

MINUTES

Metropolitan Policy Committee
Bascom-Tykeson Room—Eugene Public Library—100 West 10th Avenue
Eugene, Oregon

March 10, 2011
11:30 a.m.

PRESENT: Members: Sid Leiken, Vice Chair, Lane County
Sheri Moore, City of Springfield (for Hillary Wylie)
Kitty Piercy, City of Eugene
Alan Zelenka, City of Eugene
Christine Lundberg, City of Springfield
John Thiel, City of Coburg
Sonny Chickering, Oregon Department of Transportation
Jay Bozievich, Lane County
Mike Eyster, Lane Transit District
Greg Evans, Lane Transit District

Ex officio: Gino Grimaldi, City of Springfield
Jon Ruiz, City of Eugene
Mark Pangborn, Lane Transit District

George Kloeppe, Byron Vanderpool, Andrea Riner, Ann Mortenson, Kathi Wiederhold, Paul Thompson, Ruth Atcherson (Lane Council of Governments); Savannah Crawford (Oregon Department of Transportation), Rob Inerfeld, Kurt Yeiter (City of Eugene), Len Goodwin (City of Springfield), Celia Barry (Lane County), Tom Schwetz (Lane Transit District), Dave Jacobson, Sarah Strand, Edward Winter (Citizen Advisory Committee), David Sonnichsen, Vicky Mello, Elliott McIntire (Citizen Planning Committee for the Whilamut Natural Area of Alton Baker Park); Doug Beauchamp, Mark Rabinowitz, Mark Callahan, Paul Conte, Bob Macherion, Hal Reed, guests.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Mr. Leiken, Vice Chair, called the meeting of the Metropolitan Policy Committee (MPC) to order and welcomed everyone. Mr. Leiken explained that the MPC Chair, Hillary Wylie, was out of town. Those present introduced themselves.

CALL TO ORDER/APPROVE February 10th Meeting Minutes

Mr. Eyster, seconded by Ms. Lundberg, moved to approve the minutes of the meeting held on February 10, 2010, as written. The motion passed unanimously.

ADJUSTMENTS TO THE AGENDA/ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM MPC MEMBERS

Mr. Leiken ascertained that there were no adjustments to the agenda. There were no announcements from MPC members.

COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Elliot McIntire spoke in support of naming the Interstate 5 bridge over the Willamette River the Whilamut Passage Bridge. He felt that the history of the area's earliest residents had been erased. He observed that landmarks were often given the names of locally prominent citizens. He believed naming the bridge the Whilamut Passage Bridge would give recognition to the historic significance and location and describe its ongoing importance to the area.

David Sonnichsen noted that he had served on the community advisory group for the Interstate 5 bridge. He read aloud from a letter written by Charlotte Behm, fellow member of the Citizens Planning Committee for the Whilamut Natural Area of Alton Baker Park (CPC), in support of naming the Interstate 5 bridge over the Willamette River the Whilamut Passage Bridge. She felt that they had done a remarkable job of renaming things with Calapooya words and noted the installation of the *Talking Stones* in the park. She felt that the bridge naming had been an opportunity for a wider audience to become familiar with the Calapooya. Mr. Sonnichsen thanked the MPO CAC for the recommendation given to the MPC to approve the naming and he thanked the Lane Council of Governments (LCOG) staff for bringing the item before them. He also thanked Ms. Riner for her enthusiasm for changing the name of East Alton Baker Park to the Whilamut Natural Area back when she worked with the Parks and Open Space Division.

Vicky Mello echoed the request that the MPC endorse the naming of the bridge. She stated that she was a volunteer with Nearby Nature and helped guide groups of children through the natural area. She was also a member of the CPC. She averred that the City of Eugene knew what a great resource the river and natural area was and it was time to let a larger audience know.

Doug Beauchamp, former director of the Lane Arts Council, noted that he had worked with the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) on the design enhancement components of the project. He thanked the MPC for considering the bridge naming and asked that they please endorse the proposal to name the Interstate 5 bridge the Whilamut Passage Bridge.

Hal Reed stated that he had lived in West Eugene for 32 years and drove West 11th Avenue most every day. He was concerned with the magnitude of the cost for the EmX project. He felt that the area already had a good bus system in the West 11th area. He was concerned about the impact that the project would have on area businesses. He had observed that there were 19 major structures that would have to be modified or razed to accommodate the EmX along the West 11th Avenue route, and this did not include parking lots. He declared that they were spending other peoples' money and asked the MPC to support the no build option.

