

**Clark County High Capacity Transit System Study**  
**Steering Committee Meeting #5**  
4-6 p.m. Thursday, October 4, 2007  
WSDOT Southwest Region Office, Conference Room 124  
11018 NE 51st Circle, Vancouver WA

**DRAFT MEETING SUMMARY**

**Members present**

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

**Staff**

Dean Lookingbill (RTC)  
Bob Post (URS)  
John Cullerton (URS)  
Sharon Kelly (URS)  
Jack Gonsalves (PB)  
Cathy McCague (EnviroIssues)  
Jeanne Lawson (JLA)  
Kalin Schmoldt (JLA)

**Members absent**

Don Wagner (WSDOT)

**Others**

Jeff Hamm (C-TRAN)

**Purpose of Meeting:**

- Review status of design concepts.
- Receive a briefing on the role and importance of land use in transit project decision-making.

**Welcome/Committee Business**

**Review agenda** – Jeanne Lawson explained that the purpose of the meeting was to lay the foundations for future decisions.

**Approve of July 25, 2007 meeting summary** – There were no changes to the summary.

Dean Lookingbill reminded the committee that Eugene, Oregon is offering to host a tour of their BRT facilities. Invitations have been extended to the Steering Committee, C-TRAN board, RTC board, Vancouver City Council, and relevant staff. Lawson noted that the journey to and from Eugene would involve guest speakers and discussion opportunities. Speakers could include staff from Pacific University, URS' Bob Post, and economic development experts who could speak to the transformation of Hillsboro and Washington County. The tour would depart at 8:30 a.m. and arrive around 11:30. The tour would include a presentation, a discussion of the issues surrounding BRT, a ride on the BRT route, and return to Clark County around 4:30 p.m.

The committee confirmed that the tour was still of interest. The committee suggested trying to schedule the event on a Thursday or Friday.

**Study Progress/Update**

**Public Involvement** – Cathy McCague noted that a new survey has been launched on the HCT website and has gathered 174 responses within the first four days. The site has received over

1,900 hits over the past two weeks. The HCT display board is at the city of Battle Ground. RTC is planning to attend the CRC open house on October 20. Per Deb Wallace's request, Dale Robins will be sending out a request that regional elected officials add a link to the HCT homepage to their own websites.

**Schedule** – John Cullerton said that Travel Demand Modeling is underway and ridership numbers are starting to emerge. They are considering environmental and land use impacts throughout the corridors. The work is ongoing and will be summarized at the November meeting.

The purpose of the included Steering Committee schedule is to clarify the information that the committee will receive and how it relates to the CRC project. The schedule ultimately asks that the committee form a recommendation on which corridors and alignments and modes should be included in a final HCT System Plan document.

Arch Miller asked whether identifying one corridor is the primary goal. Cullerton said that they would like to identify the opportunities for an initial corridor that emerges from the system plan. This meeting will focus on the individual corridors and the system plan will describe how they work together as a system.

Lawson reminded the group of the step diagram and process chart from meeting #2. She noted that the Steering Committee members are spokespeople for the system plan and the central point for developing consensus amongst the decision making bodies.

### **Design Concept Overview & Issues Summary**

**Review design concept development for I-5, I-205, SR 500, and SR-14 corridors** – Jack Gonsalves noted that working drawings have been completed. The concept alignments have been coordinated with RTC, WSDOT, and other groups so as to avoid potential conflicts with other projects.

**SR 14 LRT** – Would begin at the downtown CRC connection and run with two tracks together on the north side of SR 14 to be closer to the greatest population. This alignment terminates at Fisher's Landing.

**SR 14 BRT** – Follows the same general path as LRT on SR 14, but BRT allows for split side running with one direction of travel on either side. Side running alignments can allow stations to be built on the onramp and reduce right of way needs. A transfer at I-205 connects farther north and then returns to SR 14 with double track side running. The alignment considers the future 8 lane widening of SR 14, east of I-205.

**Mill Plain BRT** – Ties to CRC and uses a center running alignment without removing general purpose lanes and with a minimal amount of widening. LRT and Streetcar were not considered because of the steep grade east of Grand.

**SR 500 BRT & LRT** – Connects at the Lincoln area for the Main Street CRC alignment and uses the same alignment for BRT and LRT. Because the entire right of way in the corridor will be monopolized in the future, the alignment would run largely on viaduct structures. Though

seemingly complex and expensive, viaducts have a small footprint and can minimize right of way impacts while avoiding other issues.

***Fourth Plain LRT, BRT, BRT Lite, Streetcar*** – Begins at McLoughlin, connects to the CRC I-5 alignment, Clark College, and Vancouver Mall. Terminates around 146<sup>th</sup>. The alignment would eliminate one lane in each direction, west of Andresen Rd. This alignment would likely not be commuter oriented.

