

Summary of Public Involvement - Portland Streetcar Loop Project

Public involvement is a key element in public decision-making. The Portland Streetcar Loop Project has had several decision points where choices about transit in the have been made after substantial opportunities for public involvement have been afforded. Perhaps the first public involvement was offered with the 1972 City of Portland *Downtown Plan*, which called for an emphasis on public transportation. In 1988, the Portland *Central City Plan* called for "...an inner city transit loop (possibly on Grand Ave)." Each of these decisions was preceded by public hearings where the public had the opportunity to voice their thoughts.

More recently, the City of Portland and private local interests funded and constructed a streetcar on the west side of the Central City with service beginning in 2001. Seeing the very favorable results, the City of Portland assessed the possibilities of extending streetcar service to the eastside of the Central City. A summary of the public involvement for the 2003 *City of Portland Eastside Streetcar Alignment Study* is included on pages seven and eight, below. Eight public meetings were held, including two workshops in February and April 2003, with invitations sent to over 1,400 individuals and organizations and attendance of 60 and 50 people respectively. Briefly, this public involvement effort concluded with overwhelming support for streetcar service on the Portland central eastside from both the neighborhood and business communities.

Most recently and upon the decision to seek federal funding assistance, an Eastside Transit Alternatives Analysis was conducted in late 2005 and early 2006 consistent with federal regulations and guidelines. A summary of the public involvement efforts for the Eastside Transit Alternatives Analysis is included on pages two through six, below. An even more extensive public involvement process was completed including multiple fact sheets, presentations to interested groups, newsletters, web page and e-newsletters, 2,200 postcard mailer, a media advisory, a newspaper ad, a public open house and a public hearing. Copies of individual public responses, ads, etc. are included in the *Eastside Transit Locally Preferred Alternative Report*, Appendix B. In addition, public bodies including the Portland City Council, Multnomah County Commission, TriMet Board and Metro Council all held publicly noticed meetings where a resolution concerning the Eastside Transit Locally Preferred Alternative was considered. Copies of these resolutions, considered after the opportunity for public testimony, are included in Appendix A of the *Eastside Transit Locally Preferred Alternative Report*.



I. Introduction

The Eastside Transit Alternatives Analysis, begun in 2005, is studying potential transit alternatives to improve circulation between the Eastside, Lloyd, Pearl, Downtown and South Waterfront districts that make up the central city. Potential alternatives include the extension of streetcar or continued bus service on the eastside. The study follows an earlier process initiated by the City of Portland and Portland Streetcar Inc. that recommended extending existing streetcar service from the Westside to the eastside of the central city.

The purpose of the study is to improve central city transit circulation, local connectivity and access. As the central city develops and increases in density, a higher percentage of trips in the areas being studied will need to be carried on transit to help ensure mobility for residents and visitors to the region.

The alternatives analysis built on the earlier process and used the same Project Advisory Committee made up of business owners and residents from east and Westside districts as well as interest group representatives.

The study offered numerous opportunities for public involvement including attendance at Eastside Project Advisory Committee meetings, several facts sheets and study information available on Metro's web site, two open houses (April 2005 and May 2006), two e-newsletters (April and May 2006), a public hearing (May 2006), a forty-five day comment period (May-June 2006) and meetings with community and neighborhood groups.

In addition to traditional public involvement opportunities, Project Advisory Committee members contacted property owners on the Eastside to discuss support for formation of a local improvement district to provide funding for the project. These discussions provided an opportunity to educate owners about the process and receive written comments from them.

II. Summary of outreach activities

Multiple fact sheets were produced in spring 2005 and 2006 to provide project history, identify study goals, outline alternatives and alignments and share information about the Project Advisory Committee, timeline and public involvement opportunities.

Metro staff and PAC members made several presentations to community groups, neighborhood associations, business organizations, interested advisory committees and local governments.

The June Metro Councilor newsletters, sent to constituents around the region, contained an article about the Eastside Transit Alternatives Analysis with information about providing public comments.

