



**Citizen's Advisory Committee
Sept. 16, 2010
Carvlin Hall, St. Philip Neri Parish
2408 SE 16th Avenue**

Meeting Notes

PMLR CAC Members Present:

Rick Williams – CHAIR, Lloyd District Transportation Management Association
Barbara Andersen, Oak Grove
David Aschenbrenner, Hector Campbell Neighborhood
Ray Bryan, Historic Milwaukie Neighborhood
Paul Carlson, Oregon Museum of Science & Industry (OMSI)
Valerie Chapman, Oak Grove
David Edwards, Oak Grove
Catherine Goode, Ardenwald-Johnson Creek Neighborhood
Neil Hankerson, Dark Horse Comics
Greg Hemer, Milwaukie Lumber
Erin Kelley, Bicycle & Pedestrian Advocate
Lance Lindahl, Brooklyn Neighborhood (BAC)
Ken Love, South Portland Neighborhood
Eric Miller, Island Station Neighborhood
Fred Nelligan, Oak Lodge Community Council
Dan Packard, Eastmoreland Neighborhood
Susan Pearce, Hosford-Abernethy Neighborhood (HAND)
Terri Pucik, Sellwood-Moreland Neighborhood (SMILE)
Valeria Ramirez, Portland Opera
Dee Walsh, Member-at-Large, Reach Community Development
Dan Zalkow, Portland State University (PSU)

PMLR CAC Members Absent:

Lina Bensel, Member-at-Large, Independent Living Resources Center
Debbie Cronk, South Waterfront Neighborhood
Arnold Panitch, TriMet Committee on Accessible Transportation (CAT)
Jeff Reaves, Central Eastside Industrial Council (CEIC)

Welcome, announcements

Rick Williams, CAC Chair, welcomed the group and reviewed the agenda. He introduced Catherine Goode, a new member representing the Ardenwald-Johnson Creek Neighborhood.

Dave Unsworth, TriMet Deputy Project Director, introduced Dan Blocher, TriMet Executive Director of Capital Projects.

Dan was selected for the position previously held by Neil McFarlane, who is now TriMet's General Manager. Dan's background includes 15 years with TriMet and two years on transit projects in England and Scotland. Dan knows TriMet well and has developed creative financing and contract management plans.

Dan Blocher, TriMet Executive Director of Capital Project, provided an update on the project budget.

On July 23, just a few days after the last CAC meeting and as the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) was being printed, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) notified TriMet that it would match 50 percent of the local contribution to the project, not the requested 60 percent.

Dan explained although high-level FTA officials had supported a 60 percent match and encouraged the project to pursue it, the federal agency ultimately chose to provide only a 50 percent match due to its own budget constraints. There is growing competition for these New Starts dollars, and in the absence of congressional reauthorization of the transportation bill, FTA is not able to provide more than 50 percent to projects greater than \$1 billion in scope.

Dan emphasized that 50 percent still compares favorably with the average of 34 percent federal funding for projects of this size. TriMet now considers this question closed. The project will advance on a 50 percent federal share.

This change means the project must resubmit the FEIS finance plan to rebalance the project, a process we're calling "recalibration." Similar steps have occurred at similar times on previous light rail projects. Thus, while this news is not what we hoped for, it is neither unprecedented nor unusual. TriMet staff is confident and the agency is prepared to deal with the changed funding assumption and move on.

Dan reviewed several considerations for recalibrating PMLR finances. Among the most important was that changes should not impede the project schedule. The critical in-water construction period of July 1-October 31, 2011 must be met. We are already drawing close to FTA's deadlines for FEIS review and Final Design approval. Meeting the deadline will be tight but do-able. Delaying work could also allow competing jurisdictions to vie for these federal funds and increase project cost, requiring additional local resources and/or scope deferrals.

Closing the finance gap to recalibrate the budget requires new local dollars, cost reductions or a combination of both. To close the gap entirely with local funds would cost about \$137 million. To close the gap entirely with savings would require \$300 million in cuts. This seeming discrepancy – why it takes more money in cuts than it does

in spending – hinges on the federal match. The federal government matches local funds dollar-for-dollar. Making up the finance gap with new local dollars attracts new federal dollars. Cutting a dollar worth of expense eliminates the matching federal dollar.

