

**Clark County High Capacity Transit System Study**  
**Steering Committee Meeting #4**  
4-6 p.m. Wednesday, July 25, 2007  
WSDOT Southwest Region Office, Conference Room 124  
11018 NE 51st Circle, Vancouver, WA

**Meeting Summary**

**Members present:**

Bill Ganley (City of Battle Ground)  
Arch Miller (Port of Vancouver)  
Joe Zarelli (State Senator)  
David Cusack *for* Steve Stuart (Clark County)  
Tim Leavitt (City of Vancouver)  
Deb Wallace (State Representative)  
Jeanne Harris (C-TRAN)  
Jack Berkman *for* Don Wagner (WSDOT)

**Staff:**

Dean Lookingbill (RTC)  
Dale Robins (RTC)  
Bob Post (URS)  
John Cullerton (URS)  
Jack Gonsalves (PB)  
Mark Hirota (PB)  
Cathy McCague (EnviroIssues)  
Jeanne Lawson (JLA)  
Kalin Schmoltdt (JLA)

**Members absent:**

Don Wagner (WSDOT)  
Steve Stuart (Clark County)

**Others:**

Jeff Hamm (C-TRAN)

**Purpose of Meeting:**

- Review June 13, Sounding Board meeting
- Present Chelatchie Prairie RR preliminary analysis
- Present background on HCT on the I-205 bridge
- Introduce initial corridor design concepts, comparative cost estimating methods, and HCT system modeling approach
- Review HCT decision-making process for Fall 2007

**Welcome/Committee Business**

Jeanne Lawson noted that David Cusack would be sitting in for Steve Stuart. She described the meeting as an informational midpoint between other larger milestones.

**Review agenda** – Lawson said that they would be looking to the Steering Committee for guidance on how to proceed with the Chelatchie Prairie Corridor recommendation. She noted that maps would be posted on the walls in conjunction with Jack Gonsalves presentation, and although they would not be discussed, the group was encouraged to look at them and ask questions.

**Approve of April 5, 2007 meeting summary** – Arch Miller suggested that meeting summaries be shorter. There were no other comments.

**Sounding Board & Public Involvement**

**Public Involvement Update** – Cathy McCague noted that all information materials have been updated, including the display board, fact sheets, and the website. Website visitors have increased over the past month and the web survey is being revised based on an exercise from the

Sounding Board. RTC will be providing information on the study at the County Fair. The display board is currently being hosted at Fisher's Landing.

***Sounding Board Meeting Report*** - Lawson reminded the group about the use of the Sounding Board as a way to reach the broader public. Although there was low attendance at the June 13, meeting, they had had a good discussion of tradeoffs. The Sounding Board has expressed values consistent with other findings so far.

Deb Wallace suggested that the study formally request that local elected officials begin to proactively solicit participation in the HCT mailings and use their resources to expand participation. Cathy McCague offered to send out a formal request to correspond with the new online survey.

### **Chelatchie Prairie RR Preliminary Analysis**

John Cullerton reminded the group how they had selected the four primary corridors at the last meeting and left open the possibility the Chelatchie Prairie RR corridor. Subsequent steps involved looking more closely at the right of way, potential uses, and determining whether a more detailed analysis is warranted.

The section of track being considered is between I-5 and Battle Ground. The Class 1 track is of poor quality and limits current operations. Cullerton noted environmental constraints such as steep gullies and showed pictures of sections in rural and industrial areas. The current use of the line is not extensive, although the terms of the lease give the operator (Columbia Basin) control of the rail portion of the right of way. While there is vague language indicating that the railway should work with local governments on rail transit, it would be necessary for Columbia Basin to agree on HCT use of the rail. Cullerton also noted the evolving Chelatchie Prairie trail plan.

The near-term recommendation involves looking at use of the existing track between I-5 and Battle Ground to evaluate necessary upgrades, crossings, station locations, potential ridership, operational strategies, and connections to CRC HCT service. Long-term uses could include a different HCT alignment. The information will be developed and brought back to the committee.

Lawson noted that the Task Force had discussed the corridor and most felt that while it doesn't make sense as a priority corridor that deserves extensive project resources, it should be preserved as a future option.

David Cusack noted that Commissioners Morris and Boldt were concerned about potential impacts to the trail study. Lookingbill noted that they were currently suggesting working from the existing tracks and not developing a separate guideway that would conflict with the trail.

Arch Miller noted that as the county grows there will be a need for industrial parks with rail access. He encouraged that freight use be considered along with HCT and trails. Miller complemented the memo but urged that the possibilities for the corridor not be limited. Lawson confirmed that the concerns were consistent with those of the Task Force. Lookingbill noted that they might not find an appropriate market in the initial analysis and that they were only looking

at what might be feasible. Cullerton noted that Columbia Basin holds the rights to rail and will need to be a partner and balance their needs.

