

**Portland Streetcar Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting**

**Wednesday, July 8, 2009, 3:30-5:00 p.m., Shiels Oblatz Johnsen**

**Members in Attendance: Chris Smith, chair; Debbie Cronk; Sorin Garber; Susan Pearce; Zoe Carol Presson; Bob Richardson; Vern Rifer; Scott Seibert**

**Others: David Brandt; Jake Cohen, The Oregonian; Arnold Panitch; Dustin Posner; Patrick Sweeney, PBOT**

**Staff Attendance: Kay Dannen, Julie Gustafson, Rick Gustafson**

**1. Meeting to Order:**

Meeting was called to Order by Chris Smith, chair. This is a special meeting to review the Portland Streetcar System Concept Plan.

**2. System Plan:**

Patrick Sweeney with the City of Portland Bureau of Transportation presented the latest update of the Portland Streetcar System Concept Plan. The word "concept" was added to the title to clarify the purpose of the plan. There is no specific funding or timeline attached to any of the proposed corridors beyond those that are already in the pipeline. Scott Seibert asked what the process would be for the Northwest District Association to stand against the NW 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> corridor. Sweeney responded that the best course of action would be to support a corridor north of Burnside into NW with alternatives analysis of 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>.

The proposed comprehensive planned streetcar corridors represent 58 double-track miles that could be added. The concept corridors (including existing track) totals 16.1 double-track miles. The addition of the comprehensive plan corridors strengthens the connection to the Portland City Plan. Chris Smith stated that the model for streetcar is now in the central city and that he can see where the green lines can be seen as branches from the loop. Smith asked if these corridors are the ones Portland needs most.

The Portland Streetcar System Concept Plan has been a two year process that was originally a stand alone study. Through the process the plan has been connected to the Portland Plan which has helped shape the plan and has benefited both plans. Sorin Garber commented that he supports the Portland Streetcar System Concept Plan but that the report seemed to him to start with 25 pages of promoting streetcar rather than just a nuts and bolts plan. He added that if there is enough public support for a plan then there is no need for the extra information and if there isn't enough support maybe there shouldn't be a plan. Vern Rifer commented that we can't just have a blanket approach for the entire community. Some neighborhoods are highly supportive of streetcars in their area where as others are highly concerned about streetcars and what they mean for zoning, density, bus routes, etc. Sweeney responded that the report can be more concise and that in the technical write-up the connection to the appendixes is not strong enough.

Bob Richardson added that as someone who went through the working group process he noticed that even amongst supporters there were a lot of questions and that the report is a good response to those questions. Seibert commented that having the information about other cities' streetcar projects does effect Portland and that having the information in the report is helpful. Susan Pearce added that having the educational components is very important for those people that could be highly supportive, but are not familiar with the differences between streetcar and other forms of transit and how they work together to form a transportation network. Garber commented that, as

someone who hasn't gone through the entire process he would get more out of a nuts and bolts report.

Arnold Panitch commented that when streetcar was first built in downtown Portland he did not understand why the alignment was through an empty zone, and then the Pearl developed. Then streetcar was extended to empty land which has become the South Waterfront. He hopes that the message of streetcars and this plan would be to identify underdeveloped areas to help revitalize them rather than being put into well established zones. Sweeney responded that the reason the established corridors are included (ie Hawthorne/Belmont) is that those corridors are popular pedestrian areas where a streetcar could help encourage people to leave their cars at home.

Dustin Posner commented that we need to identify what the most important message of the plan and put a focus on that in the front of the document. Rifer suggested putting a message on the plan at the beginning of the document with all the "sales pitch" following. That gives people the option to continue reading but will also leave those who don't read the entire plan with the main information.

Seibert added that he likes the plan but that the political portion of the plan is missing. Streetcar cannot be just a technical question; there is a political conversation that needs to be had above the table. Sweeney responded that on page 72 of the plan there is some discussion of the political side, though it is more thorough on the technical side. PBOT doesn't do many city wide projects and there are only so many things that can be done in association with the System Concept Plan. Sweeney recommended that the CAC draft a letter addressing any concerns raised as well as recommendations of things that should be included in the report. Garber stated that he doesn't understand the political issues with TriMet. Sweeney responded that the biggest issue is Operational funding.

Bob Richardson commented that there is no technical reason that a corridor, such as the suggested corridor on East 102<sup>nd</sup>, could not run in isolation if it is connected to the MAX tracks since a streetcar can travel along the MAX tracks in the morning or at night to travel to and from the maintenance barn.

Chris Smith asked if the CAC wants to provide formal feedback to the plan. Sweeney gave three dates for the committee to remember. July 14, 2009 is the last time Sweeney will update the planning commission. August 11, 2009 will be a public hearing on the plan. September 9, 2009 the plan will be presented to City Council. Garber asked if there is anything that the Council is having an issue with which the CAC could help clarify or support. Sweeney responded that one issue that was raised by the planning commission is the concern about gentrification along streetcar corridors. Another issue is the funding of streetcars and the burden on property owners particularly outside of the Central City. Pearce commented that gentrification is a sticky issue along MLK and Grand adding that there is a real sense of urgency in the CEID that the district not become like the Pearl which used to be an industrial area. Seibert commented that the Pearl is not a bunch of yuppy's that have moved into the area, but that it has allowed for the disabled and the elderly to maintain a home where they have access to transit that can help them get around on their own. Posner added that most of the areas being discussed in the System Concept Plan are not empty areas where new neighborhoods can be created but rather are established areas that need a little bit of help.

Pearce asked why the plan stops at 122<sup>nd</sup> rather than extending to the city limits. Sweeney responded that there were other corridors that extended further east in the early stages of the study but through the process of the plan they determined that there was less community support the further east the alignments went. Pearce added that there was a concern that this plan was going ahead without even considering the Portland Plan and that she is very relieved to hear that the two are now being seen as pieces of the same puzzle and are being incorporated into each other.

Panitch commented that he would recommend that future streetcar corridors look at how to attach to hospitals as well as other such locations in Portland that need better access. Pearce responded that the hospitals in Portland have good shuttle services that extend past connecting to MAX stops. Garber added that in the letter we should endorse the plan with reminders of the desire to maintain the urban growth boundary. Pearce added that we should comment in our letter that the System Plan and Portland Plan should be looked at as a whole rather than individually. David Brandt added that it would be worth giving the same detailed treatment to the Comprehensive Plan Corridors as was given to the Concept Corridors addressing the issues that arose with each line to help answer the questions that people will have as to why each corridor was placed into its category. Seibert suggested that a simple change such as switching the colors from green and yellow to purple and orange could prevent the assumption that the concept plan corridors are a done deal. Posner asked if there is anything that needs to be done at this time while we wait for the Portland Plan to evolve. Sweeney and Smith responded that there are alignments that are already in the works that will not be held up by the Portland Plan. Pearce added that maybe we need to put those projects that are viable giving current conditions should move ahead and not be put on a shelf while we wait for the Portland Plan. Sweeney responded that this plan has a good potential to stay alive since there are people, like this committee, that are streetcar champions that won't let the plan die.

Richardson added that the letter in support of the plan should include a bullet point about matching up different routes to help fund the routes in lower income areas. Smith reviewed the bullet points for the letter. The committee agreed upon the bullets. Smith will draft a letter and email it to the committee before the next meeting.

The next meeting for the Streetcar Citizens Advisory Committee will be Wednesday, August 5, 2009, 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](mailto: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.