

Portland Streetcar Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting

Wednesday, March 6, 2013, 3:30-5:00 p.m., City Hall, Pettygrove Room

Members in Attendance: Vern Rifer, Vice Chair; David Brandt; Carolyn Brock; Bill Danneman; Cora Potter; Zoe Presson; Bob Richardson; Richard Ross; Ian Stude

Staff Attendance: Julie Gustafson, Rick Gustafson, Art Pearce, Chris Tucker

Guests: Arnold Panitch, Lee Perlman, Chris Smith

1. Meeting to Order:

Vern Rifer, vice-chair, called the meeting to Order. The minutes from the January 9, 2013 meeting were approved.

2. Public Comment

Arnold Panitch, resident of SW Portland and a big advocate for transit reported that he had a terrible experience on the Streetcar. On the morning of February 21, Mr. Panitch and 15 colleagues from Travel Portland got on the CL Streetcar at 10th & Alder and quickly arrived at their destination and ended up arriving early. The journey was part of their learning experience so that they can better recommend sites to tourists and visitors. At one point they had to go from the stop at MLK & Morrison south to OMSI and the sign read 5 of 6 cars in op, next arrival 35 minutes. The group is representing all of the visitors and they are so glad to have the CL Line to OMSI as OMSI was impossible to get to from the downtown hotels for the average visitor. On the return the same message was on the reader board. Some people walked, some took the bus and some waited for the streetcar. His point is that you can't run something that inefficiently and expect people to recommend it. He asked the CAC to do what they could to make sure that the printed schedule is kept. Julie Gustafson responded that currently Streetcar is running with all 11 vehicles and no spare vehicles. The new production vehicles were delayed. There are days where a streetcar is out of service, in this instance there was a train with a cracked windshield that needed to be replaced. When one train is out of service it causes one line to be short a train. Operations staff have weighed all of the options and with 10,000 riders on one line and 3,000 riders on the other line, the least bad option is to run 4 of the 5 scheduled trains on the CL Line maintaining the schedule for those 4 trains. This leaves one gap of 36 minutes between trains. Staff is tracking closely the accuracy and doing the best they can. Vern Rifer asked about the message saying 5 of 6 trains in op. Gustafson explained that the message should have read 4 of 5 trains in operations and that she will communicate with operations to ensure that the message is more clearly stated in the future as Panitch and the CAC misinterpreted in op to mean inoperable.

Panitch asked if streetcar ran 11 trains on the NS Line. Gustafson responded that streetcar had 10 trains prior to the opening of the CL Line, added one prior to opening day and have 5 currently on order with an option car to follow. Panitch asked how you could double the track miles with only one additional car in operation. Gustafson clarified that 6-7 vehicles ran daily on the NS Line with 3 spare streetcars at the maintenance facility. She added that once the new production vehicles arrive and are certified for operations streetcar will once again have spare vehicles and will not have the issue that Panitch and the Travel Portland volunteers experienced on the 21st. Panitch asked if the situation on the 21st was a unique situation. Gustafson responded that it is occurring more often than streetcar staff would like, but that they are responding to the situation and getting the message out to customers. She added that she will make sure that future messages are more easily understood.

Vern Rifer stated that he remembered the original decision would be to shortline the CL Line in the Pearl rather than leave a gap. Gustafson responded that the original decision was to

turn around in the Pearl but that the level of ridership on 10th & 11th caused delays in the service without the help of the CL trains so operations switched to leaving the gap. This was discussed at a prior CAC meeting. Rifer asked what the scheduled headway is on the CL Line. Gustafson responded that the headways are 18 minutes and that when a train is dropped there is one gap of 36 minutes that occurs approximately every 90 minutes. Bob Richardson seconded the idea of finding alternative language to in op.

Rick Gustafson asked if there was anything streetcar could do to make it up to the Travel Portland volunteers as there should be a way to make the apology. Panitch responded that fixing the problem is the best apology as well as sticking to the published schedule. Ian Stude thanked Panitch for his comment and for bringing this to the committee's attention. He recommended that once we have a firm date for having spare vehicles available that we communicate that to Travel Portland. Rick Gustafson responded that it will be no later than April 15, 2013. Rifer asked that the streetcar staff reach out to Travel Portland and increase communication with them. The committee thanked Panitch for coming to the meeting and for promoting streetcar.