Miller expressed concern about limiting future right of way. Deb Wallace agreed, noting that the corridor must be preserved for transit uses. She said that it would be appropriate to find places where right of way can be extended, and encouraged the use of the corridor for economic development. Wallace said that she supports the recommendation as written but is concerned that the trail does not interfere with future rail transportation possibilities. Jeanne Harris agreed, cautioning against letting the trail get in front of the process. She encouraged proactive planning and early coordination.

Joe Zarelli noted that the creation of a long-term global perspective on the use of the corridor and considering strategies for acquiring right of way is separate from the task of the committee which involves determining potential ridership along the corridor. Bill Ganley cited the potential for substantial freight growth along the corridor and noted the importance of taking an integrated look at the corridor's potential. Arch Miller suggested forecasting for freight as well as for passengers.

### **HCT on I-205 Bridge**

Jack Gonsalves described various structural features of the I-205 bridge and noted several scenarios whereby LRT could be placed on the bridge. He noted tradeoffs such as weight, shoulder clearance, and the need for a new structure or structural modifications.

Gonsalves noted that the bridge had initially been over-designed to accommodate more weight than it needed to. LRT on the bridge would place the structure at 10% above the original capacity estimates, though the 10% overage does not mean the bridge will fail. Mark Hirota noted that bridge capacity estimates change with design code revisions and take into account new information. He noted that 10% overcapacity would not be beyond the realm of feasibility and that it's typical to revisit capacity considerations. Jeff Hamm asked for examples of other structures that operate at 10% or above, Hirota offered to find out. Jeanne Harris asked whether age was considered. Hirota said that load ratings do take into account bridge deterioration. Gonsalves noted that while they would need to look more closely at the substructure, it appears that the I-205 bridge has the potential to support LRT.

Gonsalves showed several example cross sections of how the bridge could accommodate LRT or BRT. He noted examples of how LRT could take up shoulder space and require a design exception. Joe Zarelli asked whether shoulders are necessary on both sides. Gonsalves said that while there are exceptions, there usually needs to be a refuge for disabled cars when there are three lanes. Gonsalves noted that the concept illustrations used the existing structure as is, and other possibilities could include suspending a bike path beneath an LRT alignment. Jack Berkman noted that while it may be possible to carry LRT on the bridge, it should not be misconstrued as automatically feasible: reducing lane and shoulder widths is not a trivial process.

Jeff Hamm asked whether BRT takes up more space than LRT. Gonsalves said that BRT in its own lane does require more space due to highway spacing requirements.

## **Corridor Design Concepts: Approach, Methodology and Examples**

Lawson explained that the design concepts were intended to give a sense of direction regarding potential alignments. No decisions are being made at this time, and the next meeting will feature a more detailed evaluation of SR14 and SR500.

***SR14, BRT split-side running*** – The option would widen the road, adding an exclusive BRT lane for the entire length of the corridor. Stations would be located at ramps, often in conjunction with signal priority. Existing vehicular lanes would remain intact.

***SR14, BRT lite in mixed traffic*** – The option would not have its own structure. Travel time would be decreased by signal priority at ramps. The option would only be as fast as the slowest car unless bypasses are made available in congested areas.

Joe Zarelli noted that the investment strategy would need to match the return, and asked to see a side-by-side comparison for each design. He noted that if the goal is to reduce congestion, then construction of an additional travel lane for regular traffic might accomplish that goal. Lookingbill said that John Cullerton will be applying the travel model and evaluating cost. He noted that people have primarily expressed a desire for a reliable and predictable form of travel. Cullerton emphasized that the point of the design concept was to create an example that can be evaluated for ridership.

***SR14, LRT Side Running*** – LRT would be located on the north side of the highway. The alignment could be at a different grade than the road. Gonsalves noted that the I-205 area is problematic for all of the concepts and a solution could include tunnels or a fly-over. The use of Cascade Avenue is also a possibility as a congestion bypass. Further considerations need to be made about where congestion queues form and how to bypass those areas. That step would be followed by order of magnitude cost estimates.

***Mill Plain, BRT Center Running*** – BRT would run along Mill Plain to the west of I-205. The option would cut into the planted median somewhat, though the alignment would not involve many right of way takings. Projected impacts would primarily affect driveways and present frontage issues. Sections without a median would mean even fewer takings on either side. Tim Leavitt noted that the drawing should include bike lanes. Gonsalves noted the possibility of bicycles sharing the BRT lane. The center lane option is well suited to Mill Plain because travelers were already used to not making left turns. Leavitt asked whether the BRT alignment was convertible to LRT in the future. Gonsalves said that it was possible, though an LRT or streetcar example was not used in this case because of the 6% grade east of Grand. Which could create braking and loss of friction issues. Lookingbill reiterated that the initial considerations were broad and that any specific considerations would be accompanied by an in-depth NEPA evaluation.