Mark Callahan said he was representing the Our Money Our Transit group and urged the MPC to consider supporting the no-build option for the EmX project in West Eugene. He "challenged" the committee to not "rubberstamp" the Eugene City Council decision made on the preceding day. He believed that if the project went forward, taxpayers would be paying for it into the future. He had some concern whether this vote was within the bylaws of the MPC and asked for clarification. He wanted to know if only one person out of two people representing a jurisdiction would have to vote in the affirmative for the project for it to be approved.

Paul Conte, chair of the Jefferson/Westside Neighbors, declared that there were four compelling reasons to support the 6th/7th Avenue alignment for the next leg of the EmX and listed them, as follows:

- The 6th/7th Avenue option would produce significantly better benefits for the community;

- This alignment would not create a four-lane thoroughfare through a residential neighborhood and would enhance neighborhoods north and south of the West 6th/7th coupling;
- A strong MPC vote for this alignment would assure that the Federal Transportation Administration (FTA) would see more support for the West Eugene EmX Extension (WEEE) and less opposition and would be more disposed to provide funding;
- Building the next leg of the EmX on that route would reduce the cost of a future leg out Highway 99 by an estimated \$32 million.

He believed that the 6th/7th Avenue option would generate more ridership and serve a larger area. He noted that it would serve an area that was identified in the draft Envision Eugene Plan for extensive commercial development and which already had tax breaks through the Multiple Unit Property Tax Exemption (MUPTE) plan. He averred that this presented exactly the right combination to promote compact growth. He stated the neighborhood association's opposition to the West 11th Avenue option. He predicted that choosing this option would jeopardize the project altogether, but moving forward with the 6th/7th option would be a positive step toward gaining additional FTA funding for the EmX into the future.

Bob Macherion stated that he had owned a business in this area for nearly 30 years. He thought the City Council vote was clear; even though LTD had three years to study the feasibility of the 11th Avenue corridor they had not proven that it was and it would not get the support to go forward. He believed that LTD was in a rush to complete because of funding issues and deadlines. He averred that LTD was losing community support. He asked the MPC to delay the vote. He thought there was a "dawn of a new era" in the community in which public officials could not "substitute their own desires and their own agendas" for what private citizens needed and wanted. He asserted that LTD could not say that it could not provide bus service and then turn around and remodel its offices. He believed that the corridor would require a vote of the people, according to his interpretation of the charter. He opined that the City Attorney had glossed over this and did not interpret the charter correctly.

Mark Rabinowitz believed that they were "still using" the same traffic model used to support the West Eugene Parkway. He asserted that the model assumed that gasoline would reach \$2.50 a gallon by the year 2025. He opined that the officials had "blindly ignored this" and this was why they could not afford to maintain roads or expand the bus service. He considered it to be an "environmental injustice issue, an accountability issue, a common sense issue." He discussed the conflict in Libya and its relationship to global oil production. He did not think they would be able to "toot around" on electric cars and resolve the issue. He felt that officials "refusal to include" the finite amount of oil in the world in their transportation plan meant that the plan was "not only ridiculous," it also did not meet federal requirements. He said a no build option would be a federal decision.

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO) ISSUES

Report from the MPO Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC)

Mr. Winter reported that the MPO CAC had talked about the review of a public participation plan and the Title 6 plan, as summarized in the memorandum to the MPC entitled *Report from the Citizen Advisory Committee*. They had also reviewed the public involvement plans for six projects and were provided a primer on Least Cost Planning by Paul Thompson.

Mr. Leiken thanked them for the report and for their service. He said it was good to have people who were interested and engaged in transportation issues.

Interstate 5 Willamette River Bridge Naming

Mr. Thompson restated the action before the committee. He had prepared a letter of support for it, a copy of which was included in the MPC packet.

Mr. Eyster, seconded by Mr. Bozievich, moved that the Metropolitan Policy Committee endorse the naming of the Interstate 5 bridge over the Willamette River the Whilamut Passage Bridge.

Mr. Thiel asked if the words Willamette and Whilamut were related. Mr. Sonnichsen replied that the Calapooya people did not claim a relationship, but one could deduce that the name Willamette had come from Whilamut.

Ms. Piercy considered it a beautiful and meaningful name, noting that the Eugene City Council had voted to endorse it. She thought it appropriate because it was going to be a beautiful bridge and should have a beautiful name. She considered the bridge to be the gateway to two communities.