3. E-Fare Presentation

Chris Tucker of TriMet presented to the CAC on the eFare system. eFare, or electronic fares, is something that much of the rest of the transit world embraces. It allows you to board the various modes of transit by tapping a validator and board the vehicle. This eliminates the need for paper tickets for most riders. TriMet has been doing research on this for years and has been waiting for the technology to really develop and become cost effective. Now is the time that the cost structure starts to make a lot of sense and would replace the decades old technology still in use by TriMet. They are still in the early phase of this project and it's a great opportunity to get reactions and feedback from the CAC while the system is still being designed. This is envisioned to be a universal system across the region on TriMet, Streetcar and C-Tran. Currently the agencies have fare reciprocity between the systems, but each agency has their own fare instruments that require bus drivers and fare inspectors to keep track of all the different fare types, where they are valid and how long they are valid.

Electronic fare is made up of five components. The first is your payment device that could be almost anything in the future from a smart card to your debit/credit card or even your smartphone. The validator is a piece of equipment that would be on the transit vehicles that you would tap upon boarding. The network is the wireless communications. The back office system would be a big, regional system that would determine if the payment device is valid. The fifth is the payment processing.

This project has some key objectives. It should be simple to use and easy to understand for the riders. It should also be more cost efficient. Currently the regional transit system is very dependent on complex machinery with many moving parts which require a high investment in maintenance. The eFare system would really on more static technology, the validators, with no moving parts. The system would also make regional travel between the modes seamless to the rider as it would be valid on all modes requiring one universal fare instrument for all travel on TriMet, Streetcar and C-Tran. There is also a stretch goal of funding this project entirely through cost savings in efficiencies. So far, that is still a reachable goal.

TriMet wants to communicate how they measure if this is successful. The first thing is to find out what the public thinks and what their experiences are based on surveys, comments

and feedback. Most other agencies that have implemented this type of system have had very positive results, but all of the agencies still want to hear from our riders. The second is to track boarding times and evaluate if boarding times have improved. We need to decrease the cost of fare collection. The agencies will also want to see what percentage of riders make the transition to the new system and how well it integrates all of the agencies/systems involved.

To date the leadership of all three agencies has been brought together to ensure that this will work at a policy level at all three agencies. The cooperation will continue through project implementation and beyond. The agencies are looking at a system-wide (region-wide) launch in 2017.

The way the current system works is that there is no benefit to a daily rider who cannot afford to purchase the monthly pass. This new system would allow for the same savings to be more widely applied as there could be a daily and monthly cap on spending for someone using the eFare system that would stop charging the rider after that cap is met. This would allow for those daily riders who cannot afford the monthly pass up front to be able to benefit from the same discount as those with the funds available at the beginning of the month. Art Pearce added that the City of Portland is a partner in the process.

Carolyn Brock asked for clarification that C-Tran is expected to be a part of the system-wide conversion. Tucker responded that yes, they will be a part of the eFare system. Brock asked if the advantage will still be there for those who do purchase the monthly pass. Tucker responded that the discount will still be available.

Bob Richardson asked what TriMet's current thinking is about distance based fares in regards to the implementation of the eFare system and hoped that there will not be a penalty in cost for the rider that makes multiple transfers in their trip or rides a long time as they are already doing their civic duty by getting cars off the roads. Tucker responded that this is a great question. Through research they have found many cities that do charge distance based fares that require you to tap when you get on and when you get off. A large percentage of riders forget to tap when they get off or don't bother. The biggest challenge is that it adds complexity and cost to the system. The lessons they heard loud and clear from other agencies is that it makes an incredible amount of sense to implement distance based fares but greatly complicates the system for the riders. The partners have decided that they will start with a flat fare system as it is easier to implement and easier to understand. The system will be able to accommodate distance based fares in the future if there is a desire to do so.

Richard Ross stated that after travelling to cities with a system like this he really liked the ability to quickly board the transit vehicles with the smart card system. He asked if TriMet and the partners will include some sort of Smart Card machines at the stop locations where you can purchase a smart card and add value to an existing card at the platforms. Tucker responded that self-service ticket machines like that are very expensive to purchase and to maintain. TriMet is investing heavily in the idea of a very robust distribution network which is becoming more common around the country. The goal is to cover the region with retail outlets like gift cards have done. The idea is to switch the behavior to only using the machines as a last resort.

