

MEETING REPORT

DATE OF MEETING: April 9, 1998

GROUP/SUBJECT: Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation (JPACT)

PERSONS ATTENDING: Members: Chair Ed Washington, Susan McLain and Jon Kvistad, Metro Council; Kay Van Sickel (alt.), ODOT; Dave Lohman (alt.), Port of Portland; Jim Kight, Cities in Multnomah County; Lou Ogden (alt.), Cities in Washington County; Ron Bergman (alt.), Clark County; Ed Lindquist, Clackamas County; Dean Lookingbill (alt.), Southwest Washington RTC; Roy Rogers, Washington County; Karl Rohde, Cities in Clackamas County; Tom Walsh, Tri-Met; Don Wagner, WSDOT; Gary Hansen (alt.), Multnomah County; and Charlie Hales, City of Portland

Guests: Rod Sandoz, Clackamas County; Dennis Mitchell, Jason Tell and Dave Williams, ODOT; Steve Dotterer, Marc Zolton, Mark Lear, and Elsa Coleman, City of Portland; Gary Katsion, Kittelson & Associates; Meeky Blizzard, Sensible Transportation Options for People; Mary Legry (JPACT alt.), WSDOT; Ron Papsdorf, City of Gresham; Susan Lee, Multnomah County; Bernie Bottomly, G.B. Arrington and Dick Feeney, Tri-Met; Susie Lahsene, Port of Portland; Michelle Giguere, Ball Janik; John Rosenberger, Washington County; Councilor Michael Schaufler (JPACT alt.), Cities in Clackamas County; and Councilor Scott Rice, City of Cornelius

Staff: Mike Burton, Executive Officer; Andy Cotugno, Richard Brandman, Mike Hoglund, Leon Skiles and Lois Kaplan, Secretary

Media: Gordon Oliver, The Oregonian

SUMMARY:

The meeting was called to order and a quorum declared by Chair Ed Washington.

MEETING REPORT

Councilor McLain moved, seconded by Councilor Kight, to approve the March 12, 1998 JPACT meeting report as submitted. The motion PASSED unanimously.

RESOLUTION NO. 98-2625 - AMENDING THE MTIP TO APPROVE A SIX-MONTH
HIGH-OCCUPANCY VEHICLE (HOV) LANE DEMONSTRATION ON I-5 NORTHBOUND
AND ASSOCIATED FINANCING

Dennis Mitchell explained that ODOT is evaluating what can be done to improve the I-5 corridor. He noted that the experience with the Interstate Bridge trunnion repair resulted in a 50 percent change in HOV (two or more persons per car and buses) use and a 40 percent change in bus ridership during the peak time. Following a preliminary screening last year for constructability and possible use, ODOT is proposing a six-month demonstration project for HOV feasibility on the segment of I-5 between Going Street and Delta Park.

Dennis commented on the high volume of traffic at the bridge and the bottleneck at Jantzen Beach. The HOV lane will stop short of the bridge and should enable HOV traffic to bypass a lot of the queue.

Discussion centered on enforcement being key to the success of the project. The HOV lane would be in operation during the p.m. peak time. There has been some indication from C-TRAN that they would increase service between Vancouver and Portland in that corridor during the pilot project.

Some of the next steps include coordination with the I-5 preservation and overlay project; appointing a subcommittee of JPACT to evaluate whether the project was successful and the next steps to be taken; the need for an aggressive public education process explaining the benefits to be derived by an HOV lane; and identifying enforcement issues, requiring funds for enforcement pads and overtime police pay.

Discussion followed on plans following the demonstration project. Dennis commented that it would be determined whether to continue peak period HOV operations, convert the lane permanently to general purpose travel at all times of the day or return the segment to its original condition. Part of the funds are available through preservation and restriping funds for I-5. Kay Van Sickel clarified that this project would not be taking funds away from any other project in the region.

In further discussion, Don Wagner suggested that it would be more beneficial from the Washington state perspective if the HOV lane were run past Marine Drive. He noted that WSDOT is addressing the same issues on their side of the river.

Commissioner Hales felt that a good model was set for making transportation decisions during the I-5 bridge trunnion repair.

He praised it as an example of not spending a lot of time on studies but doing something. He commended ODOT on being innovative and flexible in their effort toward a permanent solution.

The timetable discussed included bids being let in May and the project implemented in either October or November. In response to a question about a potential southbound HOV lane on the Oregon side, it was noted that the Columbia ramp is a physical constraint and the structure would need to be widened. Kay Van Sickel reported that it would be a six to eight-month process before the demonstration got started.

Andy Cotugno pointed out the air quality conformity issue associated with the project. Any project in the MTIP must meet those conformity requirements. This project has an exemption because it is only a six-month demonstration project. Whatever becomes permanent must stay within the air quality cap.

Action Taken: Mayor Ogden moved, seconded by Tom Walsh, to recommend approval of Resolution No. 97-2625, amending the Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program to approve a six-month high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane demonstration on I-5 northbound and associated financing. The motion PASSED unanimously.