Mr. Zelenka added that the pictures of the proposed art that was going to be installed under the bridge and that sought to teach about the Calapooya and the Whilamut area looked like the area would be very "special" and a good addition to the communities.

Mr. Thompson noted that the links to the art were included in the memorandum.

The motion passed unanimously.

Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) Project List Development

Mr. Thompson stated that the update of the RTP is ongoing, scheduled for adoption in November of the present year. He said everyone had the opportunity to review the existing projects in the RTP and having completed that process, as designed by the subcommittee, staff had now brought the draft proposal before the MPC for new projects to be added to the RTP. He clarified that the word 'new' in the two tables of projects did not identify new roadways; it identified new projects proposed for addition to the RTP. He reported that not a lot of projects were proposed and none were proposed by ODOT. He observed that the reality was that the RTP already captured a lot of the planned improvements over the 20-year horizon and that the fiscal reality made it difficult to identify potential new projects.

Mr. Leiken related that Lane Community College (LCC) had held a board meeting on the previous evening and one thing they had discussed was, as part of their master plan, a potential look at an interchange at 30th Avenue. He asked if there was any long-range look that ODOT was considering. He said LCC had a total of 40,000 students if one included the part-time students. He felt the current interchange presented a safety issue and wanted to know if there were any discussions on this in the plan.

Mr. Chickering stated that in the current State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) a project for a signal rebuild was included, but this was not intended to be a major improvement. He said there was a proposed future study to look at all of the I-5 interchanges including the one for 30th Avenue. Ms. Crawford added that the current study was primarily for the Glenwood interchange, but there were no existing plans currently to address the interchange to 30th Avenue.

Ms. Piercy reported that the second Area Commission on Transportation (ACT) meeting had been held on the previous evening and had featured a presentation on the state of transportation. She said the overall conclusion of the presentation was that there would be no "bells or whistles" or other improvements for a while.

Mr. Bozievich asked if staff thought the water line extension from Veneta to Eugene would add any projects to the list. Mr. Thompson replied that it was possible. He thought it was probably appropriate to add such a project to the list if it was funded or considered regionally significant.

Lane Transit District West Eugene Emx Extension Locally Preferred Alternatives

Mr. Thompson provided copies of the public comments the MPO had specifically received since the public hearing. Additionally, he stated that both of the MPO's advisory committees, the CAC and the Transportation Planning Committee (TPC), had made recommendations to the MPC to select the West 13th/11th Avenue mitigated alternative as the locally preferred alternative.

Mr. Schwetz recapped the process to date. He reviewed the map of the alternatives, copies of which were provided to everyone present. He noted that the Joint Locally Preferred Alternative Committee (JLPAC) had met for the last time on February 14. He reiterated that the City Council had acted on the preceding day to move forward with the 6th/7th Avenue alternative. He stated that both alternatives provided significant improvement over doing nothing and LTD was willing to make either of them work.

Ms. Piercy recalled the vote of the council, which had clearly indicated they preferred the 6th/7th Avenue alternative.

Mr. Zelenka thought either of the alternatives would provide benefits, but the 6th/7th Avenue alternative would make it so the build-out into the Bethel area would be substantially cheaper.

Mr. Eyster knew there were concerns about the different costs and alignments. He said LTD had to balance the present versus the future and capital versus operations costs. He stated that even though LTD did 8-year budgeting, it was not possible to firmly know what lay ahead. He related that they anticipated that the costs for the 6th/7th option would "put a crimp" on LTD, in weighing the future versus the present it seemed to him they needed to move forward on the project. He thought it possible that they could be forced to come back before the MPC and ask for help.

Ms. Piercy noted that the work session at which the council had made its preferred option vote had also focused on the Envision Eugene process. She related that approximately 70 different community leaders had participated in the process and one of the things that had come out of it was that they did not think they could do the compact urban development they wanted to do, they did not think they could address climate uncertainty, carbon emission reductions, or lessen the dependence on fossil fuels; they did not think they could meet most council goals without transportation corridors playing a big role. She averred that how they envisioned the community and the importance of having a good transit system were inexorably linked in the way they looked at the future and the way they got to that future.

Ms. Lundberg observed that the EmX extension was a Eugene project, and yet the MPC was voting on it. She related that the process in Springfield had been painful and had taken a lot of patience and caring. She stated that if the next project came out correctly, everyone could be proud of it. She pointed out that they were not at the point at which a no-build option had disappeared. She said their vote would be to send two versions forward and to honor Eugene's decision moving forward. She underscored that a lot of options could play out as they moved into the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) assessment.

