

**Clark County High Capacity Transit System Study**  
**Steering Committee Meeting #3**  
4-6 p.m. Thursday, April 5, 2007  
WSDOT Southwest Region Office, Conference Room 302  
11018 NE 51st Circle, Vancouver, WA

**MEETING SUMMARY**

**Members present:**

Bill Ganley (City of Battle Ground)  
Jeanne Harris (C-TRAN)  
Tim Leavitt (City of Vancouver)  
Arch Miller (Port of Vancouver)  
Don Wagner (WSDOT)

**Members absent:**

Deb Wallace (State Representative)  
Joe Zarelli (State Senator)  
Steve Stuart (Clark County)

**Staff:**

Dean Lookingbill (RTC)  
Dale Robins (RTC)  
John Cullerton (URS)  
Bob Post (URS)  
Jack Gonsalves (PB)  
Jeanne Lawson (JLA)  
Kalin Schmoldt (JLA)  
Ryan Orth (EnviroIssues)

**Welcome/Committee Business**

**Review agenda** – Jeanne Lawson explained the agenda and the purpose of the meeting:

- Adopt goals and objectives
- Recommend modes to carry forward for more analysis
- Recommend corridors to carry forward for more analysis

**Approve January 4, 2007 meeting summary** - Don Wagner noted that the statement on page three, paragraph two, should read that he was concerned that decisions made regarding the BIA may *not* be right. Jeanne Lawson noted that draft summaries were available for review online.

**Project status (meetings schedule)** - Dean Lookingbill described the events since the previous Steering Committee meeting, including the activities of the Task Force, the Sounding Board, and web activity. He noted there have been many hits on the website.

Lookingbill described the importance of the July 26<sup>th</sup> Steering Committee meeting and explained that it would serve as a mid-point in the corridor analysis process. He described it as an opportunity to present information on analyses relating to corridor narrowing, transit oriented development, order of magnitude cost operations, environmental reconnaissance, and other parts of the process. He suggested a supplemental meeting in mid-September to provide the committee with more time to work through the mid-point review of the corridor analysis.

Bill Ganley noted that he might have a conflict with the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursdays, because of TIB meetings. Dean Lookingbill pointed out that the September meeting would not be a key-decision meeting and would be akin to a workshop on the issues raised on July 26<sup>th</sup>. He offered to initiate a

scheduling effort to coordinate the September meeting. Jeanne Lawson noted the possibility of holding Saturday morning meetings as a means to involve the legislators.

**Public involvement update** - Jeanne Lawson described the three Task Force meetings to date, noting that members have been thoughtful and responsive. She noted that the Task Force has adopted protocols, engaged in an issues workshop, created a list of draft goals and objectives, and most recently narrowed the modes and corridors. She said that around 40 people representing a variety of groups had attended the Sounding Board workshop. She explained that the workshop emphasis was on modes but also involved some work with corridors. She noted that the outcome of the workshops has been consistent with findings from the website.

Ryan Orth explained the findings from the web survey. He noted that they had generated about 260 public contacts through the web and postcards, with the majority made via the web. He noted that two-thirds of the respondents had expressed a desire for connections to Portland. Jeanne Lawson explained that the survey takers had been provided with a wide variety of potential corridors options and consistently selected Portland as an important connection.

Tim Leavitt asked whether the survey contained demographic questions about transit ridership or income. Dean Lookingbill noted that people were asked about transit use, though other demographic information was not collected. Leavitt noted the paradoxical relationship between the importance of the *cost of fare* relative to the other listed issues. Jeanne Lawson pointed out that the survey results weren't statistically valid but would approximate the results of statistically valid surveys with more respondents. Lookingbill noted that the survey has also been useful for inspiring interaction with the project.

Don Wagner noted that he had received several comments from the general public to the effect that they don't understand all of the transit related activities in process. He cited the HCT Study, Columbia River Crossing, and Visioning Study. He noted that it was important to distinguish the planning efforts and coordinate the public information relating to the multiple efforts being carried out. Jeanne Harris agreed, noting that there has also been confusion among leadership regarding the various studies. Arch Miller requested a simple and concise explanation of the different studies. Dale Robins attested that many people who have gone to the HCT website were obviously thinking of the CRC Project when they took the survey. Jeanne Lawson encouraged the committee to forward any similar comments to the team.

