

Portland Streetcar Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting

Wednesday, December 7, 2011, 3:30-5:00 p.m., City Hall, Pettygrove Room

Members in Attendance: Owen Ronchelli, chair; David Brandt; Carolyn Brock; Bill Crawford; Bill Danneman; Peter Finley Fry; Sorin Garber; Peter Kilbourne; Janet McGarrigle; Cora Potter; Zoe Presson; Vern Rifer; Richard Ross; Scott Seibert

Others: Dan Friedman, Lee Perlman, Richard Rahm, Wendy Rahm, Felicia Williams

Staff Attendance: Julie Gustafson, Rick Gustafson, Shoshanah Oppenheim, Art Pearce

1. Meeting to Order:

Owen Ronchelli, chair, called the meeting to Order. The minutes from the November 2, 2011 meeting were approved.

2. Public Comments:

Felicia Williams, Chair of Downtown Neighborhood Association presented on their position paper/resolution that articulates their opposition to eliminating the free rail zone for Streetcar. Williams and the DNA requested that the CAC consider two things: 1) enforcement; 2) keeping the fare low to promote usage of the Streetcar.

Wendy Rahm presented that she is concerned about incorrect information that was given out at the last meeting that there are no other cities with a free transit zone. Rahm stated that Salt Lake City and a city in Virginia both have free transit zones. Rahm is also concerned about the City and the CAC making decisions without complete data. The initial purpose of Fareless Square was to maximize use of transit to keep pollution under control and to keep traffic under control. In her opinion, the equity argument is not valid as the Free Rail Zone is free for all who visit the area, not just for those who live there.

Dan Friedman, Board Member for DNA, touched on the highlights of the DNA's position paper. He summarized the accomplishments and accolades that Portland has received in large part due to the Free Rail Zone/Fareless Square. Friedman then went on to cite the recent history of attempts to eliminate the free zone. Friedman stated that he shares the concerns of the CAC and transit authorities over the equity but believes that the downtown area differs greatly enough from other areas of the city to be treated differently. The emphasis on ease of use, simplicity and other hallmarks of the streetcar system would be lost if a fare is implemented. It is the conviction of the DNA that most visitors and irregular users of Portland Streetcar could be discouraged by a system that needs interpretation.

Richard Rahm presented that he is opposed to the elimination of the free zone for streetcar as equity is a false issue. Rahm made the argument that the Central Eastside is getting a large investment with the addition of the Streetcar Loop, which is not equitable to other areas of the city.

3. Update on Fare Study & Loop Open Houses

Shoshanah Oppenheim presented that over the past two months, in addition to meeting with neighborhood and business associations all along the Streetcar alignment, the Portland Bureau of Transportation held two Open Houses with a total attendance of approximately 65 people. A Virtual Open House was also created which, to date, has garnered over 40 responses and remains available on the home page of the Portland Streetcar website.

Oppenheim laid out the concerns that were heard from the Open Houses. The first concern is that the change in the Annual Pass cost from \$100 to \$250 is too steep of a jump. One suggestion that was heard repeatedly was to gradually increase the fee annually between 2012 and 2015. Oppenheim and staff heard support for the circulator fare, though generally commenters were supportive of the lower (\$1) fare with the \$2.10 fare valid for the same 2-hour window. There was consistent support for increased enforcement of fares on the Streetcar.

Vern Rifer asked if other associations had weighed in on the fare policy. Oppenheim responded that Buckman Community Association would be meeting this week and would be sending a letter in support of eliminating the Free Rail Zone. Peter Fry added that the CEIC Land Use committee met yesterday and would be writing a letter in support of removal of Streetcar from the free rail zone. Sorin Garber asked if there were any comments about maintaining a seamless system with TriMet. Oppenheim responded that maintaining a seamless policy was an overwhelming theme.

Richard Ross asked if we have data on MAX short trips compared with Streetcar short trips and that he shares the concern that the DNA articulated about a loss in ridership and an increase in auto traffic with the elimination of the Free trips. Oppenheim responded that an internal audit was done at PBOT that evaluated the cost of the circulator fare in comparison to the cost of parking for a short trip and that the cost of parking would be more than the cost of the circulator trip. Ross followed up by reiterating his issue with wishing to know which rail system did more to eliminate short auto trips.

Peter Fry asked if TriMet leaves the Free Zone as well, will the Streetcar circulator fare be impacted. Oppenheim responded that the Streetcar Circulator fare is a separate fare that Streetcar/PBOT controls. Sorin Garber asked if the issue of needed revenue has been discussed. Oppenheim responded that needing revenue is part of the conversation but that it is not the only piece of the pie.