Mr. Schwetz said they would look at alternatives to try and optimize routing on the 6th/7th Avenue option as it was part of the process in preparing the grant application. He stressed that it was important to understand that the cost of the EmX was not the driving force in the increased cost of that option, it was the cost of maintaining existing service to the transit market served by 11th and 13th Avenues. He said the next step was to prepare the Small Starts Grant application, due in August, and the NEPA process, which would kick off as soon as the 6th/7th Avenue alternative was approved. He stated that the FTA would then review it and in February, 2012, they would hear as to whether it was funded. He acknowledged that some had said that now was not the time for a project of this magnitude and pointed out that they would not be spending the bulk of the funding until 2013 to 2015. He added that based on ODOT's assessment, they were predicting that the construction project would net the area 1,200 jobs. He conveyed LTD's recommendation to support the 6th/7th Avenue alternative, given the Eugene City Council vote of the previous day.

Mr. Zelenka wished to speak to Section 41 of the Eugene Code and whether or not there was a required vote of the people. He reported that the City Attorney had reviewed that section and was emphatic that it was unequivocally clear that Section 41 did not apply to the EmX corridor as it was not a highway or a Eugene project. He understood that the higher operating costs came from the need to run redundant service even if there was EmX to 6th/7th Avenues. He asked if there was a way to look at this again to see whether a transfer station at Roosevelt Boulevard or another solution could mitigate those costs. Mr. Schwetz responded that those were exactly the types of options that LTD would look into.

Mr. Zelenka thought Transportation System Management (TSM) was a good idea but noted that there was no funding associated with it. He thought it would make both auto and bus traffic work better. He asked what ways they could integrate this more into what LTD did and to get funding for it. Mr. Schwetz replied that LTD had looked for several years at a spectrum of transit service and there were a lot of things they could do that fell in between the EmX and other bus services for certain corridors.

In response to a question from Mr. Bozievich, Mr. Schwetz clarified that the federal NEPA process looked to the MPO and the project sponsor and technically the city would not need to take an additional action to satisfy the federal process.

Mr. Bozievich asked how much the NEPA process would cost and how it was funded. Mr. Schwetz responded that the work to complete the NEPA and the grant application was anticipated to cost \$800,000 to \$1 million. He said this included work that had already been completed.

In response to a follow-up question from Mr. Bozievich, Mr. Schwetz stated that the money would not come out of operating funds and it would not impact the operations of other routes.

Mr. Bozievich stated that a public hearing had been held and it had been based upon a recommendation for the 11th/13th Avenue corridor. He did not feel that the West 6th/7th Avenue option was being considered at that time and wondered if they needed to go back and hold another public hearing. Mr. Schwetz replied that while the JLPAC had made a recommendation as to how to decide between the three alternatives. He acknowledged that their recommendation had been the one they had taken into the public process, but all of the options had always been on the table.

Mr. Bozievich said he represented neighborhoods that were impacted by the WEEE. He was a little troubled that they were not going back for more public comment on something that did not seem to have strong community support. He noted that the vote on the West Eugene Extension had originally been a tie in the Eugene City Council, with the Mayor breaking the tie, which did not seem to indicate strong support for it. He also commented that the United Front lobbying trip had just returned from Washington, D.C.

and local representatives reported that the congressional delegation from this area had asked where the trade-offs were for the Save Rural Schools Act funding. He wanted to go on record as being more interested in increasing school funding than funding for a "single-mode of transportation." He remained unconvinced that EmX would improve anything but the EmX service, and he believed it would be to the detriment of all other businesses down that road. He discussed some of the bus service cuts to areas he represented and asked what would be cut further to contain operating costs. He saw the EmX as a "tremendously bad investment of public money." He supported delaying the decision until a public hearing could be held to focus on the 6th/7th Avenue option.

Mr. Schwetz said LTD did not think another public hearing would be legally required. He pointed out that the alternatives had been on the table for the past couple of years. He disputed the assertion that this was a single mode investment. He stated that traffic engineering had suggested that travel times for autos were actually improved by the EmX because they were pulling buses out of traffic and into designated lanes. He stated that EmX was a multi-modal transportation medium.

Mr. Leiken recalled that at the last JLPAC meeting he had asked if they would need a joint public hearing if they decided on the 6th/7th Avenue option and had not received an answer. He felt that because the 6th/7th Avenue stakeholders had not had an opportunity to provide input, an opportunity should be provided for them. He asked how much trouble it would be to delay the decision for one month so that LCOG could organize another public hearing. He observed that at the public hearing that had been held at the Hilton it seemed the majority supported the no-build option, and he was quite certain the focus of the hearing had been on the 11th/13th Avenue option.

