

CLARK COUNTY HIGH CAPACITY TRANSIT SYSTEM STUDY

Steering Committee Meeting #11

4-6 p.m. Wednesday, October 1, 2008

WSDOT Southwest Region

11018 NE 51st Circle, Vancouver, WA

DRAFT MEETING SUMMARY

Members present

Bart Gernhart (WSDOT)
Bill Ganley (City of Battle Ground)
Jeanne Harris (C-TRAN)
Tim Leavitt (City of Vancouver)

Members Absent

Jerry Oliver (Port of Vancouver)
Steve Stuart (Clark County)
Don Wagner (WSDOT)
Deb Wallace (State Representative)
Joe Zarelli (State Senator)

Staff

Dean Lookingbill (RTC)
Dale Robins (RTC)
John Cullerton (URS)
Sharon Kelly (URS)
Jeanne Lawson (JLA Public Involvement)
Kalin Schmoldt (JLA Public Involvement)
Jack Gonsalves (PB)

Others

Sharon Zimmerman (WSDOT)
Jeff Hamm (C-TRAN)
Matt Ransom (City of Vancouver)
Erik Robinson (The Columbian)
Scott Sawyer (City of Battle Ground)

Purpose of Meeting

- Study Update
- Review findings from Scenario #6
- HCT Plans and Policies in Clark County
- Review Decision making process

Welcome/Committee business

Dean Lookingbill noted that one more meeting is scheduled for the Steering Committee. That meeting will be used to gather feedback on the draft System Plan , which will be presented to the RTC Board. The decision making process will be addressed later in the meeting.

Review Agenda

Jeanne Lawson reminded the group that the last meeting had provided direction to the study team regarding changes to incorporate into a final system scenario. In addition to the system map, the System Plan is also intended to help develop a framework of plans that are supportive of HCT. Sharon Kelly will be presenting some opportunities for HCT supportive plans and policies.

Minutes from July 10, 2008 – There were no comments.

Survey #4 Results – Kalin Schmoldt explained the findings from the summer web survey that has been active since the June 26, Sounding Board. The survey posed the same questions that were presented at the June 26 meeting and asked respondents whether they felt that the proposed

mode and alignment combinations should be carried forward as part of a system plan. A total of 159 responses were received from a broad range of Zip codes within the county. The findings were organized by which options were considered to be the most promising. The most popular choice was LRT on I-5/Highway 99, followed by the BRT options, the remaining LRT options, and finally the Streetcar options. The order of preference remained largely consistent throughout the summer. Respondents favored the speed and connections to the Portland system as facilitated by LRT, though there were concerns about cost and fundability. The BRT options were considered more feasible in terms of cost, though limited in terms of connecting with the Portland system. Streetcar was largely perceived as an attractive but impractical option.

Scenario #6 Description – John Cullerton explained that Scenario #6 incorporates the latest feedback from the Steering Committee and Task Force. Cullerton recalled that the committees had called for incremental transit service in the I-205 corridor in addition to BRT service on I-5, Mill Plain, and Fourth Plain. The I-205 transit service concept was conceived as providing all day operations with connections within Clark County and to Parkrose and Gateway in Portland. Per committee recommendations, express bus service would also be included.

I-205 Bus Improvements – The goal of the incremental I-205 improvements is to connect major activity centers while also providing relatively fast operations. A variety of proposed improvements could be used to provide access to alignment. The Central County park-and-ride at Padden Parkway could use a median flyer stop with an elevator to a pedestrian overpass. A median Direct Access Ramp (DAR) for buses could serve Van Mall and a new overcrossing to efficiently get buses in and out of the area. Cullerton noted DAR examples in the Puget Sound area. The flyer stops and DAR facilities could be upgraded for BRT-Full or LRT use in the future. A possible operational strategy could include bus-on-shoulder south of Mill Plain, which allows bus drivers to drive on the shoulder if traffic speeds drop below a certain level.

Bart Gernhart noted the impending construction of a flyover ramp at I-205 and Mill Plain and noted that future station needs might still be accommodated.

System Ridership and Cost – Cullerton explained that Scenario #6 had been modeled like the previous scenarios and yielded 47,670 daily trips compared to the model base of 19,500 and the CRC base of 43,810.

The total cost of Scenario #6 is \$372 million, including incremental bus improvements. BRT capital improvements on Hwy 99 south of the Lincoln park-and-ride are not currently included. Operating costs in Scenario #6 are 11% higher than the CRC base because of the express buses.

Jeanne Harris suggested that the Main Street section should be included in the cost estimates. Lookingbill agreed, noting that costing methodologies would need to be matched with the CRC project and would likely add millions to cover BRT treatments to connect to the Mill district. There would be few BRT capital improvements downtown because there would not be exclusive guideway.

Cullerton showed projected ridership for each leg of Scenario #6 as forecast for 2030. Some of the figures show lower ridership than other scenarios because some ridership is being captured

by the express bus service. I-205 is also slightly less attractive without BRT Full. Mill Plain maintains the same ridership levels regardless of changes elsewhere.

