County, LTD, and the LCOG Board identified bus rapid transit (BRT) as the region's choice for high capacity transit. This action on BRT was the culmination of a regional conversation about the role of transit in the future growth and development of the region. Concern was expressed that transit needed to become more competitive with the automobile if it were to provide a relevant contribution to the region's future mobility.

The three primary objectives for the BRT strategy are to: significantly increase transit ridership by attracting 'choice riders' (those that typically have an auto, but choose to take BRT); improve the cost effectiveness of operating transit along congested corridors; provide an investment in transit that could, through the permanence of its exclusive right-of-way and other features, attract desired long-term land use development.

Summary of Decision-Making Process to Date

On February 14, 2011, the Joint LPA Committee made a final LPA recommendation for both the West 13th- West 11th alternative and the West 6th/7th- West 11th alternative to be moved forward for consideration along with the No-Build alternative. On March 9, 2011, the Eugene City Council voted 8-0 to select the West 6th/7th-West 11th alternative as the Council's preferred route for West Eugene EmX. On March 10, 2011, the Metropolitan Policy Committee (MPC) decided to delay a vote until after it holds an additional public hearing on the West 6th/7th-West 11th alternative. On March 16, 2011, the LTD Board selected the West 6th/7th-West 11th Mitigated Concept Alternative as the Board's preferred route for the West Eugene EmX Extension.

Optimizing Operating Costs for the West 6th/7th - 11th Alternative

As described in the comparison of alternative build alignments for the West Eugene EmX project, the West 6th/7th- West 11th alternative, has a higher operating cost than the West 13th- West 11th alternative. There are two primary differences for this:

- Regular service on West 13th Avenue and West 11th Avenue needs to continue under the West 6th/7th- West 11th alternative, whereas it would be replaced by the new EmX service under the West 13th- West 11th alternative; and
- Aside from a rural route that only runs six times per day, there is no regular service running on West 6th/7th Avenues. As a result, there is no service directly on West 6th/7th Avenues that would be replaced by new EmX service. The regular routes serving Highway 99 and River Road utilize West 5th and 8th Avenues through the area that would be served by the West 6th/7th- West 11th alternative. It has been assumed to date that this service would continue the relatively short distance into the Eugene station as opposed to having riders on this service transfer onto the new West 6th/7th EmX service.

As indicated at the March 10, 2011 MPC meeting, an important part of preparing a Small Starts grant application for FTA funding involves optimizing the regular routes serving the project corridor in order to identify the most cost-efficient service possible. While additional analysis is needed to quantify the effects of specific changes to regular service within the project corridor, LTD staff and consultants have been working on a number of options that will reduce operating costs for the 6th-7th Avenue alignment.

Project Build Alternatives Property Acquisition Impacts

The project's impacts on private property would result from the need to widen the existing right of way to provide transit priority lanes and to preserve long-term roadway capacity. The conceptual project designs for the build alternatives have been refined to minimize the need for these property acquisitions. Remaining acquisitions would need to occur as strip acquisitions primarily at or near high volume intersections. This type of property acquisition would be similar to the acquisition on the two completed EmX corridors. These project impacts and mitigation were documented in detail in the March 10, 2011 MPC meeting materials provided by LTD. As described in the comparison of alternative build alignments for the project, there are also two property impacts for the West 6th/7th-11th alternative which, without additional mitigation, could potentially require full acquisition of the properties.

- Vacant motel building on West 7th Avenue between Monroe and Madison Streets. Right of way widening could directly impact approximately 10 feet of this structure. The portion of the building affected (the motel office) is adjacent to the existing sidewalk and may need to be removed to accommodate the current project design.

- The Adult Shop on Garfield at West 7th Place. Right of way widening on Garfield could result in a reduction of a high proportion of this property's off-street parking.

It's important to note however, that the project alternatives have been designed to only the 8-10% level for purposes of determining potential impacts. Preliminary Design (the next stage of design) will allow for a more detailed and accurate assessment of potential project impacts. Additional design refinements will be pursued to further reduce or eliminate impacts to individual properties. If the constraints of the project are such that these impacts cannot be substantially reduced through design, additional mitigation could include partial reconstruction (in the case of the vacant hotel), or purchase of replacement parking (for the Adult Shop).

Options for MPC Decision-making

With completion of the public hearing on April 5, MPC is scheduled to deliberate on the selection of a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) for the West Eugene EmX project. The Eugene city Council and LTD board have already taken their action on an LPA, both selecting the 6th-7th EmX alignment with mitigation. The range of options for MPC action include those developed as part of the Joint LPA Committee process:

1. Select the 6th-7th EmX alignment with recommendation that LTD incorporate mitigation measures identified through subsequent analysis - this action moves the project directly into the Small Starts grant application process and work on completion of the environmental process;
2. Select the 13th EmX alignment with recommendation that LTD incorporate mitigation measures identified through subsequent analysis - this action would require further discussion and reconsideration by all three adopting bodies. Given the deadlines for submittal of the Small Starts grant and the time it would take to work through the process of reconsideration, this action could jeopardize the project's ability to move forward;
3. Select the No-Build alternative - the implications of this action would be similar to selection of the 13th EmX alignment as further discussion and reconsideration would be required.

The implications of a stalemate, or lack of action by MPC at this time, would be similar to options 2 and 3 above as further discussion and potential reconsideration of actions previously taken would be required in order to move the project forward.

Attachments

Attachment 1: WEEE Alternatives Map

Additional Information

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