David Brandt asked if this is a system that will allow for a set period of time to make a transfer so that transfers won't be penalized. Tucker responded that the plan is to have a

daily cap equivalent to the day pass rate. Rifer added that he was in San Francisco and that their system is not valid on all modes of transportation and wondered why that is the case. Tucker responded that he is not sure of the exact situation but that there needs to be a partnership set up between the various agencies which is something we have already done in our region. The second piece is that the systems are proprietary in nature and that it can sometimes be too inflexible and expensive for new agencies to join on after implementation. It took Seattle 15 years to roll out their smart card system with 7 agencies involved from concept to implementation. San Francisco is dealing with around 27 agencies. Rifer asked if back door entrance is envisioned on our region's system. Tucker responded that both Streetcar and MAX are expected to have validators at every door but that they are not looking at back door entry on the fixed route buses.

Bill Danneman asked if this system will work for the Tram as well. Tucker responded that the conversations have begun and that the plan is to include the Tram as well. Pearce added that conversations need to continue but that they are interested in being integrated into the wider transportation network with this new eFare system. Zoe Presson asked if this will be included on the paratransit system. Tucker responded that they don't want to put validators on the Para Transit system as it is a bit unrealistic for everyone boarding to validate using their cards. They are looking at a prepayment system where payment could be made using the eFare system when making the reservation. If you don't end up going on the reserved trip the fare would be refunded. Presson followed up by asking if Tucker will be presenting to the TriMet CAT committee. Tucker responded that he is on the agenda to present to the TriMet CAT committee. Ian Stude asked if there have been conversations about integration with the upcoming bike share system. Tucker responded that preliminary discussions have been had about ensuring that the system is flexible enough to integrate across modes, but the commitment to integrate with bike share is still a high level discussion. Stude followed up by asking about the employer based ID cards systems and if the eFare system will allow for those agreements to continue. Tucker responded that those agreements are a critical piece to all of the agencies and that eFare system will be a big piece of that. The likely scenario is that there will be a separate transit card that will be issued by the institute or employer and that the conversations are just beginning. Chris Smith asked if this will coexist with the GlobeSherpa application. Tucker responded that GlobeSherpa is expected to integrate into this system but the details are still being worked out.

4. Operations & Vehicle Update

Rick Gustafson reported that operations are still very challenged because of the lack of spare vehicles and that there is something strange in the air the past couple of months. There have been more crashes in the first 2 months of 2013 than we had all of 2012. This adds to the challenge of operating without spares. For example, in the first 12 years of operations we had to replace one windshield. In the past 2 months we have had to replace 2 windshields. Each windshield replacement takes 5 days to replace the windshield and cure the sealant before it can return to revenue service. Rifer asked if streetcar will revisit the shortlining option. Gustafson responded that they won't revisit the shortlining option as that resulted in the largest number of complaints by riders and appears to be the worst option available. They have tried operating an alternate schedule with even headways that does not reflect the published schedule and found that to be hard on the ridership as well. The least bad option is the current solution which is to take one car out of service and maintain the written schedule for the other 4.

Car 021, the first production vehicle, has been on the Portland Streetcar tracks since the third week in January. It has gone through all of the dynamic testing which is brakes and speed including running on the MAX tracks at up to 48 mph. There remain some issues with regards to finishing up the car that along with certifying for safety we accept the car which moves it from the manufacturer to our possession. Before this can occur the manufacturer has to complete all of the punch list items prior to acceptance. There are a couple of physical items that need to be completed before we will accept the vehicle. The next car is anticipated to be delivered March 22 and will probably take half the time for testing as the first car that is designed endures a far more extensive testing process than subsequent cars. Car 021 is expected to enter revenue service by the middle of April with Car 022 following in the middle of May. The prototype will be removed from service after Car 022 enters into service. Rifer asked for a recap of what will happen to the prototype. Gustafson responded that Rockwell and United Streetcar have proposed to switch out the drives at their expense. The new drive has a much higher capacity than the current drive which barely meets operations requirements. The new drive will resolve issues such as the higher noise emitted during operations.

