

MINUTES OF THE METRO COUNCIL WORK SESSION MEETING

Tuesday, February 13, 2007
Metro Council Chamber

Councilors Present: David Bragdon (Council President), Kathryn Harrington, Rod Park, Robert Liberty, Rex Burkholder, Brian Newman

Councilors Absent: Carl Hosticka (excused)

Council President Bragdon convened the Metro Council Work Session Meeting at 2:04 p.m.

1. DISCUSSION OF AGENDA FOR COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING, FEBRUARY 15, 2007/ADMINISTRATIVE/CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER AND CITIZEN COMMUNICATIONS

Council President Bragdon reviewed the February 15, 2007 Metro Council agenda. Councilor Newman distributed a document related to the Zoo future vision committee (a copy is included in the meeting record).

2. COLUMBIA RIVER CROSSING DIRECTION

Councilor Burkholder talked about upcoming steps and guidance in attending next week's Columbia River Crossing (CRC) meeting. Metro was one of 39 team members. He distributed two documents (a copy of each is included in the meeting record) and mentioned some of the previous alternatives over the past two years. An important issue was the functionality of the existing bridges and whether they could be retained. Councilor Burkholder personally supported the Task Force recommendation to replace the bridges. He acknowledged that the analysis to date had not been at the level of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)—23 proposals was too many to do a DEIS on all of them.

Councilor Liberty offered a PowerPoint presentation (a copy is included in the meeting record). He pointed out the similarities of the two "non no-action" alternatives. He estimated the total cost at \$2 to \$6 billion. He described the weaknesses that he saw in the analyses done to date, including ways in which they did not meet our desired outcomes. He gave information about the estimated useful life of the existing bridges and how it might be longer than was assumed. Seismic standards were being used to declare the existing bridges unacceptable, but he felt that no bridge in the region met those standards. He gave an alternative seismic standard that was more realistic and an estimated cost of upgrading the existing bridges to meet that standard. He said the bridge lift limitations were being used as a means to eliminate the existing bridges. He felt that land use had not been used as either a ranking or an alternative. He said there was no system management alternative presented, as had been requested by the Metro Council. He gave some information on the potential effects of tolling in managing congestion. The amount of money spent studying just for this one project was about 10-30 times greater than the amount spent for all other regional transportation planning combined.

Councilor Newman asked if there had been another alternative that was a close second in some way, but that had not made the final alternatives. Councilor Burkholder said everyone would have preferred a less expensive alternative. There was not a well-articulated third alternative, however, not substantive enough to do a good study on it. He mentioned some of the issues that would need to be addressed, such as maintenance. Councilor Newman shared Councilor Liberty's general

concerns about the scale and the cost of the project. If the starting assumption was that the existing bridges would be kept, then the no-build would be the best recommendation. He asked about the clarity of the need for a transit option. Councilor Burkholder felt the Council was pretty well on record as preferring a transit alternative.

Councilor Liberty thought that one of the plans did not necessarily talk about the form of the lanes. He felt incremental improvement—such as upgraded onramps—could remediate many of the safety concerns. Councilor Burkholder observed that the existing bridge had too many interchanges. Many of the fender-bender type accidents were caused by bridge lifts.

Councilor Park asked how much discussion had occurred around the issue of river traffic. Councilor Burkholder said the tugboat operators, in particular, had attended the discussions. Their concerns were about the “weave” between the vehicle bridge and the railroad bridge. The medium-height bridge alternative had been chosen to be above the barges and below Vancouver air traffic.

Councilor Burkholder said there was a mix of responses. What had been analyzed, what was part of the DEIS process? He talked about some design issues. Those were still somewhat in the future. He talked about the use of MetroScope. There had been some land use analysis, but a lot of it had been outside the scope of this project. Councilor Harrington said she had heard an expectation that the various things in the October memo had not been addressed. Councilor Burkholder agreed that some of the Council values were not addressed in the DEIS process.

Council President Bragdon asked about freight capacity, as it related to new induced single-occupancy vehicle travel. The greatest inhibition to freight in that corridor was SOV traffic. Would capacity be sucked up by more and more people traveling to Battle Ground? Councilor Burkholder stated that the performance objectives included freight. Systems management had not been addressed deep enough as of yet. He talked about some ideas that had been proposed to improve things for freight.