4. Review of CAC Fare Policy Recommendation

Owen Ronchelli reviewed the straw poll from the November meeting and asked the committee to review the summary. Peter Fry asked if PBOT could add to their 1-pager on the fare policy that the TriMet fare can be bought on the streetcar. Scott Seibert commented that he has heard from NW Portland that they would like to be able to buy an all zone ticket on the streetcar. If Streetcar charges \$1 and MAX is free this will not promote ridership on the new line. Whichever entity makes the change first will take the brunt of the complaints and a hit in ridership. Seibert added that he has heard from others in NW that the conversation about equity is disingenuous and that the reason we are talking about fares is that we need the money for operations. Ronchelli responded that the conversation began with the equity issue, but it also about revenue and creating a sustainable, ongoing policy for streetcar as it expands. The City has moved to a Central City focus which includes the east side, the Lloyd District and NW. Carolyn Brock added that there is no such thing as free rail, it costs money to run those trains and the real question is who is going to pay for the service and what portion of that responsibility falls on the people riding the system.

Ronchelli stated that he will take the comments from the CAC and will draft a letter to PBOT and the City. Fry added that the comments about the Central City are very important and that the Streetcar will unite the Central City. Ross asked for clarification on the acceptance of the downtown bus pass. Oppenheim responded that the downtown bus pass is only valid within the Free Rail Zone. Ronchelli

will clarify that point in the letter. Rifer stated that the CAC should put forward the underlying principal to make the system as simple, accessible and affordable as possible. Rifer added that increasing ridership solves many of the problems. Sorin Garber commented that he supports the comments that Rifer added, but that the committee has already given their input and the letter doesn't need to be wordsmithed.

5. Proposed Operating Budget

Rick Gustafson presented the proposed operating budget for 2012 to the CAC. The City of Portland is going through major budget cuts due to the drop in gas tax revenue and TriMet is going through major budget cuts as well. Along comes the streetcar with its current operating budget as well as an increase in service. The next 6 months we will go through deliberations about what do we do in regards to building a budget and providing service while facing serious limitations in funding. It is difficult for both entities to tolerate hefty increases with no cut backs. Our service profile is 15-minute service on the Loop and maintaining the existing 12-14-minute service on the current line. The budget for that service is \$9.4 Million. The current budget for existing service is \$5.7 Million. We have added up the current contributions from PBOT and TriMet as well as the additional contributions that both agreed to contribute back in 2007 when the Small Starts application was filed. The Loop provides a whole new service that does not exist today which means it is more operating money because the existing lines will continue to run. The total of the existing and promised contributions from PBOT and TriMet add up to around \$7 Million. There are different buckets that additional money could come from including: on board fare boxes; platform fare boxes; and annual pass sales. 80% of all transit riders in the region will "touch" the Loop at some point in their transit trip. The Loop will open September 21, 2012 and we will be lucky to be short only \$2 Million for the operating budget. There is concern over opening a system and having it poorly received. It was suggested to the PSI Board that the Loop be opened with the proposed service with a commitment to operate at that level for at least the first year of service. Alternate budgets at \$9 Million and \$8.6 Million are also being discussed, but the goal is to convince the City to allow the PSI Board to try and come up with sufficient revenues to meet the original \$9.4 Million budget.

Sorin Garber asked what the CAC can do to help, for example an opportunity for public testimony. Gustafson responded that the best way to help is to support the efforts of the PSI Board to locate and secure funding such as helping the City sell their existing BETC credits. Every rock that we can find to turn over is what needs to be done, and any help that the CAC can provide is fabulous. It is essential that we offer quality service when the Loop opens. Ronchelli added that the CAC would like to see as successful a first year as possible. Richard Ross added that ridership on the east side MAX line took a while to pick up due to cost cutting measures that were taken at the beginning that prevented quality, robust service.

6. Lake Oswego Update

Vern Rifer presented on the Lake Oswego project. The preliminary report of the refinement phase can be found on the Portland Streetcar website. Some key cost cutting has occurred including: shortening of the Lake Oswego segment by 3 blocks; consolidating the park and ride facilities into one location; use of a single-track configuration for 2 miles; extensive use of paved track rather than the tie-and-ballast trackway; use of a single overhead wire; and procurement of 4 new streetcars rather than 6.

7. Loop Construction Update

Julie Gustafson reported that all track and overhead wire has been installed. All shelters have been formed and poured. Work is now moving into the punchlist and testing phases which will include the installation of 13 shelters at each of the shared Streetcar/Bus platforms. The remaining 12 shelters will be installed in the summer of 2012. Test trains will begin running in the Pearl in the next two weeks and on the remainder of the Loop as early as January.

8. Other Business

Owen Ronchelli reminded the CAC that there will not be a January meeting.

The next meeting for the Streetcar Citizens Advisory Committee will be Wednesday, February 1, 2012, 3:30pm-5:00pm at City Hall, Pettygrove Room. **There will be no January meeting of the CAC.** 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.