Portland Streetcar Citizen Advisory Committee
November 14, 2001, 3PM, Portland Oregon Visitors Association

Members in attendance: John Carroll; Steve Fosler; Mary Kennedy; Stan Lewis; Ken McFarland; Janet McGarrigle; Chris Smith; Collen Smith
Staff attendance: Rick Gustafson; Kay Dannen
Others: Carol Presson; Joshua Aaron; Bob Pike

The meeting was called to order and the minutes were approved. John asked for a moment of remembrance for Michael Dale. Michael on September 23, took his own life after sudden and severe depression. He had been a member of our CAC for some time, land chair for the Downtown Community Association and was very active in environmental issues. He was an avid hiker. His thoughtful comments and his quiet demeanor will be missed.

1. Nextbus Update.

The City Council has approved the purchase of the Nextbus global positioning equipment. A reader board will be installed at each of the platform stop locations, which will indicate how many minutes until the next car comes. Electricity to the stops has been a challenge at 8 of the stop locations. Installation of this electricity source is in process with 24 of 32 stops to be done initially. Stan recommended we look into the possibility of providing voice communication for the seeing impaired. Rick did not believe that Nextbus provides audibles, but will ask. The Nextbus system runs on the internet and we will look into ways to incorporate a voice portal for the seeing impaired. Chris volunteered to assist with setting this up. Nextbus assures us that the system can be calibrated and fully operational in 60 days. The superintendents at Streetcar will be logged into the Nextbus system and will be able to make necessary changes; such as indication that service has been delayed due to an accident, for example. Nextbus will provide a 5-year lease and operating agreement. It will provide continuous signalization.

Carol noted that the posted schedules are not always accurate and cause frustration to the user. Some of these issues will be resolved once Nextbus is installed and operational. Streetcar intends to print the schedules indicating the 15-minute headways and print actual times for the 20 and 30-minute times. Rick reported we should expect a schedule change on December 2, 2001.

Travel time for streetcar is determined by the amount of riders. As the system has more riders, it takes longer for boarding and deboarding. The MAX crossing intersection also determines the schedule and we are sometimes held up anywhere from 3-7 minutes; which is unacceptable. Ridership numbers for September were Mon-Fri, 4,600, Sat, 4,600 and Sun., 4,300 including ridership counts of vintage trolleys on weekends. The annual ridership goal is 1.2 million, which we will exceed. Skoda vehicles average about 56 riders per run with the vintage trolleys averaging 120. We are meeting 99% of the dispatched trains, have had 2 accidents that stopped service and 2 power outages. Occasionally the vintage trolley is taken out of service and replaced with a Skoda car because of the crush loads.

Steve recommended we post on the reader boards, “no smoking on the platforms”.

2. Application to Accessibility Committee for grant money to support vehicle modifications.

Streetcar has applied for state grant money in the amount of about $48,000 to support relocation of our fare machine and to perform a measurement audit on all ramp slopes on all cars, both sides. Carol suggested we lowered the fare box for people in wheelchairs. When we have a crush load (150-200 passengers) the bridgeplates will not operate. The A end of the cars were a little lower than the B end. That has been modified so they are now the same. All stops have been inspected and meet specifications. Steve mentioned it should be noted that problems have been identified and a significant amount of work has gone into making sure they have been addressed. John suggested that money be allocated from the operating funds to pay for the platform slope audit and repaid, when or if the grant money is received. Rick stated that the poles for the retrofit of the fare machines have been ordered from Skoda. The drawing for the bill changer has been received showing the price has changed from $1500 per machine to $3000. Gary Cooper, on his upcoming trip to the Czech Republic will check on this issue.

3. Streetcar benchmarks.

Current benchmarks will be sent to all CAC members. Benchmarks currently include:

- Safety
- Reliability
- Ridership
- Revenues
- Cost effective service
- Development

The benchmarks set up were patterned after Tri-Met’s and other Districts’ benchmark systems.