Miller asked about the park and ride at Grand and Fourth Plain. Gonsalves said that the “P” represents an anticipated park and ride location. Cullerton noted that they had reviewed various potential locations for available capacity or joint uses.

Joe Zarelli asked how the park and ride locations were determined. Cullerton said that the placements were oriented towards serving immediate neighborhoods, not drawing riders from a great distance. He explained how they were considering both arterial and freeway alignments with stops oriented towards high access or high speed ridership patterns. Each corridor will be analyzed to determine how well it serves an HCT function and ridership. Lawson explained that the locations were for the purpose of creating reasonable guesses about what could be where. If a particular corridor were to be selected, park and ride locations would be shifted and optimized.

***Hwy 99 LRT and BRT Full*** – LRT and BRT would transfer to a guideway at Kiggin’s Bowl. BRT would stop at the Ross Complex. The alignment would be center running (like Interstate Ave.) and would allow two lanes in each connection. The alignment would not connect with the 99<sup>th</sup> Street or the Salmon Creek park and rides, but would connect to the hospital and the fairgrounds. BRT could run in mixed traffic lanes along NE 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue, north of 179<sup>th</sup> St. The alignment offers significant economic development potential if oriented towards providing access. This alignment terminates at the future 219<sup>th</sup> Street interchange.

Miller asked whether it would not be cheaper and simpler to leave the fairgrounds stop on the east side of the freeway and create a pedestrian walkway. Gonsalves said they had considered the possibility, though the goal had been to access the county’s park and ride. Bart Gernhart noted that a walkway would create a long walk. Zarelli noted that the eastside frontage road is not being used. Steve Stuart noted that the route should reflect that 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue will be stubbed and connected to 15<sup>th</sup>. Gonsalves said that they could allow a design option for a stop on either side of the freeway.

***I-5 BRT and LRT Full*** – Because there is inadequate room on I-5, the alignment uses Hwy 99 until 88<sup>th</sup> Street where it crosses the freeway to access the 99<sup>th</sup> Street park and ride. The alignment would stay on the west side and connect to the Salmon Creek park and ride, but not the hospital.

Zarelli observed that Hwy 99 would appear to cost less. Gonsalves agreed, but noted trade-offs in terms of speed and access.

Deb Wallace asked about park and ride size estimates for modeling purposes. Cullerton said that the park and rides have not been constrained for the models, though they are assuming more demand for park and rides than can be realistically provided.

**I-205 LRT** – Gonsalves noted that I-205’s companion corridor, 112<sup>th</sup> Avenue, was removed from consideration because it was short and narrow. There are a variety of improvements in process for I-205, though all are on the outside and keep the median free for LRT. LRT would cross the Columbia either concentric to the I-205 bridge or on its own structure. It is not certain whether or not an LRT alignment would be able to fit on the I-205 bridge. In either case, the alignment would use Ellsworth Avenue up to Mill Plain because of restrictions in the median. The corridor is being treated as speed oriented using the freeway median, with fewer stops, terminating at the Salmon Creek park and ride. Leavitt noted the steep grade on Ellsworth Ave.

**I-205 BRT** – BRT would use the existing I-205 bridge median. Four lanes would be retained with an 8 foot shoulder on one side. It would be unnecessary to use Ellsworth Ave. but otherwise the alignment would be the same as for LRT, potentially using a viaduct structure to access the Salmon Creek park and ride.

Miller asked about access to WSU. Gonsalves noted the out of direction travel to access the campus and said that a connection is currently unplanned although a circulator bus is possible.

Bill Ganley asked whether the study philosophy is oriented towards moving people to Oregon or within Clark County. Gonsalves noted that the I-5 and I-205 alignments would facilitate cross river movements while the east-west alignments would enable cross-county access. Lawson reminded the committee that survey respondents were largely interested in HCT facilitating access across the river, though the needs of Clark County have been kept in the forefront.

Leavitt noted that he preferred Fourth Plain over SR 500 because of the development opportunities. Stuart noted that development would be more spread out along higher speed routes. Zarelli noted that the focus should be on moving people and not on creating economic development. He questioned whether HCT actually creates economic development. Stuart pointed out that streetcar has been shown to intensify development within a three-block radius surrounding the line and attracts wealthier consumers, as in the Pearl District. Leavitt noted that he would rather just add another lane to SR 500 and use HCT as a development tool.

Gonsalves summarized various connections between the corridors and potential CRC HCT alignments. The tie-ins would be dependent on the selection of BRT or LRT. The handout version did not include the stub connections and Gonsalves offered to make them available.