Lawson said that the Task Force had reviewed the Scenario #6 information and indicated that it generally reflected their concerns. The Task Force said that they wanted to see a better comparison with base MTP improvements, noting that the comparison to the CRC base does not seem to provide a good sense of what improvements are already planned. The Task Force also requested a comparison to the goals and objectives that were not previously considered differentiators as evaluation criteria. Lawson noted that while some committee members were disappointed with the lack of an LRT alignment, they understood that it was not practical at this time and they felt that Scenario #6 provided an appropriate and upgradable framework to allow for future improvements. Lookingbill noted that the system plan does not constitute a final recommendation, but encouraged the committee to raise their concerns at this time.

Jeanne Harris asked how changing ridership or funding figures could influence the plan. Lookingbill said that if nothing is built, then the plan can be modified. If parts of the plan have been built, then right of way will have been preserved and elements will be in place to facilitate upgrades as needed. Harris asked whether there was a build order for the alignments. Lookingbill said that there was not. Policy discussion, subsequent selection of a priority corridor, and conversations about funding priorities would come first.

The committee indicated that Scenario #6 appeared to reflect the concerns raised at the previous meeting and that there were no further concerns at this time.

HCT Plans and Policies in Clark County

Sharon Kelly explained that the next stage of the HCT process will consider land use and transportation planning policies in Clark County. Kelly noted the map of existing land uses as well as the comprehensive plan map and explained that her presentation would focus on land use background, a description of transit supportive development, and strategies for plan and policy actions. Implementing an HCT system will be dependent on collaboration between agencies and will require support from political figures and staff, as well as continued public involvement.

Kelly recalled the basic policy directives as developed by the Steering Committee, including maximizing ridership, improving transit travel time, and maximizing access. Transit use is heavily dependent on adjacent land uses and HCT works best in conjunction with density, mixed uses, transit oriented pedestrian environments, parking management strategies, and transit oriented urban design. Transit can serve as a tool for managing growth and for revitalizing underused areas. Transit can also provide a focal point for investment and help to reduce auto use. Kelly summarized possible actions and changes that each agency could take:

RTC – The agency will need to adopt the HCT System Plan and incorporate it into the MTP along with policies to support the plan. RTC can identify funding for alternatives analysis of a priority corridor; identify early implementation strategies such as bus priority treatments; and could address other non HCT corridors. RTC would need to identify metrics for tracking whether the plan is a success or not and would need to make implementation of the plan a priority.

Jeanne Harris asked about the decision making authority of RTC with regard to the HCT system. Lookingbill said that building a project is a decision for C-TRAN. RTC will not select which corridors to pursue first but RTC will incorporate C-TRAN's decisions into its own plan. Jeff Hamm added that the plan would need to be in place at the MPO level in order to line up funding.

Jeff Hamm noted that RTC can set where the plan sits in a long term regional vision and can help clarify what is gained for the region through mobility and mode shift. The value of HCT may lead to a shift in how resources are allocated.

Jeanne Harris asked about the role of the Comprehensive Plan. Lookingbill said that changes to the Plan would be cycled into the underlying land use assumptions for the HCT System Plan. Harris noted that the Regional Transportation Plan Organization will become more connected through the GMA to begin to play a more influential role in the shape of the County Comprehensive Plan.

Bart Gernhart suggested that it would be good to consider how the System Plan will postpone or otherwise influence existing corridor plans.

C-TRAN – Kelly summarized possible C-TRAN actions. As the implementing agency, C-TRAN generally doesn't have land use or policy authority but could revisit their 50 year vision in the context of the HCT system and could include the HCT System Plan within their 20 year Transit Development Plan. A priority corridor could be selected and an implementation strategy could be prepared. C-TRAN could define implementation strategies for the HCT corridors; prepare a marketing plan for branding BRT routes; support the City and County in TOD plan and code amendments; advocate for TOD with the City and County; prepare a comprehensive park and ride study for the county that addresses the corridors; and develop transit street design criteria.

Jeff Hamm noted that passing a sales tax was missing from the list. Lookingbill suggested that a sales tax could be included as a sub section of the 20 year TDP. Hamm added that 81.104 funding will also require voter approval from service area residents.

Clark County – The County can address policy and land use issues by incorporating the HCT System Plan into their Community Framework Plan. The Framework Plan was created in 1994 and needs to be revisited. The 20 year Comprehensive Growth Management Plan can be modified to include the HCT Plan, the County TIP can be modified to include transit supportive elements such as priority lanes. Transportation standards can be updated. The County Code and Zoning Map can be updated to include HCT corridors; TOD zoning can be applied to the corridors; and mixed use districts can be made more TOD supportive. A Transit Overlay Zone can be developed and applied to the corridors along with minimum densities and parking management strategies within the corridors.

Bill Ganley expressed concern that trying to increase density within the HCT corridors could inhibit growth in outlying communities such as Battle Ground and Ridgefield. Lookingbill countered that creating areas with higher density would not necessarily take growth away from the smaller cities. Lawson noted that requiring changes in density would help to expedite higher

density development over time. Ganley reiterated his concerns about reallocating land uses without keeping the interests of the affected communities in mind.

