

Portland Streetcar Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting

Wednesday, January 16, 2008, 4:00-6:00 p.m., Shiels Oblatz Johnsen

**Members in Attendance: Chris Smith, chair; Lynne Coward; Bill Danneman; Mary Kennedy; Peter Kilbourne; Stan Lewis; Ann Niles; Susan Pearce; Michelle Poyourow, Events & Outreach Director, Bicycle Transportation; Carol "Zoe" Presson; Bob Richardson; Vern Rifer; Scott Seibert; Dan Zalkow
Others: Michael Cannarella; Linda Hoist, ODOT - Salem; Jim Karlock; Carolyn Young, TriMet
Staff Attendance: Kay Dannen, Julie Gustafson, Rick Gustafson**

1. Meeting to Order:

Meeting was called to Order by Chris Smith, chair. Introductions were made. Guest was Carolyn Young of TriMet.

2. Fareless Square Presentation by Carolyn Young:

Fareless Square discussion is a big issue and was even before the latest security issues.

Portland's Fareless Square was started in 1975, and since has been expanded 3 times (the latest of which was to Lloyd Center)

The Original Goals of Fareless Square:

- 1) Reduce air pollution from auto trips (Fareless Square is part of the air pollution solution)
- 2) Promote transit use
- 3) Make travel within downtown easy for retail, entertainment, etc.

Seattle has a similar Fareless Square, but in 1990 they reduced their hours from 6am to 7pm for security reasons. Denver has a free bus circulator to get people around their downtown.

Parsons Brinckerhoff conducted a study in 1998 about Fareless Square which addressed the issues of security, safety, crime, undesirable behavior, and attracting panhandlers – all of these things were seen as they expanded Fareless Square. There have been numerous complaints of aggressive panhandlers in the fareless zone. Since there are no fare inspectors in the fareless zone, there are less eyes and ears on the trains and at the platforms. The benefits of Fareless Square include increased ridership.

Other Issues regarding Fareless Square:

- Fairness to other jurisdictions
- Fairness to other businesses
- Transit equity – low income and minority riders.

Approximately \$1.7 million is lost in revenue for TriMet each year just for the Fareless Square Lloyd expansion. The entire budget for Fareless Square downtown is out of TriMet's budget.

Susan Pearce brought up the question of fairness with Fareless Square now that the streetcar is expanding to the Central Eastside and the short rides there will not be free. Ann Niles commented that the number of people affected by Fareless Square in Portland's Downtown is higher than in other areas (like Hillsboro).

People from all over use our transit system while in town (i.e. tourists, visiting business people, etc).

Fareless Square Ridership:

- 86,000 weekday boardings (44,600 on bus, 41,400 MAX). Most of these riders are on the transit mall and the MAX line. There is a discussion to changing Fareless Square to Fareless MAX rides within the Fareless Zone (omitting busses).

Chris Smith asked about the timeline for this discussion. This conversation about the long-term goals for Fareless Square really should be resolved soon so that any changes can be made in 2009 when the green line opens. After discussions, they will hire a consultant to put all the suggestions together so they can bring a document back to the CAC.

- 15% of bus trips that start within Fareless Square are entirely fareless. 45% have a pass. Which means in actuality only 7% are making a free trip entirely within Fareless Square.
- MAX – 31% of trips are entirely within Fareless Square. 1/3 have a pass. 20% are making a free tip within Fareless Square.
- Streetcar - % of trips within Fareless Square are much higher.

Free trips in Fareless Square are for the purpose of:

- 1) Going home - 27%
- 2) Going to work – 23%
- 3) Personal business – 12%
- 4) Going to school – 4%

Other responses included: visiting friends, medical appointments, recreation, and other. (This survey was not conducted all day therefore the figures are not exact, they are taken from a sample and estimated.) Stan Lewis voiced concern about the accuracy of the numbers in the survey stating that he had issues with surveys in the past and that the numbers may be skewed.

Zoe Presson commented that how the questions are worded can influence how people responded. Michelle Poyourow asked about the park and ride from the Lloyd District and any numbers they had from that.

Policy Objectives in relation to free trips:

- Shopping = 7% of bus trips, 13% of Max trips
- Dining = 5% of bus trips, 10% of Max trips
- Hotel = 6% of bus trips, 3% of Max trips

Today's need for the old policy goals:

- 1) There is no longer an air pollution problem
- 2) Transit use is not linked to free rides
- 3) Fareless Square does make travel easier, but how is it being used?
- 4) Limiting Fareless Square could increase revenue for more service, security or amenities.