Miller asked about space available under the interchange at St. Johns and SR 500. Gernhart said that St. Johns will go over SR 500 and there is no room for additional widening without significant impacts to the park and other costs.

Leavitt asked about the bridge structures on SR 500. Gonsalves said that about 70% of the alignment between 39<sup>th</sup> Ave. and Vancouver Mall would be on viaduct structure. He noted that it is possible to build raised structures in an efficient and cost effective way.

## **Overview of Land Use and Transit**

Cullerton introduced Sharon Kelly who is an environmental and land use planner. Her background is in transit and she has worked with the FTA on preparing grant submittals for New Starts funding.

Kelly offered a general overview of the importance of land use. She noted that transit is becoming an important tool for shaping communities, and various factors contribute to how well a project works or whether people use it. Land use questions consider current uses and densities. Different modes fit different areas and different uses better than others. Land use is also affected by comprehensive plans and visions, zoning, and other regulations. These factors contribute to whether people will use the system.

Leavitt asked about the consideration of these factors when considering the placement of park and rides, particularly facilities that draw people to the site at Kiggin's Bowl. Kelly said that those considerations are an important part of comprehensive planning and need to be planned in conjunction with the location of transit services. Many transit facilities serve park and rides as their primary purpose, though the transit investment can be more integrated and adaptable for the community depending on the design. A higher speed system with fewer stops will probably have less of an effect than a line with more stops at a slower speed. Wallace suggested that there is an opportunity for the City to cultivate neighborhood plans to support and request more transit. Jeff Hamm noted that park and ride areas tend to evolve and become attractive to other uses and development. Zarelli noted that the sole purpose of park and rides is to help get people from one place to another and that transit is needed because previous land use planning wasn't done correctly. He suggested that it is backwards to think that bringing in transit will create economic development when the need is to get people to their jobs. Stuart noted that travelers will use streetcar even at short distances in a live/work/play environment. Jeanne Harris suggested thinking about the future development of convenient services in conjunction with park and rides.

Stuart noted that Clark County appears to be at the bottom end of the required density for LRT and other HCT.

Kelly noted that a mix of housing, retail and employment is more attractive and supports higher capacity transit. If people can access facilities easily and comfortably, they will use transit more. As an example, Kelly showed aerial photos of downtown Vancouver and Vancouver Mall. She noted that while transit access is more straightforward and versatile in downtown, access to the Mall is limited by the layout of parking lots and freeways.

The FTA has become more rigorous about transit projects, predominantly considering the factors of cost-effectiveness and transit supportive land use. The three basic criteria for transit supportive land use ask: What's there now and how does it support a transit investment? What plans are in place to support such an investment? And: What's your track record for achieving transit supportive development in the past? The FTA considers factors such as population, employment, trip generators, station development, pedestrian facilities, parking, growth

management, and transit supportive policies. “Other” land use implications, such as an argument for increased economic development, are also considered. Kelly showed a chart that indicates how different land use elements are rated on the FTA scale. Jeff Hamm noted that there is also a qualitative element to the FTA assessment.

Gernhart asked whether a comparison could be made between the Clackamas LRT line and Clark County. Kelly noted that the Clackamas line benefits from its association with the Portland mall alignment, which increases the overall calculated density. In Clark County’s case, density could not be recalculated using connections to preexisting lines. Leavitt asked whether there is a time frame to consider so that HCT could benefit from the CRC connection to downtown Portland. Kelly said she did not know.

Kelly described the Small Starts program, which considers projects under \$250 million that are seeking up to \$75 million from the federal government. BRT could be eligible for such funding. Lookingbill added that there are many ways to build in a cost effective way once a system has been conceptualized and if a corridor is selected.

Wallace noted that an HCT system will inform land use plans, and support many of the underserved areas in the community. Lawson also noted that part of the impetus is to inform the discussion of what happens in terms of crossing the river. The distributed schedule is intended to clarify that relationship.

### **Next Steps**

Cullerton said that they would spend the next month and a half performing technical evaluations of the alignment concepts to determine transit markets in the corridors. He reminded the group of the Eugene BRT tour. Miller noted the similar densities of Vancouver and Eugene. Jeff Hamm noted that Eugene had received 5309 funding for their BRT system, not Small Starts or New Starts. Gonsalves noted that the Eugene BRT system is not completely exclusive lane, and the system is now being expanded using a Small Starts grant. Lawson noted that the stories surrounding the political and financial process for the Eugene transit district and cities are compelling regardless of whether BRT or LRT is the mode of choice in Clark County.

### **Public Comment**

Edward Barnes noted a Streetcar Symposium to be held on Saturday, from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Clark College.

### **Close**

Next Steering Committee: Wednesday, November 28, 2007 @ 4:00 p.m.