

## Portland Streetcar

Citizen Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes  
September 15, 1999

Members in attendance: Kay Dannen; Vicky Diede; Steve Fosler; Stan Lewis; Ken McFarling; Vern Rifer; Ingrid Stevens; Chris Smith.

Others in attendance: Doug McCollum; Steve Fosler; J. Hahn Lee; Carter MacNichol, Sarah Shaoul, Chloe Eudaly, Nick Denicola.

### 1. Update on Potential New Stop

Carter MacNichol talked about the possibility of placing a new stop near 10th and Oak in response to requests from neighborhood merchants. He said they had originally asked for a stop between Stark and Oak Streets, but two driveway cuts make that impossible because there isn't enough room - and there are no options for moving the driveways.

The next option would be between Washington and Stark. One concern is that US West recently installed a new utility vault underneath, and the streetcar designers would have to make sure there would be no conflict or that changes could be made to the vault. He suggested that the merchants present at the meeting contact Tom Bechtel, manager of the Pittock building next to the proposed stop, to make sure he has no problem with this proposed location.

Sarah Shaoul said that she appreciated the information and the knowledge that the project managers were pursuing their request. She had wanted information for a long time and had not felt it was forthcoming. She thinks the Stark street site would be a good spot. Referring to the parking lot between Oak and Stark, she said that most people use the Oak Street driveway.

Nick Denicola said that even though there is only one entrance open, the lot is still three-quarters full. People always find a way to use it.

Carter said that if the stop is too far north on 10th Ave. it will intensify the problems of lane changes that already exist at that intersection. It's always preferable to have the stop at a corner, but it's not always possible. He said that there are plans to enlarge the island at Burnside to improve pedestrian crossings.

Kay Dannen said that creation of a new stop is not a certainty, but they are moving ahead with trying to make it work. Carter said they haven't found a fatal flaw that would stop it at this point. He said he would get back with the merchants by the beginning of October to let them know how plans are progressing. NOTE: As of October 1, the Streetcar project has added a stop to the alignment on SW 10th mid-block between SW Washington and SW Stark.

## 2. Construction Update

Kay Dannen distributed an illustration of the Central Business District describing the proposed construction schedule. She said the next construction challenge is crossing Burnside, which will take 10 days to two weeks. Only one lane of Burnside will be open in each direction during this construction.

Chris Smith asked why NW 19th was closed at Lovejoy over the previous weekend. He asked why the contractors didn't put plate down over the construction site to preserve access. Kay said she would look into it, as they normally do put down the plate when they are not working.

Kay has been meeting with the Association for Portland Progress about access into the Smart Park Garage on SW 10th. She said the most important issue is to get the message out that the garage and stores are open for business - you can park and shop

## 3. Next Streetcar Phase Planning

The City has established a new committee to determine the alignment for the streetcar's next phase. Michael Powell chairs it and John Carroll and Steve Fosler serve on it. The next meeting will cover PSU Master Planning and information about the North Macadam Urban Renewal District. They will meet every two to three weeks in hope that they will finish their work by the end of the year. Steve Fosler said that he hopes to remind people that the streetcar has always been intended primarily to support housing development.

## 4. Marshall Street

There is a proposal to close NW Marshall between 15th and 16th in light of streetcar operations and the maintenance facility. The functioning of Marshall is a big issue of concern to both the City and the Northwest area. Street connectivity is a high priority for the City. Chris asked the NWDA transportation committee to comment on the proposal, and committee members said they would like to have the options laid out for them more fully before they take a position.

Doug McCollum said the City recommends that Marshall should be a local street with two-way traffic and with no traffic signals. Vicky Diede, Doug and Chris agreed to schedule a meeting with the NWDA Transportation Committee on this topic in November.

Ken McFarling suggested taking out parts of Hoyt Street to leave more room for the Greyhound facilities. Vicky Diede said there are good reasons to consider that proposal, and they will be discussed in the future.

## 5. Traffic Management Along The Alignment

Doug said that the purpose of this project is to anticipate how the streetcar will perform and prevent unnecessary problems that will slow it down. Hahn Lee distributed a list of potential issues.

The first issue addresses was bike lanes on Lovejoy. Hahn Lee said there are potential safety problems with having the lanes on the same street as the streetcar. One option is to leave them, another is to move them to Marshall Street. A potential hazard is the streetcar overtaking bicyclists, especially where there are curb extensions and the bike lanes will merge into traffic lanes.

Vicky said the streetcar project is working with pedestrian and bicycle advocates. The newest design proposal calls for bikes to ride across the platform where people are waiting for the streetcar. There will be large signs that say "bikes use caution: yield to passengers."

A previous proposal moved bikes to another street, but bicyclists want to remain on Lovejoy. This newest option is preferred by bike advocates working for the City and in the community. She said the agreement between all parties is that if the bikes conflict with pedestrians for access and safety, the bikes will be removed. The stops will have tactile indicators to alert blind people to possible conflicts with bikes.

Vern Rifer moved to approve the proposal. Ingrid Stevens seconded the motion. The committee voted unanimous approval.

The traffic engineers discussed signal pre-emptions: sites where the streetcar driver could change signal timing to keep from missing lights and slowing down the operation of the streetcar. He said one spot would be at NW 23rd Avenue, where the streetcar must make tight curves, plus stop and then pull back into traffic. This will require special signals to keep from tying up the streetcar in congested traffic.

