

Portland Streetcar Eastside Steering Committee Meeting

April 9, 2003, Oregon Convention Center, King Board Room, 2:00PM

Members in attendance: Rick Parker, vice chair; Jeff Blosser; Mike Bolliger, Richard Brandman for Rex Burkholder, Dick Cooley, Donna Forsberg, Tom Markgraf, Rod McDowell, Bill Medak, Brad Perkins, Maria Rojo de Steffey, Dee Walsh

Staff attendance: Kay Dannen, Rick Gustafson, Matt Larsen, Peter Finley Fry, Steve Iwata, Dave Unsworth, Rick Williams

Others: Joe Angel, Mark Rohden, Sean McCusker

1. Meeting called to order

The meeting was called to order by the vice chair Rick Parker. The next meeting will need to change from April 30 in order to accommodate Hank Ashforth's schedule. The steering committee will be polled to determine the next meeting date. The meeting will continue to be held at the Oregon Convention Center King boardroom (new addition) and is scheduled for 2:00PM. All future meetings are open to the public.

2. Public Workshop

Kay Dannen reported on the last eastside study workshop, which was held at OMSI auditorium, Thursday, 5:00PM – 7:00PM, April 3, 2003. Format was very similar to the Feb. 26 workshop with workstations set up entitled:

- System overview / Streetcar information
- Eastside alignment
- Platform stop / Vehicle information
- Finance
- Operations
- Public process

During the workshop, Vicky Diede from Portland Department of Transportation gave a slide presentation on the current streetcar and information on the proposed eastside alignment. Participants at this workshop had an opportunity to ask questions. Comments from participants were generally in favor of the eastside alignment. Consideration for bike ease and safety was recommended from the bike supporters who attended this meeting. No more workshops are scheduled at this time.

3. Eastside Tour

Rick discussed the eastside tour, which was held on Wednesday, April 2 and a special thanks to Jeff Blosser for the use of two vans from the Oregon Convention Center to accommodate the 40 participants. The proposed eastside alignments were followed and discussed, including some review & touring of the current Westside line. Disembarking at different locations gave tour participants the opportunity to view some of the alignment challenges, such as connections to buses, etc.

Rick would like to have the steering committee join him and political figures; Jim Oberstar, Peter DeFazio and Earl Blumenauer at the Doubletree Hotel at 10:45am on Wednesday, April 23. Rick has arranged to have a streetcar moved to that location for the duration of this visit. By attending this event, you can demonstrate to these public appropriation committee members your support of federal funds for the eastside streetcar project.

4. Draft set of recommendations for an Eastside alignment

Rick distributed the draft report of the eastside streetcar alignment study recommendations, which includes alignment, phasing, public support and implementation. The steering committee recommends that the alignment study continue to the next step by implementing the following actions:

- Steering committee
- Citizen process
- Environmental assessment
- Alternatives analysis
- Preliminary engineering
- Finance plan
- Engineering funds
- Amend regional transportation plan
- Development proposal

It is expected that at our final meeting, that an approval of this recommendation be adopted. It is possible that we could convene an additional meeting to accomplish this adoption. It is expected that the technical committee will have a technical report available soon for distribution. It is important that all steering committee members understand this recommended adoption.

Richard Brandman for Rex Burkholder - Even though the alignment choice seems to be specific for phase I, Richard is suggesting that we list our options for future studies. Currently Grand is not conducive to streetcar operations and it would be necessary for the City to make the necessary investments to make MLK and Grand streetcar friendly. Richard also recommended that bike lanes be included in the early engineering.

Donna – Buckman neighborhood has recommended not using SE 6th and SE 7th as the streetcar route. This neighborhood is not interested in changes in the zoning. It is understood that you would need street improvements on MLK and Grand and addition of street signalization at many intersections if you used SE 6th or SE 7th.

Rick – is has been the priority of this group to make MLK and Grand work for streetcar operations. It is intended that the draft recommendation portray the preference of this group, but at the same time recognizes the challenges that each alignment may pose including MLK, Grand, 6th and 7th. Grand/MLK indicates poor performance for peak streetcar operations. 6th and 7th streets, although show they are operationally better, pose redevelopment challenges. The Technical group will be discussing all these issues more thoroughly and presenting their findings to this group.

Brant – suggested that we define our set of recommendations, which shows our commitment to MLK and Grand.

Mike Bolliger concerned that options not mentioned. The possibility of streetcar using 6th and 7th as an alignment option raises rezoning issues that neighborhoods impacted by the alignment are not interested in changing.

Dee – suggested that using MLK/Grand reinforces development already on these streets.

Joe Angel – suggests that the project do a cost benefits analysis as part of the alignment study to determine the best alignment to use in deference to scarce resources. Suggests using 12th Avenue bridge by Benson High School to Sandy then east on Sandy to MLK to utilize an already existing bridge. Rick will add this alignment option to the study. Joe would also like to see policy issues raised by alignment to be debated. He is suggesting using as much of the current infrastructure as possible for construction. We need to be smart about how we spend money. How does the spread of the alignment impact development? If you enlarge the loop – the operation time of streetcar goes down. Joe also suggested a south alignment, which would use Division under the MLK viaducts, over the railroad crossing to OMSI and connect to the possible future Caruthers Bridge.

Rod – OMSI is landlocked for transportation and are further jeopardized by the possibility of TriMet pulling their bus service from OMSI. Rod is concerned about being in phase 3 and would like to be included in phase 2 of the project.

Dick Cooley – need to address MLK/Grand and definitely need connection for OMSI and other businesses in that area.

Rick – maybe we need more discussion in phasing and should include OMSI in phase 2. Grand is a strong transit street where MLK clearly needs lots of work.

Rod – if the Caruthers Bridge were delayed, would like to make sure that project planning to OMSI is not delayed.

Joe – does not want the alignment to OMSI missed if the Caruthers Bridge is delayed or cancelled.

Rick for Hank Ashforth – Lloyd District feels that the 7th Avenue Bridge is very important to transit connections to the central eastside, but recognizes that this would not be part of the streetcar project.

Bill Medak – Suggests the steering committee make a strong alignment recommendation and clearly designate phase I and phase II.

Brad Perkins – Would prefer to have OMSI as phase II and if Caruthers Bridge loses financing that the project use the Hawthorne Bridge. He would like to have the Caruthers and/or Hawthorne Bridge be in phase III.

Rick – HUD could earmark money for a feasibility report. Smith and Blumenauer to request \$1 million from HUD for eastside extension work. Federal funds would support 50% of the project. On the past streetcar capital cost, the percentage paid by the local improvement district (LID) has been 17%. Rick would suggest expanding the steering group to include business and neighborhood leadership as we move along the process. He also recommended we expand the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) to include the existing members with addition of neighborhood representatives from the eastside. The current CAC brings to the eastside ten plus years of streetcar experience and will provide valuable leadership as we go through this process.

Richard – Changes to Grand Avenue need to be done to better accommodate streetcar operations. Work would need to be done at the bridgeheads as well as street and sidewalk work.

Brant – The addition of 7th Avenue as a potential streetcar alignment has the potential of taking some traffic off Grand and MLK.

Rick – the technical committee is meeting on April 10 and will have a first draft of their report done and sent to committee members soon after.

5. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Steering Committee is to be scheduled. It will be held at 2 PM at the King Boardroom of the Oregon Convention Center.

6. Submittal Process

Rick – It is proposed that we take the final eastside alignment recommendations to the PSI board on May 13. Review and approval processes will be scheduled with Portland City Council, Portland Development Commission, Multnomah County Board of Commissioners, Metro and JPACT.