### **Goals & Objectives**

Jeanne Lawson explained how interviews with the Steering Committee, along with survey results, were the basis for the issues that went on to the Task Force and the Sounding Board to be refined into the study Goals and Objectives. Lawson noted that the changes to the Goals and Objectives made by the Task Force did embody what was heard through other sources. She noted that the Goals and Objectives had initially been laid out according to the FTA categories, but had evolved into the three broader categories of transportation, community, and feasibility.

Tim Leavitt asked whether it would be more appropriate to change the first paragraph reference replace "... transit modes and corridors *for* Clark County ..." to "... *within* Clark County ..."

Don Wagner asked whether the federal earmark grant affects whether or not to use "for" or

“within.” Dean Lookingbill said that using a more specific term, such as “within,” would be appropriate.

Jeanne Harris asked about the reference to “regional transit systems” under Goal 2. Jeanne Lawson explained that the reference had originally referred to Portland, but the Task Force had raised the issue of being inclusive of other modal connections. Bill Ganley suggested the usefulness of a connection to the airport. Dean Lookingbill explained that the two objective bullets were meant to describe the relationship to other systems as well as those within Clark County. Lawson suggested adding “other” to “regional transit systems” for clarification. Harris clarified that the addition for “other” would not exclude C-TRAN. Don Wagner clarified that C-TRAN may or may not be the agency in charge of future HCT system. The team confirmed that the agency in charge is undetermined.

Jeanne Harris asked about Goal 7. Jeanne Lawson explained that the Goal was worded to avoid the implication that an HCT system would be used to force development changes, while at the same time allowing HCT to serve as a tool for change if so desired.

Tim Leavitt asked about the language of Goal 6. Dean Lookingbill explained some of the language is intended to capitalize on preexisting resources, such as the Chelatchie Prairie Railroad, or the right of way at Clark College. Jeanne Lawson also emphasized the importance of using public funds in wise and fair manner.

Tim Leavitt asked whether a rail system was considered “fixed” relative to the “respond to changing needs” objective of Goal 7. Dean Lookingbill noted that rail systems could be extended. Jeanne Lawson noted the challenges inherent in setting corridors aside and noted that it will be important to capture potential extensions for the future. Don Wagner noted that the references in the Goals and Objectives refer to a specific alignment as opposed to a full corridor. Jeanne Harris noted that she thought that the protection of critical corridors referred to structures in the way. Lookingbill clarified that the first objective refers to the short term and protecting potential future corridors while the second objective is longer term, anticipating long term corridor development. Tim Leavitt noted that arguments against rail include its inflexibility compared to BRT and pointed out that the objective could be used as an argument against light rail.

Don Wagner asked about the application of Goal 5. Dean Lookingbill acknowledged the difficulties inherent in the many varied perspectives on what a healthy environment includes.

Jeanne Harris noted potential challenges in the use of subjective terms like “reasonable,” “fair” and “responsible” in Goal 6.

Dean Lookingbill described the Task Force’s conversation about identifying a HCT system and causing changes to land uses, as opposed to using the HCT system to match and support preexisting land uses. Jeanne Lawson noted that the second objective of Goal 4 tries to make it clear that specific land use patterns will not be forced. Jeff Hamm noted that in the federal New Starts process, solid land use actions must be demonstrated to support the selected HCT system.

Jeanne Lawson noted that the wording is intended to allow that understanding, but without appearing to force land use changes where they are not wanted.

Arch Miller asked whether it made sense to reword Goal 6 and remove the subjective language. The committee agreed to reword the goal as: “Develop a system that can be funded and demonstrates stewardship of public funds.”

Jeanne Lawson noted that some versions of the Goals and Objectives will be reflected in the screening criteria. She asked whether the committee could support the proposed changes. There were no objections. Don Wagner noted that he supported the changes and emphasized the importance of articulating “within” instead of “for” in the introductory paragraph so that it is clear that the study is looking within Clark County. Arch Miller noted that it is a separate objective to connect with other transit systems.

### **Narrowing of Modes**

Dean Lookingbill introduced the evaluation of the HCT modes. He noted that the PMT and Task Force have reviewed the modes and corridors and provided comments. He noted that the Steering Committee, through its formal recommendation, will forward their recommendation to the RTC board for approval.