Chris asked if traffic backed up at the Lovejoy light on 23rd could be a major slow-down for the streetcar. Doug said the goal is to lengthen the light slightly on demand to clear the intersection, allowing the streetcar to pass.

Vern suggested eliminating parking immediately north of Everett to allow vehicles to pass cars waiting to turn left. He asked how long boarding the streetcar will take. Vicky said that it will take less than a minute, probably less than the time it takes to load a bus. And, because it will only stop on demand, it won't stop all the time at all loading areas.

Chris said that two way operations on Lovejoy and Northrup may be a problem if people don't want to drive on the rails. Doug said that the streetcar installation is one of the smoothest tracks ever installed.

Carter said that there will be a solid white line on the right. This will emphasize that parked vehicles must stay within that area or risk blocking the streetcar. One problem will be mirrors on trucks that stick out into the street.

Vern asked about the possibility of moving the stops back from the corners. Doug said that corners are always the best locations for stops. In addition, driveways limit the opportunities for moving the stop locations. Ken asked about the opportunity for stops on the far side. Carter said that there are a few of these on the alignment where they are the best location.

Doug said that the problem with far side stops is that they can cause traffic to back up into the intersection.

The committee discussed the possibility of making Lovejoy one way, with a protected right turn (a green arrow) and then a permitted right turn, to reduce the wait for pedestrians.

Carter said that all the intersections would be having new signal installation. Doug said that many options are possible, but any traffic changes that improve movement for the streetcar will affect other traffic movement.

Vern suggested creating a protected left turn at Lovejoy from 23rd. Hahn said that he is concerned that traffic will get diverted to Marshall if Lovejoy is too congested.

Vicky said that before they make any major traffic management changes other than at 23rd and at Burnside, the traffic engineers need to watch how the system operates and look for problem areas.

Vern said he is very concerned about the intersection at 11th and Burnside. Vicky said that the next phase of traffic management planning will address this corner.

Stan Lewis expressed concern that people new to the area will get confused with the tracks and bring things to a halt, as they do on the transit mall. Carter said that because the rails are so easy to drive on, he doesn't think this will be a problem.

Vern said that traffic safety will be a big issue. Vicky noted that all the MAX accidents have occurred in suburban areas where the trains operate at high speeds. She noted that at Saturday Market, where there is a lot of pedestrian activity, there have been no problems. Vern said the engineers should watch out for potentially dangerous areas along the alignment.

Carter said that the vehicles will have the capacity to communicate with the signals. Doug said that retrofitting the signals may be difficult, so it might be necessary to install those communication devices during the original construction.

Carter said that the contractors are beginning to install the stops, and they will complete one about every 10 days.

Ken said he thinks far-side stops are a good idea.

Doug said the biggest problem will be where there are a lot of cars turning left, especially in areas with high pedestrian traffic.

Chris asked if there is a computer model to anticipate operational issues. Doug said there is one, but it's very expensive to operate. Stan said that Tony Mendoza at Tri-Met has one that may be available. Vicky said she will look into finding one that may be available.

Hahn said that the big issue is making sure the project is prepared to make operational changes as needed. The key to that is thorough study and analysis in advance. Vern said that the long vehicle trial period should give us good insights into potential problems.

Steve said the engineers should figure out now how hard it will be to retrofit the traffic signals for pre-emption devices.

Hahn suggested that the project team and CAC should create a complete menu of options for every problem area that covers all alternatives - even if they are not appealing to neighborhoods or traffic engineers, Staff will bring such a list to the next CAC meeting. One of the areas they will focus on is 11th and Burnside.

Hahn said, as an example, that couplets are not popular, but if you rule them out initially you may end up with more congestion and more traffic diverting through neighborhood streets.

Chris said that if congestion problems are reduced in some areas, the neighborhood will look to the city to reduce commuter traffic in other areas.

## 6. Other Issues

Stan reminded the committee of serious accessibility problems, particularly for deaf and blind people, at West Side Max stations. Some of these required new way-finding facilities to be installed. At one station, Tri-Met had to tear down and rebuild a pedestrian bridge for accessibility reasons.

Stan asked for information as soon as possible about stops for the purpose of reviewing accessibility issues. Committee members also would like to see vehicle floor plans as soon as possible. However, the accessibility committee has no official authority over the streetcar. Vicky Diede said she feels confident that they have addressed accessibility issues on the trains and at the stops.

Ken referred to a series of photos of the PSU area near the previous alignment. He said that if PSU's concerns were about noise, he believed there was already considerable noise there as a result of trucks and drop boxes.

Vicky said that the issue of the alignment at that spot has already been decided, and that PSI has conceded to PSU's demands to put the track on 11th to Market, to 10th, to Mill Street. The new committee will be

studying the alignment from 10th and Mill to PSU and to the river. Vern said that there was some confusion about the new committee's charge, and Vicky said that she would clarify it before the next meeting.

Ken said that this new alignment requires three turns instead of one. Vicky said she didn't think it was the best option but it was no longer open for debate. Vern suggested having the track go straight down Market to 5th. Vicky said the CAC would look at the options at the next meeting. She said that the first phase terminus will be decided by the end of the year. With the current available money, they can build Market to 10th Ave. to Mill. If more money becomes available they can revise the alignment. She said there will be better signalization to make it easier for the streetcars to make those turns.