A cutting-only approach would not only be very difficult; it would not create the project the region signed up for (e.g., shortening the line would stop the rails somewhere north of Bybee Boulevard). A change of that magnitude would also delay the project schedule. The best approach is a balanced approach: a combination of trimming expenses and raising local dollars.

TriMet has begun conversations with local stakeholders about raising more funding. Those efforts, despite the lean economic times, have borne some fruit:

- \$10 million through Oregon Department of Transportation for federal flexible Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds.
- \$27.4 million through Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP) flexible funds. Metro's Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation (JPAC) met on September 2nd and recommended a further \$27.4 million to the project, in addition to \$72.5 million it had already committed. This demonstrates the strong regional commitment to the project.

We are continuing to look for other sources of local funding:

- About \$10 million from donations of right-of-way held in public ownership. Such donations would be treated the same as cash and would be considered a local contribution eligible for federal matching dollars.
- About \$54 million from additional local resources.

These extra local funds still will not make up the required \$137 million in additional funding, so project partners are looking to find the balance through cost reductions. Some criteria identified for cost reductions include:

- Cuts must not jeopardize safety or security.
- Cuts must not diminish quality standards achieved on other lines.
- Cuts must not disrupt the project schedule.
- Cuts should be shared by all areas across the alignment.
- Cuts should be elements that have potential to be added back later if resources are available.
- Bigger reductions make it easier to recalibrate.

We started to identify potential cost reductions using a mitigation list developed for the FTA a year ago. FTA required a list of items to cut from the project if contingency funds ran short. That provided a starting point for potential cost reductions. Not all of those items were available for this recalibration. Adding and removing from that FTA list, we produced a final list of about \$62 million in proposed cuts (list in CAC packet).

This list of cuts and additional local dollars provides the information we need to get into Final Design and begin construction. The list is a snapshot in time of what we know now. However, we will know much more during Final Design. We will begin to get prices

on major construction contracts, and we believe the current construction market is good for us. This may give us more room to maneuver as we advance through Final Design and construction.

Questions

Susan Pearce: Are federal officials OK with adding local dollars if their ultimate source is the federal government?

Dan Blocher: Yes. The funds are still considered local if they are controlled by local jurisdictions and had not come from the federal New Starts program.

Rob Barnard, TriMet PMLR Project Director, discussed the list of cuts and deferrals, beginning with project-wide and operational changes:

- Reduce construction contingency by 6 percent (\$10 million savings).
- Delete purchase of two additional light rail cars (\$9.9 million). This reduces opening day vehicles from 20 to 18. This is considered adequate for the opening years, while pushing the purchase of more vehicles further out in time.
- Reduce Ruby Junction light rail maintenance facility expansion (\$3 million). By purchasing two fewer rail cars, TriMet can expand the facility to accommodate 18 cars rather than 20.
- Delete PMLR share of electronic fare system replacement (\$1.3 million).
- Delete ice caps on overhead catenary system (\$1.1 million). This is easy to add back on in the future.
- Delete track switch heaters (\$1 million). An easy add-on later.
- Decrease insurance budget (\$925,000). Insurance needs decrease as project scope decreases.
- Reduce art program budget by 10 percent (\$320,000). This reflects our philosophy that all areas of the budget should contribute to the cost savings.
- Reduce supplemental bike parking throughout alignment by 20 percent (\$220,000). City codes call for 80 bike parking spaces. The project had planned to build 460 spaces. We identified 47 of the most expensive (difficult-to-build) bike parking spaces. Eliminating those 47 spaces resulted in reducing the bike parking construction budget by 20 percent.

Questions

Dee Walsh: Could the deferral of overhead wire ice caps affect service during cold weather?

Rob Barnard: Yes, in foul weather it could affect service.

Dave Unsworth: We acknowledge that all of the elements on this list are important and difficult to cut. But we have to live within our budget. These are items we can eliminate or defer and meet our budget, but which could be added at a later date if resources are available.

David Edwards: At what point can you use contingency funds?

Rob Barnard: FTA requires “hold points” in a contingency management plan. At project milestones, FTA requires a check-in or review of the contingency. At those points, it is possible to adjust the contingency. Those funds, if available, are then released and made available for spending.