**Presentation** - Jack Gonsalves explained the goal of reviewing the transportation benefits and financial feasibility for each mode in order to narrow the initial options. He briefly described the initial nine modes under consideration: light rail, bus rapid transit (BRT), BRT Lite, streetcar, heavy rail (subway), commuter rail, monorail, water (river) transit (passenger only), and personal rapid transit (PRT). He then explained the five screening criteria, noting that if a mode fails to satisfy the study purpose or goals, it would be inappropriate to carry forward.

**Discussion & recommendations** - Arch Miller noted that they were eliminating the four modes—heavy rail, monorail, water transit, and PRT—that they had originally noted as inappropriate. The committee agreed to remove the four. Jack Gonsalves explained that it was necessary to look at the initial nine modes in order to validate the process.

Arch Miller expressed surprise that commuter rail received such a high rank. Jack Gonsalves explained that commuter rail can be expensive, but it can also utilize preexisting lines at a lower cost. Dean Lookingbill noted that the rankings were based on national averages and were system-wide. He noted that upon closer inspection, there may be further reasons to exclude commuter rail because of conditions within Clark County. Jeanne Lawson noted that commuter rail could be a smaller part of an overall system.

Tim Leavitt asked why BRT did not rank as high as light rail in terms of creating transit oriented development (TOD). Jack Gonsalves explained that there is a perception that the right of way for BRT isn't permanent, whereas light rail has a proven record of creating TOD. He added that it's misleading to think of BRT as impermanent, as it does require a developed right of way.

Arch Miller noted that there would be 12-14 light rail stops between Vancouver and Downtown Portland, and the time needed for so many stops would need to be addressed to make it a viable

option. Jeanne Harris noted that C-TRAN doesn't know whether they want an urban or express system within Clark County. Dean Lookingbill said that reviewing travel patterns will hopefully give a better idea as to what is needed.

Arch Miller suggested moving on. Dean Lookingbill confirmed that the committee was sending on the suggested five modes and eliminating the bottom four. The committee agreed.

### **Narrowing of Corridors**

**Presentation** - John Cullerton noted that the screening is intended to determine which corridors are the most viable options to take into the next study phase. He summarized the meaning of the term "corridor," emphasizing that corridors cover broad swaths of space and are not focused on any specific route or facility. He showed maps outlining the East-West and North-South corridor options.

He noted the criteria used to evaluate each corridor and summarized the component parts of each criterion. He noted that the corridor scale was too broad to draw conclusions about potential environmental impacts as a criterion. Based on the criteria, Cullerton noted the four highest ranking corridors. He noted that the I-5 South corridor does not include the area from Kiggin's Bowl south. He drew attention to Deb Wallace's letter and her concern that the I-205 south corridor should receive a *High* rating for existing transit ridership.

**Discussion & recommendations** - Tim Leavitt questioned whether the trips across I-205 were indeed higher than on I-5 (as stated in Deb Wallace's letter.) Dean Lookingbill noted that the volume is higher, but noted that because of latent demand, preference could be greater for I-5. Dale Robins noted that Deb Wallace's concerns will be addressed in the next phase. Jeanne Lawson noted that the goal at this phase is to determine whether corridors should be carried forward, regardless of whether they are ranked higher or lower than another corridor.

Arch Miller noted that people will ask about additional corridors if only the top four are selected for further consideration. He noted that as the emphasis shifts to the modes within the corridors, other corridors will need to be considered. John Cullerton noted the Task Force discussion of looking at growth beyond 20 years. Dean Lookingbill suggested incorporating a criterion that looks at the potential for extending corridors. Bob Post agreed that it's valid to evaluate on the basis of expandability. Jeanne Harris asked whether expandability refers to capacity or to geographic expansion. Post said it refers to meeting the demand for both.

Bill Ganley noted that it's safer to preserve corridors in areas that haven't been developed yet—regardless of mode—and to have forethought in enabling future connections. Dean Lookingbill noted that it was necessary to be clear on whether HCT or express bus or another system will serve the corridors, and it's a discussion to have with the broader agencies as to how it fits with their plans.

Bill Ganley asked whether the tipping point price of gasoline has figured into the estimates. John Cullerton said they had not.

Jeanne Harris cautioned against spoke-like expansion instead of holistic development. She encouraged the group to “not forget about the rest of the elephant.” Jeanne Lawson noted the system emphasis and how busses could potentially connect the lesser corridors. Harris cautioned against requiring too many transfers.