Council President Bragdon asked when and how the impacts to downtown Vancouver and Hayden Island would be accounted for? Councilor Burkholder said, by replacing rather than keeping the existing bridges, that was one way to reduce impacts. The height of the bridge, the interchanges, and SR-14 were all factors.

Council President Bragdon felt strongly that light rail needed to be extended. That should be a condition of Metro’s support. Councilor Liberty said there was a basic difference in understanding in what we were doing and what we were asking. If the recommendation were approved, we would get a 10-12 lane bridge with light rail; land use analysis would then be a derivative of that choice. Seismic standards were going to preclude something else. Other bridges did not meet that standard. The result would be a high, without lifts, 12 lanes, with some form of transit, and no other options were being studied. He compared it to saying Metro would do a fairly large UGB expansion or a really large UGB expansion. Our thrust should be to carry forward not just 2-3 alternatives with additional analysis, but look at the fundamentals and allow us to think about more choices. The crossing still had \$60 million of study money; we should use it to really think creatively.

Councilor Newman felt there was a lot of skepticism out there. The final recommendation simply might not be implementable. He would like to see an alternative recommended that could actually be accomplished. He’d like to see how Option 3, with the existing I-5 bridges for Interstate

traffic, and something else with transit, functioned under all the analysis for the next stage, including the political situation and what the political leadership would support. He was not 100% comfortable with the staff recommendation. His preferences were moving forward, being explicit about our preferences, not shutting the door, but keeping Option 3 or some variation, whether the bridges were refurbished, seeing what could be done at a lower cost, and addressing local traffic.

Councilor Park asked who would pay the bridge operating costs currently borne by the states? Would that information be in the DEIS? Councilor Burkholder said that was the smart thing about keeping the bridges, because they were part of the interstate system, it was about \$4 million per year to maintain them. New bridges should be less. The state departments of transportation would not want to help maintain them. No one really wanted to take on the new responsibility.

Council President Bragdon was worried about narrowing the options down too quickly. That would be a fiscal and political mistake for a project of this magnitude. For example, he had not seen enough information on community impacts. He wanted Metro's recommendation to be consistent with our other transportation values. He did not see anything like a low-cost option and was not convinced about the longevity of the existing bridges. He'd like to see more study on some of the alternatives.

Councilor Harrington asked Councilor Burkholder if he felt the Council's issues would be addressed with the larger group. Information would be available on congestion, freight mobility, land use impacts, and air quality impacts. There would be no information on a supplemental bridge unless we put it in there. Councilor Liberty thought that the net had not been cast very wide at the very beginning of the project, due to no bridge lifts and seismic. If a supplemental bridge had to be 80 feet high, it would be rejected because of the cost. Councilor Burkholder said he did not know what the outcome would be. The studies showed a lot of negatives to a supplemental bridge, but a study of that option would provide good data.

3. BREAK

4. PROJECT UPDATES: PORTLAND STREETCAR LOOP AND LAKE OSWEGO TO PORTLAND ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS

Richard Brandman, Transit Program Director, presented an update on two of the transit projects. The locally preferred alternative would require a new bridge. The steering committee recommended that the federal project application include the Minimum Operable Segment (MOS) all the way to the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI). Councilor Newman said the committee was very comfortable with an application to Oregon Street. Mr. Brandman said the steering committee had submitted a transit application to go all the way to OMSI. There was a growing recognition that these projects changed the face of communities. This kind of thinking was now being allowed to influence the ranking process. He said the big issues were the financial ones. Right now, the project had an estimated cost of about \$170 million, with the hope that \$75 million of that would come from the feds, and the remainder from local government. Councilor Newman proposed that some costs might be even higher. There was some concern that the costs were being presented as unrealistically low. David Unsworth, Tri-Met, gave information saying the numbers might be a bit light in some cases. They have negotiated with the City of Portland to use a third-party estimator.

Councilor Liberty asked how much of the likely transit system user benefit for the Willamette bridge would be contributed by the streetcar. Mr. Brandman guessed it would be high, but small relative to the light rail project, which would have far more travel time savings. He talked about potential local funding sources. Council President Bragdon wondered if we needed to reinforce our communication with other local jurisdictions to make sure the funding requests were being coordinated. Councilor Newman thought there was confusion about the process at the various legislative levels. Mr. Brandman thought Randy Tucker, Legislative Affairs Manager, would be the conduit for getting Metro's information out. He felt there was a sincere response from the project team that they did not want to get in the way of the process. There was a request from the federal administrator to submit a request on a short timeline.