Postcards were mailed to business and property owners along the proposed alignments as well as interested persons, advocacy groups, neighborhood groups and elected officials to invite

participation at the open house and public hearing and in the public comment period. Just fewer than 2,200 postcards were mailed on April 21, 2006.

E-newsletters were sent to over 4,000 interested parties in April and May to share information about the open house, public hearing and public comment period.

A media advisory was distributed on May 2, 2006 to appropriate local media. The release included information about the open house, public hearing and public comment period. Following the advisory, stories were done by the Oregonian (May 11 and June 29) and the Business Journal (May 22). An editorial in the Business Journal ran on May 26.

A newspaper advertisement for the open house, public hearing and public comment period was placed in the April 27 Oregonian, all zones.

An open house was held at Metro Regional Center on May 3. Just over 40 citizens and one print reporter (Business Journal) attended. The open house was open for three hours and featured:

- a. Illustrated stations explaining the project history and timeline, options considered and findings of the study. Each station was staffed by project staff (Metro and partners) who were available to answer questions and explain details.
- b. Video simulation of streetcar operations on the eastside showed how the streetcar will operate in mixed traffic
- c. Comment cards that citizens could use to provide feedback on the options and comments on the project

A public hearing was held before the Eastside Project Advisory Committee at the Portland Building on May 10. Roughly 20 citizens attended the event and six provided oral testimony to the committee. The maps and information used at the open house, including self-mailing comment cards due June 30, were made available again at the public hearing.

III. Public outreach findings

Public comment period May 3 -June 30, 2006 (copies attached).

Open house

Attendees at the open house appreciated the information, maps, charts and traffic analysis visual simulation. Staff reported that some people they spoke to had strong opinions about the options but many were seeking more information about the options. A number of people strongly support streetcar. Concerns expressed about the options included: cost control, desire for buses over streetcar and specific design issues to address pedestrian and/or traffic issues. Some people had questions about the options themselves. Others asked about the process and timing of upcoming decisions.

Six people completed comment cards at the open house.

- a. Three comments favored streetcar and focused on specific design suggestions: 1) run entirely on MLK/Grand avoiding 7th Ave., 2) run in left lane across Broadway Bridge to avoid turning conflicts, 3) add signals at transfer points on MLK and Grand to calm

traffic, 4) prioritize Grand and Harrison signal for pedestrians and streetcar, 5) locate the Grand and Morrison station at the near side of Morrison for better access to businesses.

- b. Three comments indicated a desire for a bus circulator to be evaluated along with the streetcar in addition to the no-build alternative, which includes current bus service. Of these three, two want trolley buses (or rail-guided) evaluated and one wants to see the same streetscape improvements with a bus option as with streetcar.

One person mailed a comment card in after the open house. She expressed concern over use of Grand Ave. for the streetcar prior to implementation of Milwaukie light rail as the auto and truck traffic impacts would be great.

Public hearing

Six people offered oral testimony to Project Advisory Committee members at the hearing. As time allowed, the committee engaged in conversation with those who provided testimony. The committee asked staff to report back on use of trolley buses since more than one person who testified mentioned it.

Testimony at the hearing included the following:

- a. Three people support use of streetcar to connect the west and east sides of the Central City. One requested a stop at the Rose Garden and ongoing consideration of a 7th Avenue alignment. One supports the MLK/Grand alignment and hopes to see traffic calming and development opportunities on both streets. One supports more streetcar lines in SE Portland and wonders if the lower portions of the Marquam Bridge could be used rather than a new crossing.
- b. Two people support the use of trolley buses rather than streetcar to create an eastside connection. They favor the trolley buses because of cost issues. The buses themselves may cost the same as a streetcar but there is no need to install or maintain tracks. They carry a similar number of people and are currently used successfully in Seattle, San Francisco and Vancouver B.C.
- c. One person expressed concern about the overall vision for the transit system, especially as it relates to cost and traffic impacts. On this study, he is concerned about the route, specifically: use of already busy streets such as the Broadway Bridge, MLK and Grand. This person favors a MAX yellow line "Eastside connector" heading south from the Rose Garden to connect with the proposed Milwaukie light rail.

