

Portland Streetcar Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting

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

Members in Attendance: Owen Ronchelli, Chair; David Brandt; Carolyn Brock; Bill Danneman; Arlene Kimura; Sue Pearce; Zoe Presson; Bob Richardson; Vern Rifer; Richard Ross

Staff Attendance: Kay Dannen, Julie Gustafson, Rick Gustafson

1. Meeting to Order:

Owen Ronchelli, chair, called the meeting to Order. The minutes from the June 5, 2013 meeting were approved.

2. Public Comment

No public comment was made.

3. Mobile Ticketing

Julie Gustafson presented to the committee on the Streetcar Mobile Ticketing App. The app is currently in beta testing through July 26 and members of the committee and staff are among the testers. She demonstrated the use and features of the app on her phone. Beta testing is going well. Feedback has been positive to date with few issues in the beta test. The plan is to launch the app to the general public sometime in August.

Bob Richardson provided his feedback on the app. First, the Loop graphics don't line up in the background the way they were designed to line up. Second, it would be nice to be able to access a use history so that you can keep track of when you used the ticket. Third, Richardson was concerned about how the app will work with off network devices and wants further clarification on that. Arlene Kimura asked how many testers are using the app right now. Julie Gustafson responded that there are about 60 testers currently. Kimura followed up by asking if any testers are in the non-tech savvy group. Rick Gustafson responded that he is one of those testers who are not as familiar with technology and that the app has been easy for him to use as well. David Brandt asked if the app can be used on non-phone devices such as tablets and iPod Touch devices. Julie Gustafson responded that they would need to access wi-fi to purchase the tickets but that tickets are able to be used off network. Owen Ronchelli thanked the committee for their feedback. Julie Gustafson added that there is a lot of added capability in the back office as well which will allow for increased interaction and data.

Carolyn Brock asked if there is a blind person testing the app. Julie Gustafson responded that GlobeSherpa has someone connected to their company that is visually impaired who has been testing the app from the very early stages to ensure that the app was built correctly to interface with the reader functions on the devices. Zoe Presson stated that this is nice to hear as it was a concern of hers as a member of the Committee on Accessible Transportation. Her other concern is how this will impact those who don't use the tech. Julie Gustafson responded that this will now be another fare instrument available and will not replace any of the fares already in place. Brock asked if a PayPal account is needed to purchase tickets. Julie Gustafson responded that the first time you purchase you set up your account with a credit or debit card and the app gives you the option of storing that card for future use. The payment method and purchasing can also be done via the website for those who don't like to set things up from their phone.

4. Oregon Passenger High Speed Rail Update

Richard Ross presented to the committee on the high speed rail project that ODOT is conducting. He started by showing the committee a map that shows the travel times from outlying areas to the urban cores that included major choke points of the system. He reviewed a few of the options on the table including upgrading the UP mainline and the possibility of tunneling from just south of downtown all the way to Vancouver. No pricing plans have been shared with the committees yet. Ross recommended that the CAC start looking at the possibility of teaming up with other local entities to stimulate a bigger dialogue.

Carolyn Brock asked why there isn't a Portland to Seattle option in the plan. Ross responded that Washington is studying the Vancouver/Portland to Seattle portion while Oregon is studying the southern section. Vern Rifer asked what the planned speed will be. Ross responded he believes it is around 100-110 mph. Bob Richardson asked if this is true high speed rail or a higher speed than we currently have. Ross responded that the staff and planners are very careful not to call this high speed rail as it is really looking at a consistent higher speed than we have now.

Ronchelli thanked Ross for representing the CAC on the advisory committee and asked him to continue to update the CAC and let us know what they can do to support him. Sue Pearce added that she is working on a forum for the impacted neighborhoods along the corridor. Ross responded that the neighborhoods need to be informed but he is also concerned about the decision makers not being made aware of the situation too. Ronchelli committed to work with staff to help get the word out.

5. Fare Discussion

Owen Ronchelli kicked off the discussion about the potential of a change to the Streetcar Only Fare with a recap of the discussion from June. A packet of information was distributed to the committee with detail on fares collected and survey data for ridership numbers. Ronchelli reminded the CAC that the fare discussion began due to the discrepancy between the projected revenue and the actual revenue. Original fare revenue projections did not take into consideration the ridership benefits that many of the Streetcar sponsors participate in which provide annual passes to their employees and/or students. This would account for much of the difference between the projected number of tickets sold and the actual number sold. Carolyn Brock asked for a point of clarification that it is the revenue that is down and not ridership. Rick Gustafson replied that predictions were that there would be around 13,500 riders a day and that the last quarterly numbers had ridership around 12,000 riders a day. He reminded the committee that there are about 8-9 fare instruments that are valid on Streetcar and that only one of those will be impacted by the fare change. 45% of our riders have a TriMet fare, the Employer ID program is about 20% of the ridership and 10% is the Streetcar Annual pass which means about 75% of our riders are not impacted by a potential fare change. In Fiscal Year 2013 around 300,000 Streetcar Only tickets were sold.

Sue Pearce asked for clarification on the difference between the \$1 and \$2.50 fare and asked what percentage of the revenue from the \$2.50 and \$5 fares sold from Streetcar ticket vending machines goes to Streetcar. Rick Gustafson responded that 100% of that revenue goes to Streetcar. Julie Gustafson proceeded to review the changes to the sponsorship program that were included in the original Portland Streetcar, Inc. Board discussion of revenue. This includes increasing the cost of Streetcar sponsorships, increasing ridership benefit program costs and the increase of participation in the Off the Rails guide. (Current numbers are available on the Portland Streetcar website).