Councilor Park wanted to confirm that the request had not gone through the Portland City Council in any form. Mr. Brandman was not aware of any. Council President Bragdon said the agency was Portland Streetcar, Inc. Councilor Burkholder talked about the way in which people went after the various available funds. Councilor Harrington wanted to make sure the conditions would apply to the Morrison MOS as well as the OMSI MOS. Councilor Liberty said we were in this phase, he hoped the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) would clarify Metro's values in making them operational.

The other big issue on the finances was how to pay for operations. It could well be \$5 million per year, of which perhaps 30% could be met through fares. Councilor Park asked for more information about the operational side. In a regional project like light rail, the money was pooled, but a project like this was locally focused. Mr. Brandman said Tri-Met's share came out of their general fund. He talked about some previous inter-agency negotiations. Councilor Park followed up with some additional questions about where the money came from. Mr. Brandman replied that there was not a scientific formula. Councilor Newman commented that the concern, which was raised over and over again, was that Portland had an ambitious agenda for the streetcar; this project would be an additional, supplemental service that needed to be part of a larger discussion.

Regarding Lake Oswego, Ross Roberts, Transit Program Director, came up to the table with a project review. A lot had been going on. He talked about the history of the project, which dated back to 1988, and some of the various stakeholders. He distributed a handout (a copy is included in the meeting record). They were doing a performance analysis of the alternatives. He showed a map of some potential alignments and stations and mentioned some of the streetcar options. There had been public demand for widening Highway 43, but those options had not proven to be very feasible. River transit had been looked at; the costs were very high and there were access issues. They talked about the options for crossing over from Milwaukie to Lake Oswego.

Councilor Newman observed that the current streetcars did not have much seating. It was more of a people mover for a dense environment such as downtown. Would the cars for longer distances be different? Mr. Roberts said it would be analyzed with the existing vehicles, and changes could be looked at later. Councilor Newman wondered how the actual car design would affect capacity. Mr. Roberts added another constraint, single-car vs. two-car trains. There were ways to get the capacity up.

Councilor Burkholder wondered when there would be information on the project that would make some sense. He saw that things were still being added pretty piecemeal. Mr. Roberts said there was some work being done about potential capital funding and operating funding options. Councilor Burkholder said, what if the preferred alternative was a no-build with better bus rapid transit; would a DEIS need to be done? Mr. Roberts said not necessarily; bus rapid transit would

be funded incrementally over time as demand accrued. He confirmed for Councilor Harrington that it would be a 6.5-mile streetcar, with no rails on Highway 43.

Councilor Park said, the sooner we got it moving forward, the better. He was skeptical about the project and wondered whether it was it fiscally responsible.

5. COUNCIL BRIEFINGS/COMMUNICATIONS

There were none.

There being no further business to come before the Metro Council, Council President Bragdon adjourned the meeting at 4:34 p.m.

Prepared by,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Hotz', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dove Hotz
Council Operations Assistant

**ATTACHMENTS TO THE PUBLIC RECORD FOR THE MEETING OF
 FEBRUARY 13, 2007**

Item	Topic	Doc. Date	Document Description	Doc. Number
1	Agenda	2/15/07	Agenda: Metro Council regular meeting, February 15, 2007	021307c-01
1	Communications	2/11/07	To: Metro Council From: Brian Newman Re: Oregon Zoo, Strategic Master Plan, Assessment Report #1, Draft #2	021307c-02
2	CRC	1/19/07	To: Columbia River Task Force From: Royce Pollard Re: City's position on the I-5 Interstate Bridge	021307c-03
2	CRC	11/21/06	To: Task Force From: CRC Project Team Re: UPDATE: Considerations for Replacing Versus Reusing the Existing Interstate 5 Bridges	021307c-04
2	CRC	undated	To: Metro Council From: Robert Liberty Re: Council Discussion of Columbia River Crossing Task Force Staff Recommendation for DEIS Alternatives	021307c-05
2	CRC	10/19/06	To: CRC Task Force From: Metro Council Re: Input from Metro Councilors	021307c-06
4	Project updates	2/13/07	To: Metro Council From: Ross Roberts Re: Lake Oswego to Portland Transit and Trail Alternatives Analysis Update	021307c-07