

Central Lane Metropolitan Planning Organization

From: Mark Frohnmayer [mark.frohnmayer@gmail.com]
Sent: Tuesday, April 05, 2011 8:29 PM
To: Central Lane Metropolitan Planning Organization
Subject: April 5 2011 West Eugene EmX Locally Preferred Alternatives Public Hearing

To the distinguished members of the metropolitan planning organization:

I am writing to offer feedback on the EmX extension to west Eugene. First, I am a big proponent of a real mass transit system in Eugene and I strongly support the city council and EmX board decisions to route EmX down 6th and 7th to Garfield. That said, the current plan for this segment of the route that calls for addition of a fifth lane of travel in each direction along a significant portion of this segment is critically flawed.

EmX on 6th and 7th should share existing lanes of travel. The livability of the border areas of the Whittaker and Jefferson west side neighborhoods will be substantially negatively impacted by both the removal of trees in an already concrete-laden jungle, as well as the additional difficulty of pedestrian and bicycle crossing of these routes. As a resident and business owner in the Whiteaker neighborhood I witness these two streets on a daily basis. These routes currently have plenty of capacity for the EmX buses in traffic. By using existing lanes, the new route can be built expeditiously at low capital cost, and with minimal disruption to existing businesses along the segment.

As for the west 11th segment of the route, I am conflicted. That whole street, from chambers on is an urban strip mall wasteland, and a mass transit solution out there should be a priority for the city. Still, the current plan will impose hardship on existing businesses, and unlike the 6th/7th alignment, doesn't have 8 lanes of existing travel to utilize without a dedicated bus lane. Also, the significant nature of the build of this full alignment dictates a timeline that won't see the route operational for more than half a decade.

I'd like to offer an incremental approach for consideration. The first step should be to extend EmX along existing lanes of travel to a new transit nexus at Blair between 6th and 7th. Some or all West 11th, highway 99 and river road buses could be rerouted as express buses with fewer stops that both run more frequently and terminate at this new nexus, yielding many of the benefits of rapid transit without significant capital cost. This approach would serve several purposes. West Eugene transit riders could travel in west Eugene without first having to pass through downtown. Some express buses could travel inbound 11th to outbound 6th and inbound 7th to outbound 11th, resulting in zero transfer travel along these west Eugene corridors. Operating frequency could increase without increasing operating cost because of the removal of duplicate service into downtown. And finally, subsequent EmX routes could be planned easily down any of these major corridors as a continuation of this incremental approach.

I hope this concept is useful in the ongoing discussion of west Eugene transit improvements.

Sincerely,
Mark Frohnmayer
Whiteaker neighborhood resident
Property owner, 508, 530, 544 Blair
Founder and President, Arcimoto