Tim Leavitt asked how the Corridors Visioning relates to the HCT Study. Dean Lookingbill said that the HCT Study uses more known comprehensive plans, while the Corridors Vision looks further into the future at new corridors.

John Cullerton outlined the medium and lower ranking corridors. He noted several adjustments made by the technical team and PMT that recommended extending some of the corridors to new termini, which could include park-and-rides or other activity centers. He also noted that the Task Force had made several recommendations.

Arch Miller inquired as to how much right of way is owned by the county on the Chelatchie Prairie Railroad. Dale Robins said that the right of way is between 60 and 200 feet. John Cullerton noted that the existing tracks could be used, or they could be replaced to facilitate a different mode.

Don Wagner noted that the SR-502 interchange was a more logical connection for I-5, as the use of interchanges will change substantially. Dale Robins noted that the reason for the extension was the connection to the fairgrounds, and other land use connections. Tim Leavitt asked why the Mill Plain extension did not go to 192<sup>nd</sup>. Dean Lookingbill said that while they want to be sure they aren't cutting off extensions, they need to be realistic and not extend the corridors so far that they become weak. Don Wagner clarified that they were looking for logical corridor termini. Jack Gonsalves added that federal funding could disappear if there are too many miles versus the cost benefit. He noted that they can look at minimum operable segments which still qualify for funding, with an eye towards future expansion of those routes in the future. Arch Miller noted that 164<sup>th</sup> is a clear cutoff.

Jeanne Harris said it is necessary to establish the type of transit and whether it is express or with many stops. She suggested being more up front about anticipating what will come.

Dean Lookingbill noted that extensions should be considered, but added that they may come back to a narrower area. Jeanne Lawson noted that a reason for narrowing at this phase is to get the most detail for the money. Lookingbill added that it would be infeasible to make projections for 50 years into the future.

Don Wagner noted that the logical terminus for I-5 south is the river. He noted that the Columbia River Crossing is reviewing a segment of the corridor, and if they reach a no-build decision, then it would fall to this study to include the area between Kiggin's Bowl and the river. Jack Gonsalves suggested that a placeholder system would be inherent in a CRC no-build decision. Dean Lookingbill said that the efforts are being coordinated. Wagner reiterated that the corridor should be included—whatever the wording—and regardless of individual projects. Jeanne Lawson offered to do some wordsmithing that would recognize the concern.

Jeanne Lawson summarized the committee recommendations: modifying how the downtown section is addressed; extending I-5 north to SR – 502; and extending Mill Plain out to 192<sup>nd</sup>. She added that if the Chelatchie Prairie Railroad corridor fails to pass muster on initial look, it can be eliminated.

Jeff Hamm noted that the committee was about to make a big decision by screening out corridors. He expressed concern that BRT light would still be a valuable HCT mode that could benefit various congested corridors. Dean Lookingbill noted that the issue is how much work is done in the corridors for this effort. He described it as a handoff between the HCT study and what C-TRAN is doing in the long term.

Jeanne Harris suggested that it might be prudent to go after the projects that couldn't be built by Clark County alone.

Dean Lookingbill explained that the selected corridors are those with the highest priority. He agreed that other corridors may deserve consideration and posed the question of how to keep them viable as future options. Bob Post noted that they were in the process of defining the backbone of the system, which doesn't mean that the other portions aren't important. Jeanne Lawson asked that the team consider how to ensure that the potential for other pieces of the system are not lost.

Arch Miller said that it sounded like the top four priority corridors should be considered for modes while the other corridors should be looked at in a lesser capacity. Jeff Hamm suggested that while the priority corridors might be looked at in terms of New Starts funding, the lesser elements might need to be reviewed within the context of other funding options. Jack Gonsalves suggested that the other corridors be looked at in the context of expandability.

Dean Lookingbill noted the task of fitting within the criteria for New Starts funding while making sure the options outside of consideration are not lost. He said that it will be up to the group to describe in a narrative fashion which other corridors need to be covered by C-TRAN or jurisdictional plans.

### **Public Comment**

There were no public comments.

### **Wrap up**

Jeanne Lawson noted that next meeting will be on July 26<sup>th</sup> and will include information from the midpoint of the analysis. She noted that the staff will follow up regarding a potential meeting in September. Tim Leavitt noted that the work of the Task Force is appreciated and said that they should be thanked for their work.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, July 25, 4:00 p.m.

### **Close**