Rifer asked if there is a hope to reduce the headways on the CL Line from 18 minutes. Gustafson responded that the budget for next year is the highest priority. The City and the new Mayor have to consider all sorts of challenges and PBOT's budget is in serious crisis with regard to the funds available to the organization. There is a lot of work that will go on in PBOT and the Mayor's office on the budget. All Streetcar is asking from the budget is to maintain the service levels from this year for next year. The plan for the 2014 budget is to go to 15 minute headways on the CL Line and 14 minute headways on the NS Line. Two things are going to happen in the meantime. The first is that we are going to experiment with shortening the cycle time on the east side from 6am to noon by 5 minutes. We are confident that we can create a different schedule for the morning that runs at 17 minute frequency instead of 18 minutes. We know we can't make it in the afternoon because of traffic and loads. The second thing that is going on is that TriMet, OHSU and PSU are working with us to upgrade the service to the life sciences building once it opens. We are still working on the details but it will probably mean that our 14 minute frequency will start earlier in the morning to accommodate the loads that will travel between the two campuses and the new building.

5. Operating Efficiencies Report

David Brandt reported that the subcommittee met on February 21 to discuss how they may be able to help the streetcar run more efficiently and quickly through the route. Essentially the ideas came down to three or four areas that may help improve efficiency. The first is stop signs. The idea was to change the direction of the stop signs or to replace some with signalization. The second area is to look at a number of the stops that are low use or redundant stops that may not be needed or even one location on 11th where two stops could possibly be consolidated. The third main area was to work with PBOT on getting better communication for the streetcars with the traffic signals on 10th & 11th. While the signals are synced to move traffic the streetcar often gets off the cycle due to stop dwell times. This was all done with the idea of improving efficiency to get more bang for the buck and also to help change the perception that walking is faster than taking the streetcar.

Bob Richardson added that he would like to see us engage the neighborhoods involved and that we are not looking to go in and change things but rather looking for alternatives that enhance the environment for more than just the streetcar. Richardson added that another item on the list is there are long sections of 10th & 11th that have 3 or more lanes and the

committee wants to look at the possibility of converting the track lane into a dedicated Streetcar and right turn only lane for those stretches.

Richard Ross asked if the subcommittee had looked at the possibility of eliminating the back in diagonal parking as it is not highly used. Brandt responded that they had not thought of that issue and that he is unaware of the history of that issue. Julie Gustafson responded that the ones on 11th between Jefferson and Main are often so full that you can't find a spot there but that they usually empty out by 5pm as the office employees all leave. Rick Gustafson responded that the Streetcar was not a factor in the angles parking decision. Ian Stude commented that the signalization of 11th & Couch seems like a practical idea though signals are expensive. Rifer asked what the instruction is for the operators when there is an empty stop. Rick Gustafson responded that their instruction is to bypass a stop when they don't have a request for that stop and don't see someone waiting at the platform.

Lee Perlman asked if there is a moral or legal basis by property owners to object to the elimination of a stop. David Brandt responded that any of these issues will have someone who is really invested in that particular stop or that particular stop sign and that any changes will involve community outreach and evaluation. Rifer asked if the issue with the underused stops is the operators not bypassing the stop or is the unique rider that waits at that stop. Rick Gustafson responded that both issues were raised and that both are valid. With the Harrison stop most operators bypass that stop as the visibility is good but there is the occasional rider that will wander down to that stop that could have just as easily waited at the stop between First and Naito that adds to the route time for that train as they have walked by either First & Harrison or walked by River Place to get there. Richardson added that when he originally suggested Harrison for elimination was the evaluation if there is another stop within the same distance for riders. Brandt added that there will need to be a high level of evaluation and that making one change will not make a large difference long term but that if we can add up enough savings to shorten the headways and get more runs out of each train that could really improve service to the riders.

Richard Ross asked if MAX has preemption in downtown and if so, why doesn't Streetcar as that would help improve the route times. Rick Gustafson responded that the cost of adding preemption depends on the equipment available. He added that the sophistication of the City signal system is improving every year and that we have very good cooperation with the City for these ideas. He suggested adding the preemption idea to the list for review and evaluation by Streetcar Operations staff and City staff. Rifer added that the issue on 11th & Couch seems to be more of an issue with Burnside rather than Couch. Julie Gustafson responded that there is also the issue at that intersection when there isn't a backup of cars from Burnside as but rather the traffic will back up at Couch because of the high volume of pedestrians crossing the intersection.

6. Other Business

No other business was discussed.

The next meeting for the Streetcar Citizens Advisory Committee will be Wednesday, April 3, 2013, 3:30pm-5:00pm at City Hall, Pettygrove Room and Council Chambers.

Please call Julie Gustafson at 503/242-0084 or email at julie@sojpdx.com if you have any questions regarding this committee.

The CAC meetings are open to the public.