4. Restaurant guide and sponsorship update.

Kay reported a restaurant guide called “Ride and Dine” is at the printers and will be distributed next week. It includes 19 restaurants along the Streetcar alignment that have chosen to be included in this guide. All restaurants that are within 2-3 blocks and are in the local improvement district are eligible for this guide. Income from this guide for a six-month period is $5,700 with expenses about $3,000. Kay passed around a list of the restaurants participating. Kay also passed around a list of the current car and stop sponsors which include to date, 4 car sponsors and 25 stop sponsors. Kay asked for help in securing sponsorships for the remaining 3 Skoda streetcars (including the two arriving in mid-2002) and one Vintage Trolley.

5. Other business.

Police authority on vehicles. Rick explained that currently Vicky is working on rules of conduct to be used for Streetcar protocol. Authorized Streetcar personnel would then have the ability to exclude a
passenger from riding for a 30-180 day period. Once approved by legal council at the City it needs to go to City Council for adoption.

RiverPlace Extension. Rick reported and Janet confirmed that we have strong support of extending streetcar to RiverPlace. John suggested we have our next meeting at RiverPlace and invite Portland Development Commission to do an overview on activity in the area including the proposed OHSU tram project. Janet reported that 50% of the retail businesses have closed in the last year and parking is terrible. The only parking garage available is the most expensive in the City. In the N. Macadam area, the Zidell barge business is still operating; the Schnitzer property could be redeveloped. Work needs to be done and possible rethinking of the alignment to more meet the proposed tram from OHSU. Two condominium projects will be under construction at the first of 2002. Rick reported that the preliminary engineering contract has been approved and design has started. Janet will work with Kay to set up the January CAC meeting at RiverPlace.

Is Streetcar performing to the expectations of the community? John suggested 5 or 6 questions be developed and a poling of 30-40 business be done along the alignment to test the success of streetcar operations. Kay and Rick will work on developing the questions.

Future operating funding. Steve suggested we might want to revisit the funding package received from Tri-Met. Tri-Met is currently evaluating their service plan and it makes sense to have streetcar evaluated along with their system. To have 12-minute headways for streetcars, we need approximately $200,000 in additional funding. Rick did mention that Tri-Met would be experiencing a downturn in revenue because of the existing recession. We currently have a 5-year agreement with Tri-Met which provides for $1.6 million per year in operating dollars for streetcar.

10th/Clay platform stop. Colleen advised the committee that she has observed people tripping on the platform where we have an unmarked step. During the audit of the platforms, we agreed that we would also look at safety issues such as reported by Colleen, and at a minimum, have the City paint on caution paint at the step location. Colleen also provided the committee with some photographs, which shows the issue. Carol mentioned that the handrails are too high and do not prevent a wheelchair from passing under them.

Stan introduced Bob Pike. Bob is a national expert on disability issues and worked very closely with the Westside Light Rail Project and is currently involved with Interstate MAX. He has been following the Streetcar project, but had not had an opportunity to join our committee meetings in the past.

Rick clarified that there is no boarding or deboarding at 4th/Montgomery. With the cooperation of PSU, the streetcar is laying over at the PSU Urban Plaza stop and will leave the doors open for boarding. It was suggested that the operators display a sign that gives the departure time from this stop.
John reported one issue that a rider complained to him about, was the long layover times when crossing the MAX, especially on 11th. Rick explained that is of high priority and the issue is being discussed with Thomas Heilig at Tri-Met, who is in charge of this project. Commissioner Hales has directed that this issue be resolved.

Rick, Vicky and Kay met with Odd Ball Shoe Company regarding the temporary closure of Marshall. Seth and Zachary Longaker were upset with the closure of Marshall at 16th and asked streetcar operations to consider, at a minimum, opening the street during the day. It was agreed that we would open Marshall between 15th and 16th during the holidays. Also we would include retail representatives in the area on the task force committee to come to a resolution on how Marshall is to be treated. It is expected this task force will meet again once the Broadway Bridge is reopened. It is intended to make the temporary barricades more attractive and postpone decision on Marshall until 3-4 months after the ramp is open.

Monthly CAC meetings to be held at selected locations on the second Wednesday of each month at 3PM. The next meeting is scheduled Wednesday, December 12, at the offices of Shiels Obletz Johnson.