Scott Seibert commented on the perception that TriMet has wanted to get rid of Fareless Square for a long time. He also commented that the major issues are not within Fareless Square; therefore, it makes it difficult to follow the logic of shortening the hours for Fareless Square. Carolyn Young responded that two years ago the big media buzz was the report that was given to the directors of TriMet stating that Fareless Square costs were better spent on expanding TriMet's service. Also, Homeland Security does not like free transit the way it's set up here in Portland because there is not the opportunity to approach people hanging around to ask if they have a ticket. Eliminating Fareless Square during certain hours allows police to have a reason to approach riders.

More problems occur after 7pm (after dark) but they are more code violations rather than crimes within Fareless Square.

New Opportunities downtown – Max green line opens on the Portland mall in September 2009.

Options for changing Fareless Square:

- 1) Limit Fareless Square to train (Max and Streetcar) transportation only
- 2) Reduce/change the boundaries (no Lloyd Center/Eastside)
- 3) Limit the hours of Fareless Square

Security initiative – by limiting Fareless Square hours to 7am – 7pm security officers are given an important enforcement tool; rowdy groups who currently travel between downtown and Lloyd are discouraged; panhandlers are discouraged; the perception that TriMet is unsafe is reduced.

Pearce asked how this will actually affect transit.

Vern Rifer asked how it will affect retail and economic development instead of the old goal of decreasing air pollution. Rifer also asked about the possibility of doing something a little different with Streetcar vs. what TriMet decides to do.

Dan Zalkow asked about the process and how it responds to the security issues. Young responded that this is really a measure to deal with security issues but it does not preclude a broader discussion. Public hearings regarding Fareless Square are ongoing. There were two public hearings January 16, 2008 with written comments being accepted until Feb 21.

There are two questions in front of us: Chris Smith asked for a message to take to the public hearing today. The second issue is if Streetcar should also change our Fareless Square when/if TriMet does. Zalkow said that he feels that streetcar and TriMet should go hand in hand. And that we should insist upon a decision-making process that includes Streetcar. An effort should be made to have one common answer. Bob Richardson asked if we want to be reactive or proactive. Rick Gustafson added that we don't have the capability to do inspections at night. We either risk an article about the unreliability of Streetcar or we have to adjust our operations to allow for those inspections. Richardson asked if some of the revenue from stopping Fareless Square could be allocated to inspections.

Lynne Coward asked about any violence or crime that has occurred in relation to Streetcar.

Gustafson responded that our incidents are on the increase but they are related to drugs, homeless issues, etc. (people not getting off the floor). Streetcar calls Cheers rather than police for most incidents. There are approximately 4-5 incidents a month (around 45 last year). We hire people to assist with our inspections. They conduct a survey of the type of fare paid with the assistance of a Streetcar manager or superintendent who can ask the rider to leave the train if they cannot produce a fare.

Lewis voiced concern about the change in fare structure being a mine field for destructive behavior. Rifer commented that we have to have a serious look at the consequences of changing Fareless Square on our system that is in harmony with TriMet's approach but not necessarily with the limit to finding the same answer.

Richardson asked about how this might affect stop sponsorship. Kay Dannen hasn't heard anything in regards to this issue.

Niles wondered if this was more of a "seat of the pants" reaction to current security problems.

Poyourow commented that she feels that the change may be a good idea, but agrees that it should be a long-term process.

Rifer believes that we need to be engaged in this process.

Bill Danneman stated that the 7-7 hours could address the problems within the cars, but could be an issue at the stops. Smith responded that outside Fareless Square police and fare inspectors may approach riders to question if they have purchased a ticket if riders are within the boundaries of the TriMet stop location.

Pearce added that she feels it is very important that we (CAC) be at the table and that the decision not be hasty.

Ann Niles motioned that “we as a group should suggest to TriMet that this is a long-term process and to have this be a part of the 2009 changes rather than immediate.” Susan Pearce seconded the motion.

The CAC voted and passed the motion unanimously.

Richardson reminded us of the operational issues Gustafson brought up earlier. Richardson stated that to the maximum extent possible we (the CAC and PSI) should align ourselves with TriMet’s decision regarding Fareless Square while still taking into consideration Streetcar’s operational constraints.

Seibert does not support the 7-7 hours for Streetcar because of the early commuters and dinner rush as well as the First Thursday riders.

Pearce responded that she would like more information before a decision is made. She thinks there is a potential for the Streetcar being used more as a circulator and does not believe that today is the right time to make the decision.