RETIREMENT OF TOM WALSH

Chair Washington acknowledged Tom Walsh's recent announcement to retire as Tri-Met's General Manager and asked about his future plans. Tom noted that he has been at the job for seven years, that it has been a lot of fun, and that he would continue to participate in transportation planning in the future.

HOUSE AND SENATE ACTION ON ISTEIA AND ESTABLISHMENT OF REGIONAL POSITION FOR THE CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

Andy commented on the JPACT-approved regional position paper, dated February 26, 1998, taken to Washington, D.C. Handouts were distributed at the JPACT meeting analyzing the differences between the House and Senate-approved bills on ISTEIA. A follow-up recommendation position paper reflecting the elements supported by this region has been developed. It describes the major issues and includes an attachment that references the region's position. Andy noted that Senator Wyden is on the Conference Committee and will be able to help with this reconciliation.

Dick Feeney and Jason Tell identified the key issues being addressed. Jason noted that the first issue relates to the emphasis on the funding formula and how Oregon fares under the House and

Senate proposals. The Senate formula would put Oregon above a 95 percent return. The second issue recognizes the importance of the Federal Lands Highway Program. The third issue dealt with efforts to limit states' ability to levy weight-mile taxes. The last change dealt with reopening of the ISTEA bill in three years. The concern is that it would be disruptive to funding. It could also affect large projects that depend on such funding, such as light rail.

Commissioner Hansen raised an issue in support of the Bridge Program. Multnomah County is proposing that language be included on the charts that reflects that "the region supports retaining ISTEA's Bridge Program." They oppose the penalty because of the use of STP funds.

Mayor Ogden asked whether it would be a significant issue in getting the funding formula changed in the House Bill. Under the Conference process, the formula could be changed. Other committee members also felt it is extremely important.

Andy explained the Conference Committee process, that it will be comprised of House and Senate committee representatives, the fact that it took four weeks to get through the first ISTEA, and the fact that staff are working on these issues to achieve resolution. One bill will surface out of the Conference Committee which then goes back to the House and Senate for a vote. Both bills are being studied and issues identified.

With regard to variable/value pricing, Andy noted that we are supporting up to 15 pilot projects under the Senate version of the bill. Projects being earmarked are in the House bill only. The most important message to send is that we would like to see those demo projects stay. If some could be added, they are noted in our Position Paper, citing completion of the Sunset Highway as an example. If they have to drop any projects, we would ask that they retain the ones we've adopted for funding.

Andy also highlighted policy issues relating to the Land Use Grant Program, CMAQ/Transportation Enhancement funds, Welfare-to-Work Program, NEPA Streamlining and Employee Transit Pass Increase funds. The Senate version was supported with respect to the latter two funds.

Jason Tell commented that not all states can boast a great working relationship between MPOs and their departments of transportation, such as experienced here. On a national level, some states may or may not take advantage of flexible funds. It doesn't affect our relationship with ODOT.

JPACT

April 9, 1998

Page 5

Dick Feeney highlighted the transit funding issues. He spoke of significant increases in the New Starts program but that the competition was also significant. Tom Walsh felt that the Transportation Infrastructure Financing Innovation Act (TIFIA) would become a significant element in making loans work. It is intended for large programs (\$100 million or more) or at least 50 percent of the federal allocation in one year. Payments can be deferred for as long as 10 years. The credit supplied is significant. He also noted Tri-Met's support of the New Starts "blanket authority" approach reflected in the House Bill. It was noted that the Letter of Intent will become the Full-Funding Grant Agreement with a 60-day period for the House Infrastructure Bank and the Senate Banking Committee.

Dick commented that the minimum allocation proposal on the Transit Fund dollars contributed would result in a 70 percent return. Tri-Met is opposed to that. Dick felt the issue could return in Conference Committee. Andy asked whether there was support for communicating that position to the Conference Committee.

Dean Lookingbill commented that, from a bi-state perspective, the issue on being a donor state is not obviously supported by the State of Washington. Their representatives (Murray and Metcalf) in D.C. are working with Jason Tell on the issue.

Dave Lohman raised an issue about funds on the highway side -- whether receipt of funds represented a future commitment or obligation for those projects. Andy noted that the Congressional Initiatives list of projects would provide funds for those projects but it is not clear whether they are sufficient to complete those projects.

Commissioner Rogers asked about the next steps for the new ISTEPA. Andy noted that Senator Wyden's office is interested in knowing the committee's position and we need to have a dialogue with delegation staff. Contact people for the highway side are Jason Tell and Michelle Giguere (ODOT) and Jeff Boothe and Dick Feeney on the transit side. In further discussion, it was noted that there will be some compromises.

Chair Washington asked that a weekly or mid-course update be provided JPACT members.

Councilor McLain felt that the Position Paper was a reaffirmation of the position taken by JPACT and was supportive of the list. As there are competing lists, she agreed on the need for updates. She cited the importance of JPACT being recognized as a unit and the need to look at the list in terms of its helpfulness to the region.