This list represents a snapshot in time; there is a continuum in order to get to the next hurdle, to get to Final Design and get pricing. We needed this list to get FTA approval to move to the next level. As we move through the project, we may find other funds, or other savings.

Susan Pearce: How quickly can the ice caps and switch heaters be added back?

Rob Barnard: They are fairly easy to retrofit, but they can't be installed quickly enough to respond to an imminent storm.

Susan Pearce: Can you reduce the art budget further than 10 percent?

Dave Unsworth: We didn't pick this 10 percent arbitrarily. There was a lot of thought given to these changes, in many meetings with our jurisdictional partners. I think it's important to get through the whole list first.

Next, Rob discussed station-area changes on the list, beginning at the north end of the alignment:

- Adjust Harbor structure alignment but preserve ODOT's future I-5 ramp, freeway improvements (\$477,000).
- Delete Willamette River bridge's mid-span viewing areas but retain 14-foot multi-use path (\$1.1 million). Pedestrian loading is more per square foot than for a light rail vehicle. This extra loading created a ripple effect throughout the structure, with significant cost implications.
- Delete viewing areas at Willamette River bridge towers while retaining 14-foot multi-use path (\$1.1 million).
- Remove aesthetic shaping of Willamette River bridge's pier caps (\$1 million). This preserves the integrity of the design, towers, railings and features.
- Delete remaining streetcar “close-the-loop” facilities within the light rail alignment (\$3.7 million).

David Aschenbrenner: Does that mean the Portland Streetcar would not be using the bridge initially?

Rob Barnard: Initially it was never going to. “Close the Loop” is an unfunded project that needs more than just this section of track (new vehicles, for example). Our idea had

been to squeeze a little scope into the PMLR project to make it cheaper for the region in the future.

Erin Kelley: So there will be no extra width at (what would have been the) belvederes on the Willamette River Bridge?

Rob Barnard: There's no extra width set aside for viewing areas, but the bike/pedestrian path is still 14 feet wide along the whole bridge. That compares with 10.5 feet on the Hawthorne Bridge.

Dave Unsworth continued with station area changes:

- Delete pedestrian overcrossing at SE 13th – SE 14th avenues (\$1.65 million). We are looking instead at providing further improvements to the pedestrian connections on Powell Boulevard under 17th Avenue.
- Delete replacement of Rhine-Lafayette overcrossing (\$3.3 million). The current overpass, while non-ADA-compliant, does provide access over the Union Pacific rail tracks. That would remain. Meanwhile, project partners have applied for TIGER II funds to replace this structure.
- Eliminate accommodations for future Harold Street station (\$100,000). This does make it more expensive to build this station in the future.
- Delete southern pullout and elevator (retain northern pullout and elevator) on Bybee Bridge (\$1.85 million + \$700,000). People approaching or leaving the station from the south side who need an elevator would have to cross the street (crosswalk and signal on west end of bridge). There would not be an eastbound bus stop at the station entrance on the bridge (existing stops east and west of bridge).
- Reduce Tacoma Park & Ride from an 800-space garage to 320-space surface lot (\$10.8 million). The lot would have landscaping and water quality treatments, and the same bicycle and pedestrian connections.
- Delete side platform at Downtown Milwaukie station, retain center platform (\$1.7 million).
- Reduce Park Avenue Park & Ride from 600 spaces to 355 spaces (\$6.8 million). Our thought is to build an easily expandable structure to accommodate added levels. For this alignment, about ten percent of our ridership comes from Park & Ride lots. The remainder comes from people walking, bicycling or transferring from other public transit. So we need to be careful about planning Park & Ride structures. Also, we want to fine tune our models for predicting parking needs.
- Eliminate SE 42nd Ave signal and traffic calming on Johnson Creek Boulevard between SE 32nd and SE 45th (\$300,000). Neighbors and the City of Milwaukie had advised against that signal.

Questions

David Aschenbrenner: No new traffic signals on Johnson Creek Boulevard except at Southeast 32nd Avenue?

Dave Unsworth: Yes.

Catherine Goode: You mentioned a tunnel replacing the deleted pedestrian overpass?

Dave Unsworth: That was a reference to the sidewalks on Powell Boulevard under the 17th Avenue overpass where it can feel like a tunnel. Neighbors have had ongoing concerns about the pedestrian and bicycling experience here. We would hold some of the savings from deleting the pedestrian overcrossing for potential improvements to the Powell underpass.