One attendee at the hearing provided comments in writing. He favors a streetcar on MLK/Grand due to the potential for increased development. He wants the full loop built and hopes that the need for a new crossing does not delay the completion of the project.

Written

The City of Portland Planning Commission wrote a letter to the City Council expressing their support for the extension of streetcar on the eastside. Their support focused specifically on the concept of a streetcar loop to promote circulation, the increase in overall transit ridership, and the potential for increased development along the alignment. They acknowledged a broad

collaborative public process. They realize that the project is not without challenges but see that it directly supports adopted city policies related to economic development, transportation and land use.

The Portland Streetcar Inc. Citizen Advisory Committee wrote a letter to the City Council expressing their support for extension of streetcar to the eastside as soon as is financially feasible. They look forward to the same success and community support for streetcar on the eastside that they've experienced on the existing line.

Following discussions with property owners about a potential local improvement district being created along the proposed alignment for funding purposes, seventeen letters of support were received from property owners. Owners articulated an understanding of the Alternatives Analysis process and potential funding plans. They expressed a strong preference for an extension of streetcar to the Eastside. Pending final plans, they support the formation of the local improvement district recognizing that they would pay into the district to help fund capital costs. They acknowledged that the project may need to be built in phases, based on available funding, but all of the property owners support the full loop alternative.

Three organizations in the Lloyd district, the Lloyd District Transportation Management Association (TMA), the Lloyd Business Improvement District (BID) and the Lloyd Executive Partnership (LEP), strongly support the extension of streetcar on the eastside as defined by the Locally Preferred Alternative. All three organizations look forward to an even stronger emphasis in the district on increased transit, bike and pedestrian trips and reduced auto trips. They recognize that streetcar provides significant economic development benefits that will support and leverage key infrastructure projects to increase private investment and public benefit in the district. They are all directly involved in efforts to create a local improvement district to help fund the project.

- The TMA represents 85 businesses in the district that employ nearly 10,000 of the district's 20,000 employees. Two neighborhoods, the Lloyd District Community Association and Irvington Community Association, are represented on the TMA board.
- The BID represents over 100 property owners who come together to fund public safety, transportation, planning and advocacy programs for the Lloyd district. The BID provided \$50,000 towards the initial streetcar study completed by the City of Portland.
- The LEP represents the five largest property owners in the Lloyd district. They focus creating clear economic priorities for planning projects and investments being made in the district with urban renewal funds.

One comment card indicating strong support for a streetcar extension was received following a presentation to the Portland Business Alliance Transportation Committee. The writer wants the full loop built and offered ideas about how to finance the project.

One comment card supports streetcar north of Broadway on MLK to promote revitalization and traffic calming. The identified area was not included in the scope of the study so no study results are available related to this idea.

One letter asked questions about subway in downtown Portland and reconstruction of old electric buses (pulley trolley) by TriMet.

One comment card was simply a request to be added to the mailing list.

E-mail

Twenty-eight e-mail comments were received.

- a. Two-thirds of the e-mail comments favor streetcar because it's quieter, more charming than buses, easier for the disabled and elderly to use and it supports investment and redevelopment. The route is good for people using other transit modes.

Of those who support streetcar, some specific comments were provided:

- One comment requests a stop at the Rose Garden.
 - One comment favors an extension east on Broadway and Weidler to 21st St.
 - One comment favors streetcar on 7th Ave. rather than MLK/Grand.
 - One comment specifically favors the full loop and mentions that there may not be enough residential property along the alignment.
 - Eight comments specifically support streetcar but focus on extending it north of Broadway on MLK to promote commercial revitalization and allow easy residential access to transit. The identified area was not included in the scope of the study so no study results are available related to this idea.
- b. One comment favors light rail over streetcar for increased speed. In addition this comment suggests express trains. One comment supported a light rail connection between current yellow line and proposed Milwaukie light rail
 - c. Four e-mail comments favor buses over streetcar because fares are always collected and they are faster, more reliable, less expensive, more accessible to homes and more secure. One commenter favors buses because they don't encourage infill, density and traffic congestion. One comment supported bus rapid transit because they cost less, are more environmentally friendly and not as noisy as regular buses.
 - d. One commenter wants to see all Portland streets paved before funds go to build a streetcar. One comment favored additional projects to serve East Multnomah County where there is a greater need.