***Mill Plain, BRT Lite*** – The option would employ queue jumps and may still need infrastructure changes to allow the bus to cut in line. Signal priority technology would be used to maintain schedule reliability. East of I-205 there are issues with drainage and business access, although station access is better. Sometimes side running BRT is perceived as the same as a regular bus.

There was some discussion of BRT versus regular bus. Gonsalves noted that BRT is faster, and more frequent, with stations often spaced as wide as LRT. BRT might not remove existing transit service. Joe Zarelli asked why more buses could not be added with fewer stops. Jeff Hamm said that adding more buses was a good first step, but also that there is a point where congestion slows down the buses and makes them less attractive to use. BRT would attract ridership. Zarelli noted that the issue of traffic moving south to north seems to be the bigger issue. Lookingbill assured the group that each corridor would be evaluated to determine whether or not it makes sense to carry forward, as well as what level of service is feasible for each and whether the benefits are worth the cost. Lawson noted that an HCT system is to transit what a freeway is to regular traffic. Zarelli asked whether the study goal was to deal with congestion and to influence users who have the option of driving. Lookingbill said that the goal is not primarily to reduce congestion, but to determine what makes sense for an HCT system. While there will be analysis regarding how HCT affects traffic loads, the study isn't driven by purely reducing congestion. Jeanne Harris noted that the study is also about economic development and allowing the community to grow. Lawson suggested that the committee review the study purpose, noting the emphasis on seeking an efficient and high quality transit service.

### **HCT System Modeling Approach**

Cullerton noted that the general design concepts were examples of what HCT could look like in each corridor. The next step involves determining ridership demand and creating a comparison of modes and alignments. Modeling will involve selecting three or four scenarios within each corridor and will use the CRC assumption that there will be LRT or BRT on Main. Operating plans will be coordinated with C-TRAN. Assumptions will come from 2030 population and employment forecasting.

Tim Leavitt asked whether a connection at Kiggin's Bowl or Main Street would make a difference. Lookingbill said that it would not make a significant difference in their travel time estimates. Leavitt asked whether there was information about willingness to travel out of their way to use park and rides. Lookingbill said that they will consider how people reach the park and rides. Jeanne Harris asked whether the projections consider diversions to transit because of tolling. Lookingbill said it probably would affect transit demand. Joe Zarelli expressed concern about using tolling to push people towards transit, and said that he preferred providing motivational incentives. Cullerton explained that they were using the same approach as CRC and that potentially increased ridership due to tolling was a secondary effect. Lookingbill explained that CRC had always assumed a toll would be necessary for completing the process. He emphasized that the purpose of the study was to address growing mobility demands with the realization that it might not be feasible through greater highway investment. He noted that they were not trying to make things more difficult for autos. Cullerton said that the effect of tolls on transit would probably be small. Zarelli commented that there is more work to be done regarding funding the I-5 bridge federally.

Cullerton noted that they will ultimately have assessed ridership for the modes within the corridors to determine which will have the most positive impact on county, inter-county, and interstate travel.

### **HCT Decision-Making Process: Fall 07 Sequence of Findings/Recommendations**

John Cullerton reminded the group of the current place in the study process. He noted the late November meeting at which point the final recommendations for the promising corridors would be brought forward for review. He noted the corresponding CRC process and how the HCT recommendation on the System plan would be considered at the time when the CRC is seeking agency endorsement and adoption of the LPA.

Lookingbill asked for comments on the explanation of the schedule and the interplay between the projects. Deb Wallace felt that the average person would have a hard time with the explanation. She suggested gathering a group of volunteers, possibly including newspapers, to serve as a focus group for clarifying the message and keeping the studies straight. Jeanne Harris said that CRC is attending council meetings regularly and suggested that there might be opportunities to start dovetailing the two studies. Jeff Hamm noted the importance of the HCT study to the CRC as they look at funding options. He said that it was likely that funding will come out of the HCT 81.104 Legislation. He indicated that it would be necessary to adequately describe the system plan with CRC as the first phase before going to voters. He suggested that the scope of work for the study might need to change.

Lawson confirmed that the committee understood the correlation between the study and the CRC project. Harris said it needed to be tightened up.

Lawson noted that the CRC board was considering a tour of the BRT system in Eugene. Some members of the Steering Committee expressed interest in a similar tour.

### **Close**

Next meeting Thursday, October 4, 2007 @ 4:00 p.m.