Commissioner Hansen asked whether there are any issues that could be shared with the Chambers of Commerce or Contractors Association in terms of other concerns. Dick Feeney commented on the budget issues and priorities and thought such meetings might be helpful.

Committee members agreed that they would be willing to have an emergency meeting if the situation on ISTEPA becomes critical.

Action Taken: Commissioner Rogers moved, seconded by Mayor Ogden, to adopt the April 9, 1998 ISTEPA Regional Position Paper. The motion PASSED unanimously.

SOUTH/NORTH LRT UPDATE

Richard Brandman presented an update on the status of the South/North LRT project. He reported that the DEIS for the project is complete, commenting that it has been a monumental effort and document. The document has been well received and getting support and praise for being easy to follow.

Richard explained that we are in the middle of the public comment period which will close April 24. There have been five open houses and numerous community meetings. In May, a decision-making process will begin on the available options and a decision made on the option to move forward into the FEIS and then into construction. The South/North LRT project is authorized for construction in the House Bill version of BESTEA.

In discussion, Richard noted that the region is in a partnership with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to move forward in serving the transportation needs of the South/North corridor. The South/North LRT project has been highly rated by FTA and is considered one of the top projects in the United States. Richard explained that the project is rated highly in part because of its integration with land use and our financing plans. The local match is incorporated into the capital financing plan.

Key benefits of the South/North Light Rail project were reviewed. Projections include 68,000 trips per weekday being carried, with 40 percent more transit trips than the all-bus option. The light rail is also 33 percent faster than the bus options, saves \$50 million in travel time per year for transit and highway users, and has significant energy and air quality benefits.

The South/North LRT project is planned to be constructed in segments. The Minimum Operable Segments (MOS's) include the Clackamas Regional Center to the Rose Quarter Transit Center, Clackamas Regional Center to N. Lombard, and the Bi-State from Milwaukie Marketplace to Vancouver.

JPACT

April 9, 1998

Page 7

The purpose and need for this project is in response to the growth that has occurred in this region, its future growth and the need for a balanced, efficient transportation system. The amount of congestion in the region is having an economic toll. Richard spoke of a total savings of \$50 million per year in the year 2015 in terms of the value of travel time savings, which is based on an FTA formula.

Richard spoke of a rigorous analysis having taken place over several years in which a number of options were selected and compared with an all-bus option. He noted that light rail is significantly faster than putting buses in this corridor and spoke of other intrinsic values of light rail. He commented on major environmental, air quality and energy impacts as well. Richard noted that light rail is an option that would complement other transportation modes. One of the major components of moving forward with light rail transit is its relationship to the 2040 Growth Concept. There is a major relationship of development and redevelopment opportunities on land adjacent to the light rail station areas.

In terms of cost, Richard reported that, during cost cutting last April, the alignment was shortened, some segments deferred and that, because the project would be built over a decade, it would cost about \$2.3 billion in actual construction costs, including inflation.

Richard indicated that 80 percent of the comments received have been supportive of the South/North LRT project. He explained to JPACT their role in the decision-making process. The Citizens Advisory Committee and the Project Management Group will forward their recommendation to the South/North Steering Group toward the end of May. JPACT will make its recommendation at its July 9 meeting with Metro Council adoption on July 23. The Portland City Council will be holding its hearings in April.

Visual simulations were placed around the meeting room depicting river crossings, the potential LRT bridge (steel truss bridge), oversight in downtown Portland, the half-mile option in downtown Portland, issues in North Portland (I-5 versus Interstate alignments), the noise berms on I-5 and the potential terminus in downtown Vancouver/Hayden Island.

In response to questions about the accuracy of travel forecasts, Richard spoke of calculations in the 1970 projections being off but felt the questions at hand should relate to current projections, the fact that the models being used today are calibrated to the Eastside light rail experience and considerations pertaining to performance and what we want to achieve. When the Banfield LRT

line opened, it had 19,000 riders. That number has grown to 31,000 today.

Discussion followed on what would have happened to Portland's economy and air quality considerations if highways had been built rather than rail. Committee members felt it would be useful to have a bulleted summary prepared of the light rail benefits. Richard Brandman indicated it would be prepared for the committee.

INITIATION OF MTIP/STIP PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA

Andy Cotugno explained that the region is undergoing an MTIP/STIP update. A handout was distributed on the schedule to address concerns and factors relating to the MTIP/STIP Program. TPAC will adopt its recommendation on technical ranking criteria at its May 29 meeting and JPACT will formulate its decision on June 11. A more detailed worksession will be held to develop the criteria. An illustration on how the criteria was utilized over the past six years was distributed.

At issue is whether or not we are picking the right projects and how we want to modify the criteria. Andy asked that JPACT members submit suggestions on criteria they wish for consideration.

The agenda packet included the technical data currently in use. Andy asked JPACT members to contact him if further information was needed. He indicated he would be happy to meet with committee members on a one-to-one basis.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

REPORT WRITTEN BY: Lois Kaplan

COPIES TO: Mike Burton
JPACT Members