Mr. Pangborn said whether the decision was made at the present meeting or in a month, the deadline for the grant was August and a decision in a month would only shorten the time staff had to prepare for it.

Mr. Zelenka thought that all of the options had been on the table since day one. He pointed out that the Whiteaker Community Council and Jefferson/Westside Neighborhood had recommended the 6th/7th Avenue and when it had come before the council it had been presented as two options, with both the 6th/7th and 11th/13th routes. It had been very clear to him that all options were on the table and people had testified in regard to both.

Ms. Lundberg had attended the public hearing and had thought both routes were being considered. She asked what would happen if they took a vote at the present meeting and the county voted against it. Mr. Schwetz responded that his hope was to get firm direction at the present meeting.

Mr. Evans surmised that the option might not move forward based on the Lane Board of County Commissioners discomfort. He recommended holding another public hearing and then voting on it at the April 14 meeting and to not defer it again. He underscored that as an agency, LTD could not be left hanging in terms of what they were going to do in their short-term and long-term planning.

Mr. Leiken recalled the Gateway EmX process and some of the fall-out that had happened. He reiterated that holding another public hearing was about making sure everyone had ample opportunity to weigh in.

After some discussion it was determined that staff would work to schedule an evening public hearing prior to the April MPC meeting, in order to accommodate the public's access to the meeting.

Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program Administrative Amendments

Mr. Thompson said this was an information item. He had provided the current language in the Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP) that controlled the administrative amendment process by the TPC in the memorandum. He related that staff had reviewed the amendments from 2010 and had found that there were 54 of them and of those 19 added new projects. He stated that of those, nine were handled administratively and, out of them, four were previously endorsed or supported by MPC.

Mr. Zelenka had some concern in that a couple of the amendments were "rather substantial." He saw three that were "huge in price tag." He thought there should be a threshold and that if there was an amendment that involved an \$8 million change, staff should provide more than a paragraph of information.

Ms. Piercy concurred with the importance of decision making. She wondered whether some of the amendments had previous approval that the MPC had already participated in.

Mr. Zelenka noted that among the amendments were a change in project scope, cost revisions, and additions and deletions to projects. He said they approved a plan and through the administrative amendment plan they were authorizing "gigantic projects." He wanted to make sure they were taking responsibility for them.

Mr. Thompson stated that of the nine projects added administratively, the MPC had previously seen seven. He cited the University of Oregon Transit Station as an example, noting that the MPC had supported the LTD application for flexible funding and the amendment was the step to add that money when it was approved by the OTC. He said the MPC had directed staff to provide a summary paragraph of the amendments and stressed that staff was willing to provide more than a paragraph.

Mr. Zelenka suggested that any administrative amendment of \$500,000 or more should come before the MPC with more information as an agenda item.

Ms. Lundberg indicated that she was comfortable with how they had it set up. She suggested that they could pull amendments, like an item on the Consent Calendar, and discuss it. She felt that otherwise it would add a lot to the agenda.

Mr. Thompson pointed out that MPC members could pull any of the amendments for discussion.

Ms. Piercy said she was fine with a Consent Calendar approach as long as there was a link in the materials so that members could find out more about an item should they desire to do so.

MPO Planning Calendars

Ms. Riner stated that nothing had changed on the calendar. She thought they would probably be in a position of having a couple of things come before the MPC for approval.

Follow-up and Next Steps

1) ODOT Update

Ms. Crawford reminded everyone that the ODOT stakeholder work group was still open and the application period closed on March 16. She said applications could be found at LCOG's web site or Lane ACT.org. She also announced that ODOT had a new district manager, David Warren.

2) Rail

Ms. Piercy reported that the interviews for the committee to consider rail alignment between Eugene and Portland were still going on. She noted that the Governor had chosen Lynn Peterson as his Sustainable Communities and Transportation Policy advisor.

3) MTIP Administrative Amendments

This item had sufficiently been covered.

4) Next Steps/Agenda Building

Mr. Kloeppe said staff would compile an agenda.

Ms. Piercy reported that the United Front trip had encountered "a lot of gloom and doom" in Washington, D.C. She appreciated everyone's collaborative effort in keeping things moving along and to keep the issues in play.

Mr. Leiken noted that the Springfield girls basketball team was ranked #1 and would be playing that day.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:24 p.m.

(Recorded by Ruth Atcherson)