Catherine Goode: While I'm happy to hear the Tacoma Park & Ride has been scaled down to a surface lot, it seems that the lot could be expanded in the future.

Dave Unsworth: True. While we're looking at a surface lot now, we may look for ways to bring back a parking structure in the future. The structure is still in the FEIS.

Paul Carlson: After you cut the contingency by \$10 million, does that bring you to the minimum allowable contingency?

Rob Barnard: We were close to the minimum before this cut, so will need to discuss the thresholds for each milestone with the FTA.

Paul Carlson: By cutting two light rail vehicles, how does that affect service?

Dave Unsworth: In year 2030 – the year we're planning for -- we have forecasted a 7.5 minute service frequency. With the recalibrated project we are forecasting an 8.6 minute frequency, along with a slight decrease in ridership. This frequency would translate to a need for 17 vehicles. We're buying 18 cars to give us the appropriate spare ratios. We have looked carefully at FTA standards in making these cuts. Some things they look at include ridership, number of vehicles necessary, and cost-effectiveness of the project. We think we're fine with all those standards.

Paul Carlson: Is there any flexibility in that metric because you're looking at 2030?

Dave Unsworth: No. There may be more flexibility when we're in Final Design. Neil McFarlane, TriMet's General Manager, will have to sign a document certifying that all the costs for capital and operations are in the budget. We need to include that for technical reasons.

Paul Carlson: Assuming these cuts are made and you go out to bid, how will these projects be brought back in?

Dave Unsworth: We have tried to keep flexibility in the FEIS to allow them to come back in. We will work with our partners again to determine which pieces will return to the project.

Dan Blocher: Our next major window in the contingency management plan would come midway through Final Design, later in 2011. At that point we will have more cost certainty, and would hope that some of these items can be brought back. We have deliberately chosen items that have that the capability of being restored.

Dee Walsh: What would be our role in the process of reprioritizing items to come back into the project? Would we help in that process?

Dan Blocher: We pledge we will do it together to the extent we can, when we get to those decision-points. There is no formal structure for making those decisions. We will begin with the project leaders group, take it through the project management group, and then seek counsel from stakeholders.

Susan Pearce: Is it too late for consideration of other ideas for crossings of Powell Boulevard?

Dave Unsworth: If there are great ideas, we will consider incorporating them.

Susan Pearce: Could more money be taken from the arts budget? Is there a statutory requirement for arts funding?

Rob Barnard: There is not a statutory requirement. But the list of budget cuts was developed over many meetings with all the project partners, aiming for balance. These cuts were viewed as an appropriate amount for the arts program.

Susan Pearce: I am so relieved the Clinton to Caruthers bike lane has survived.

Barbara Anderson: I am impressed with the cuts generally, but not with parking garage cuts. I'm concerned that a 355-space Park & Ride garage at Park Avenue will be filled within the first three months.

Dave Unsworth: We have more work to do. We have a wonderful travel forecasting model, but its weak link is Park & Ride demand forecasting. We will form a task force to look at what we learned about Park & Ride usage on our other lines.

Barbara Anderson: We are reducing the scope of a badly need Park & Ride. I want to move it back to the top of the add-back list.

Teri Pucik: The SMILE neighborhood has great concerns with changes in our area. We are concerned with elimination of the south pullout on the Bybee Bridge. Why is it safe again when it wasn't before? We are most concerned about the loss of parking. Tacoma parking is a key ingredient to success of the project. While Dave Unsworth said 10 percent of ridership comes from Park & Rides, we were told it was more like 80 percent.

Dave Unsworth: Ten percent is for the project as a whole. The Tacoma station specifically could be different, could be higher.

Teri Pucik: People who can't park on site will come into the neighborhood, where it's already congested. If the Milwaukie Park & Ride goes away, we will lose 320 spaces. So we're not gaining anything. We're losing 320 and gaining 320 spaces. This will be a factor in whether the neighborhood continues to support the project.

Rob Barnard: To clarify the proposed changes on the Bybee Bridge, the elimination of the bus pullout would be on the south side only. There would not be a pullout or a bus stop on the south side, so no buses would be stopping in the travel lane. The lane striping would remain the same.