Niles agreed with Seibert that we should disengage and that Streetcar is used to support restaurants and local economy. (There is no parking in the Pearl and people use Streetcar to get to places).

Richardson added that there is a perception that the Streetcar is “toys for the rich” and that if we don’t follow along with TriMet that perception could be increased.

Rifer motioned that the CAC position be that no change in fare structure for the streetcar be changed until it is brought back to the CAC for further discussion and a vote and that the CAC commits to having special meetings as necessary. Richardson seconded the motion.

Peter Kilbourne commented that Fareless Square makes Portland more appealing to visitors. Niles added that it helps the economic development for West Portland.

The CAC voted, the motion passed unanimously.

3. Public Comments/Business:

Introductions of members who entered late.

4. Project Updates:

Loop: When the Streetcar crosses the Broadway bridge how does it integrate with the current alignment? The current plan is the Northrup loop configuration (turn North on 10th to join the existing alignment and add new track on 11th where streetcar can turn around and return to east alignment). The advantages of this option are:

- 1) That it pulls streetcar service north into the Pearl District and
- 2) Preserves parking on 1 block along Lovejoy (leaving only 1 block of lost parking).

The disadvantage is that there will be out of direction travel (which won’t be as much of an issue if the Lovejoy/Northrup couplet happens).

The second option is turn around at Hoyt. This does not offer connections to the Northwest. If we ever wanted to run a 23rd to OMSI alignment it would cause out of direction travel in both directions.

The Northrup option is supported by the neighborhood and business associations. It will cost \$4 million more for the Northrup option, but that is money that can only be spent in that district. The loop really has to run as a loop by 2015 with a second line (the original line). Option B (turning at Hoyt) is a huge concern/impact for the community since it eliminates parking and does not increase circulation to the neighborhood. Both options accommodate the future Northrup/Lovejoy couplet. Richardson reminded the committee of his objection due to cost savings and the apparent simplicity of option B (Hoyt). The Steering committee has asked for input from the CAC. Smith asked the committee to endorse an option, make input, or to decide to sit back and watch the process. Pearce commented that as a neighborhood activist she supports the neighborhood and moved that we support the Northrup option. Seibert seconded the motion.

Poyourow asked about the ride-time difference between the two options (the Northrup option is 90 seconds longer of travel time) and then asked if option B was built first would Streetcar be able to retrofit to option A in a few years. There is serious work starting in implementing the Northrup/Lovejoy couplet and PDOT is on board and has acknowledged that there would be traffic relief and is ready to move on to the next stage.

Pearce asked if the Urban renewal dollars are available now and was concerned that the retrofit option could have issues with funding in the future if the Urban renewal funds are no longer available.

The committee voted and passed the motion 6-3.

5. Bike Movement in and around the streetcar alignment – Michelle Poyourow, BTA

Poyourow presented that there are a lot of people who are crashing on the tracks but a lot of these accidents are not being reported and tracked. The only ones that are tracked are the ones that are serious and have been entered in the trauma system. Most are broken teeth, scrapes, bruises, etc. She requested information from the committee since she feels they may have information, thoughts or experience on this issue. Rifer added that there is currently no technology to cover the gap in the tracks at this time. Dannen added that the city has devised signs that are posted along the alignment. Pearce asked if the accidents ever happen other than when bicycles are running parallel to the tracks. Poyourow responded that the main problem is when bikes are running parallel to the tracks. One response to the problem is being clearer as to where bicycles should be on both 10th and 11th. (Often bikes are in the middle lane). The long-term solution is to put this in the planning for future alignments. Kay commented that when the green line MAX opens there will be bike lanes as part of the construction and alignment. One other thing that could help is making the North/South park blocks a low traffic bike route. Next step could even be bike lanes on non-streetcar streets. Niles feels it is important for transportation planning that bicycle representatives always be at the table. Pearce responded that having a pedestrian representative is also crucial. Dannen asked that Poyourow prepare bike safety tips which could be included on the Streetcar webpage.

6. Other business:

Due to Block 49 construction the furthest South end stop (SW Lowell & Bond) will be closed starting February 18, 2008 for 18 months.

We are now on Transit tracker, flyers will be printed soon! Check the website for station Stop ID numbers.

The next meeting for the Streetcar Citizens Advisory Committee will be Wednesday, March 5, 2008, 3:30pm-5:00pm at Shiels Obletz Johnsen, 1140 SW 11th Avenue, Suite #500, Portland, Oregon.

Please call Kay Dannen at 503/478-6404 or email at dannen@portlandstreetcar.org if you have any questions regarding this committee or have items for the agenda. The CAC meetings are open to the public.