Richard Ross stated that he does not feel that the ridership being a bit below projections is not that big of a deal as the line is still being discovered. He asked if there is a contractual agreement with all of the Employer ID program participants and TriMet that state how much Streetcar should get based on how many riders they generate. Julie Gustafson responded that the Employer ID program is based on how many employees and/or students they have not the percentage of ridership. Rick Gustafson responded that there is not a revenue sharing agreement with TriMet but rather a lump sum agreement that is not tied to ridership.

Vern Rifer stated his concerns that ridership has dropped and asked if there is any correlation to the implementation of the \$1 fare. Rick Gustafson responded that in September of 2012 we opened a new line, which takes some of the ridership count from the NS Line, introduced a fare and reduced service all at once. Gustafson added that the fares probably had the largest influence on the change. Rifer responded by saying that we should be very careful about increasing the fare too much because it could drop the ridership even further putting into a level that is hard to defend. Rick Gustafson responded that the ridership on Streetcar is one of the best performers in the system in terms of cost per ride, performance and productivity in comparison to other lines. He clarified that the fares being a cause of the drop is not due to the amount but rather that there is a fare at all as it is well documented that some people will bike or walk rather than pay a fare where they may have taken Streetcar when it was free. Julie Gustafson added that we need to be careful when talking about a drop in ridership since we have not received the numbers from the Spring ridership yet which is typically the highest ridership of the year and that currently we are comparing apples to oranges in ridership numbers by comparing Winter to Spring numbers.

Bob Richardson stated that part of what makes the Streetcar Only fare great is that it is inexpensive and easy to purchase and that going to \$2 is so close to a TriMet fare that it would be more confusing to people and that at that point why not just have a synchronized fare system rather than one that is only \$.50 less. David Brandt stated that he can see the trend of taking Streetcar to a unified fare with TriMet in the suggestion of a \$2 fare. Rick Gustafson responded that this recommendation would suggest that but that it is worth further discussion. There is very little investigation nationwide into the short trip and how a flat fare system impacts those short trips. A flat fare is easy to use and understand, but does not necessarily encourage short trips. Portland Streetcar, more than any other project in the country, has generated data on the value of short trips. Rifer agreed and stated that we need to look at the customer and not just the economics. Rick Gustafson responded that he tried by starting with the data that 75-80% of Streetcar riders are not impacted by a change to the Streetcar Only fare. Brandt responded that the point he was trying to make is that because the numbers of TriMet passes and tickets is so large it would be nice to see a breakdown of how the lump sum combined with the money collected in Streetcar TVMs for TriMet fares and how that fits into the budget.

Richard Ross added that he would like to see a bigger analysis of Streetcar ridership works. Sue Pearce agreed that we need to have more, quality data before the committee makes a decision. She suggested we don't make changes in fares for at least a year and maybe even wait until 2015 to allow the ridership to grow, to gather further data and to tie it with the closing of the Loop.

Ronchelli stated that the discussion will continue next month and in September. Rick Gustafson thanked everyone for their input and really liked the idea of the "value" of the fare and of the short trips. He is very sympathetic with Pearce's suggestion of holding off as his original suggestion was to wait until September 2014 to raise the Streetcar Only fare as the service this year has been spotty.

He added that the committee originally floated the idea of an increase to \$1.50 but the issue of cash collection was raised as staff would need to collect the cash boxes from the trains 3-4 times a week rather than once a week to accommodate the change needs. Julie Gustafson added that another issue with the \$1.50 fare is that one of the 3 TriMet fares would no longer be available onboard the Streetcars as currently the Honored Citizen fare is the same price as the Streetcar Only fare so they are combined. She reminded the committee that there are only 3 fare buttons on the onboard TVMs.

6. Operations Update

Bob Richardson brought up comments from the Portland Transport blog about Car 021. The commenter stated that the sign that displays the next stop was not functioning internally. They also requested a time of day clock be added to future orders similar to some of the Inekon cars. Other feedback about the new cars included comments that there is a louder whine on 21 than on 1-10 but it is better than 15 and that the AC is better than the older cars.

Rick Gustafson reported that Car 15 is scheduled to go out of a service for a month later this summer to correct the whine, but that won't happen until there are enough cars in service to allow for enough vehicles in service. It has been delayed already to allow maintenance crews to perform repairs on the rest of the fleet from accidents so that we can both return the cars to full service and file the insurance claims. Almost every accident we have a claim against another insurance company. Car 23 is scheduled to arrive Monday, July 8 and should be in service sometime in late July early August.

7. Other Business

A brief construction update was given on the Jasmine Block. The alignment has been chosen and construction is currently scheduled for May to October of 2014. The current track will remain and be the southbound track with a new, northbound track around the outside of that track.

The Stephens Turnback construction is scheduled to begin end of July with 24 hour a day work August 5 – 9 including a Streetcar shutdown with a bus replacement to allow for the installation of the left turn track off of MLK onto Stephens. There will also be sidewalk closures on the Broadway Bridge to repair the non-slip coating the week of July 15th. Details will be on the website.

The next meeting for the Streetcar Citizens Advisory Committee will be Wednesday, August 7, 2013, 3:30pm-5:00pm at City Hall, Pettygrove Room.

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.