Phone

Two comments were recorded on Metro's transportation hotline. Both messages were anonymous, and very brief. Both favor the use of buses rather than streetcar.

V. Conclusion

The public reached through this public involvement process agreed that Central City circulation is an important feature of the transit system. While some favor bus over streetcar, there is strong support for streetcar based on its demonstrated ability to promote economic development nearby. Of those who favor streetcar, no one specifically supported the two-way Grand design option but some favored modifications to or considerations besides the MLK/Grand design option.

CITY OF PORTLAND
EASTSIDE STREETCAR ALIGNMENT STUDY
(Local analysis completed and adopted by the City of Portland June 25, 2003)

PUBLIC OUTREACH SUMMARY

The following meetings/workshops were held during the preparation of this document. Each was open to the public and over 100 different people attended the various meetings.

• **Portland Streetcar Eastside Steering Committee Meeting**, Wednesday, February 5, 2003, 2:00PM – 3:30PM, Liberty Centre, 650 Holladay Street, lower level. Thirteen members of the Steering Committee attended this meeting in addition to eight staff members. Several people from the eastside community also attended. This meeting was open to the public and announced via newspaper and press release.

• **Portland Streetcar Citizen Advisory Committee Meeting**, Wednesday, February 12, 2003, 3:00PM – 4:30PM, Lloyd Center Tower, 825 NW Multnomah, 2nd floor. Invitations were sent to all neighborhood and business associations on or near the proposed streetcar eastside alignment to discuss the eastside alignment study and the public process. Attendees: 10 from the current CAC and 20 people from various Eastside neighborhoods. This meeting was open to the public.

• **Portland Streetcar Eastside Steering Committee Meeting**, Wednesday, February 19, 2003, 2:00PM – 3:30PM, Oregon Convention Center King Boardroom. Twelve members of the Steering Committee attended as well as 6-7 staff. We had about 10 neighborhood representatives at this meeting. This meeting was open to the public.

• **Portland Streetcar Eastside Workshop**, Wednesday, February 26, 2003, 5:00PM – 7:00PM, Lloyd Center Tower, 825 NE Multnomah, 2nd Floor. Invitations were sent to 1400+ property owners, and neighborhood and business associations along the proposed eastside alignment. About 60 people attended. This meeting was open to the public.

• **Portland Streetcar Eastside Steering Committee Meeting**, Wednesday, March 5, 2003, Oregon Convention Center, King Boardroom, 777 NE MLK, Portland. This meeting was open to the public.

• **Portland Streetcar Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting**, Wednesday, March 12, 2003, 3:00PM – 4:30PM, Lloyd Center, 825 NE Multnomah, 2nd Floor. This meeting was open to the public.

• **Streetcar Presentation at Hosford Abernethy (HAND) Neighborhood Meeting**, Thursday, March 20, 2003, 7:00PM, St. Philip Neri Parish Hall, 2408 SE 16th Avenue, Portland.

Vicky Diede gave a presentation on the current Streetcar operations as well as information on the proposed Eastside alignment. About 15 HAND neighborhood representatives

attended.

• **Portland Streetcar Eastside Workshop**, Thursday, April 3, 2003, 5:00PM – 7:00PM, OMSI Auditorium, 1945 SE Water Avenue, Portland.

Invitations sent to 1400+ property owners and neighborhood and business associations along the proposed eastside alignment. About 50 people attended. This meeting was open to the public.

(Minutes of meetings are available upon request.)