Valerie Chapman: I am concerned about the prospect of a half-finished parking lot.

Rob Barnard: It is two floors of parking, structurally sufficient to add more levels later.

Valerie Chapman: What happens with the Oak Grove Nature in the Neighborhoods project?

Dave Unsworth: We will continue to work with Metro and the Urban Green folks to make sure those improvements occur. We expect to continue that partnership.

Paul Carlson: OMSI continues to be a strong proponent of the project, and we understand the difficult task to make the budget work. However, I wanted to officially request reconsideration of the Close-the-Loop element. We consider this not just a light rail project but a system project. The city and the community want an integrated transit system, including a streetcar.

Barbara Anderson: Is TriMet reconsidering shortening No. 33 bus line in light of the decrease in parking spaces?

Dave Unsworth: No. At this point, the FEIS assumes the cost savings for truncating of that bus.

David Aschenbrenner: Regarding Park Avenue, are you working with the Elks to use their lot in the interim?

Dave Unsworth: Both TriMet and Clackamas County have looked at the Elks site, and there are lots of great ideas, but not enough money. We're now focusing on what we can control, and that's a 355-space lot.

David Aschenbrenner: Does the Milwaukie Park & Ride have to go away immediately?

Dave Unsworth: There may be a possibility that it could stay, with a shuttle bus.

David Aschenbrenner: Will the group working on Johnson Creek and Nature in the Neighborhood continue to go forward?

Dave Unsworth: Yes. We will continue to work with all partners.

Catherine Goode: Will the footprint of the Tacoma Park and Ride be bigger as a surface parking lot? If so, does that affect the environment more?

Dave Unsworth: Yes, the parking footprint will be bigger, but it does still pass the Biological Opinion issues on fish. There are other issues with land use that will require a zoning variance for greater than 50 percent impervious surface.

CAC Roundtable

The committee agreed to suspend the CAC roundtable in order to accommodate public comment.

Public Comment

Eleanor Hunter: I am Chair of the Oak Lodge Community Council. We are enthusiastic for transit coming, and for the work of the Nature in the Neighborhoods group. We are very grateful.

Mark Matthews: I am a general contractor, based in and living in Milwaukie. This light rail project will help get more people back to work. It will help us travel to Portland. It's a good thing.

Matt Clark: I am the executive director of the Johnson Creek Watershed Council. The Tacoma Street Station, just south of Johnson Creek, provides an exciting opportunity to enhance the creek, raise its profile and educate hundreds of commuters about Johnson Creek. We recently co-hosted three design charrettes with TriMet. Design elements coming from those planning meetings include restoration of aquatic, salmon and riparian habitat, and building a boardwalk and overlook with interpretive signage for environmental education. We intend this to be a catalyst to inspire private restoration. We would like to create a corridor of streamside forest connecting natural areas. There is a lot of community support. There will be heavy lifting required. But we are leading the charge and are grateful to TriMet for its support.

Chris Eykamp: I am past president of the Hosford-Abernethy Neighborhood. One of my priorities is the connections between the Hosford-Abernethy and Brooklyn neighborhoods. I am afraid we are taking a big step back by removing two of three proposed connections, leaving only the Powell underpass. I hope changes to the underpass will improve things. But removing the other two crossings will hurt. I hope the CAC and TriMet will find a way to not detract but enhance connections between neighborhoods.

Rustin Wright: I work for Streetcar Press. This is a wonderful project, but I have a couple of concerns about finances. Also, could a "snack shack" at the Tacoma station provide a source of revenue?

Dave Unsworth: In our experience, the primary benefit of concessions at transit stations is "eyes on street" to enhance security, rather than generating significant revenue for TriMet. Dave offered to answer Mr. Wright's first question in greater detail after the meeting.

David Caplan: I serve on the HAND board. I don't understand the ideas on the table regarding the improvements on Powell. Where would access be improved: east to west, north to south?

Dave Unsworth: We're improving SE 17th Avenue where it goes over Powell Boulevard, improving the connections between the neighborhoods.

Rick Williams left the meeting at 7:30, as announced earlier, and David Edwards adjourned the meeting at 7:35.

Next meeting: 6-7:30 p.m., Thursday, October 28, TriMet Holgate Plaza
Sellwood/Ankeny Classrooms (1625 SE Holgate Boulevard)