Jeanne Harris said she was concerned about the lack of a planned connection to Battle Ground. Lookingbill said that while there is currently not a feasible mechanism for funding a connection to Battle Ground through HCT, the C-TRAN system would remain in place, serving Battle Ground as a satellite and allowing the city to benefit from a connection to the regional HCT System. Kelly added that designated HCT corridors can serve as tools that can be used in different ways be different communities.

City of Vancouver – Kelly noted that the City actions were similar to those of the County. The City can update the Strategic Plan, the Vancouver Comprehensive Plan, the Vancouver Transportation Plan, the transit map, the city center vision, sub area plans, as well as land use and development code. The City can apply a Transit Overlay District to the I-205 and/or Mill Plain corridors, and review parking management strategies.

Tim Leavitt asked whether City staff had seen the list of potential actions. Lookingbill said that staff had reviewed the list.

Jeanne Harris expressed concern about the timeline for implementing policy changes. Kelly noted that some plans and policies will need to be revisited as they come up, while others will require special planning efforts to implement.

WSDOT – Kelly explained that WSDOT can work with C-TRAN on a park and ride strategy, define HCT corridor implementation strategies, and make transit supportive ITS improvements on WSDOT facilities.

Jeanne Harris asked why the collaboration with C-TRAN was not included as an action for the City. Bart Gernhart suggested including the required collaborative efforts as a task for each agency. Jeff Hamm noted that the City will also need to revisit its TIP.

Kelly briefly addressed potential corridor specific policy changes:

- Highway 99 – Clark County is currently working on the Highway 99 plan and making progress on TOD, mixed use development, pedestrian improvements, and parking management. The City of Vancouver could develop a subarea plan for the uptown and Main Street area.
- Fourth Plain – Most of the corridor is within the City of Vancouver and is being addressed in a subarea plan. The County has not focused on the corridor as transit oriented. The City could focus initially on key centers to avoid spreading resources too thin.
- I-205 – While the corridor is not land use focused, the corridor could be more transit supportive at transit access locations. A transit Overlay District could be applied to those areas.
- Mill Plain – Vancouver could develop a subarea plan and consider agreements to promote private transit supportive development.

Tim Leavitt said he wasn't sure if a single subarea plan could encompass the entire Mill Plain corridor, and suggested that it could require multiple smaller plans.

High Capacity Transit Decision Making Process

Lookingbill explained that the Task Force and Steering Committee roles are set to finish by October or November. Presentations are currently being planned for the HCT partnering agencies in order to gather feedback and recommendations. The final report will be presented to the RTC board and it will be proposed that they adopt the System Plan at their November meeting. The System Plan will not include a priority corridor recommendation, though committee feedback will be sought on what a priority corridor might be. The System Plan will need to be reconciled with C-TRAN decisions on their 20 TDP and C-TRAN will ultimately select the priority corridor as the implementing agency. RTC will then amend the MTP to include the C-TRAN TDP, the HCT System Plan, and the Priority Corridor. The County and City would then amend their GMA Plans to include the HCT System Plan and policy recommendations.

Jeanne Harris asked what would happen if C-TRAN were to select a Priority Corridor that is not in the System Plan. Lookingbill said that incorporating the System Plan into the MTP was delayed until after C-TRAN approval so that adjustments could be made as necessary. Jeff Hamm suggested that the plan could still be adopted by RTC, if not within the 20 year timeframe. Lawson suggested that the unique jurisdictional overlap in Clark County will likely result in the selection of a Priority Corridor that is informed by the HCT Study process. Hamm noted that the Study provides good detail and information on HCT that would not have otherwise been available to inform the 20 year planning effort.

Lawson noted the use of selection criteria such as fundability, but asked the committee to think about other criteria that should be used when selecting a Priority Corridor.

Bart Gernhart noted that decisions need to be made regarding how existing projects are designed and implemented in the context of future HCT connections. He cautioned that interim infrastructure improvements need to be appropriately modifiable.

The committee offered other criteria for the selection of a Priority Corridor, including: ridership; ride-ability; constructability; support from private development and the prospect of partnerships; the constructability of TOD; jurisdictional commitment; lane takings; and community acceptance of HCT concepts (particularly on Highway 99) and other potential changes such as carbon taxing and increased densities.

Lookingbill said that the team will try to present more formalized recommendations at the next meeting.

Wrap Up

- Next Meeting: Thursday, October 30, 2008, 4-6 p.m. at WSDOT.

Flip Chart Notes

RTC

- *Set this in the broader transportation plans/vision*
- *Monitoring progress*
- *Regional priorities*
- *RTPO thru GMA will become more connected or even drive Comp. Plan – green house gasses*

C-TRAN

- *Funding: Finance Plan*
- *HCT System Plan (sub of this plan) vote*

County

- *Battle Ground concerns regarding reallocating growth to corridors in plan instead of areas like Battle Ground*

Vancouver

- *Just don't ask for it tomorrow*
- *TIP*
- *WSDOT*
- *Work with Vancouver...*

Mill Plain

- *Sub areas*

Priority

- *Make it a success – ridership and acceptability*
- *Constructability*
- *Private partnership*
- *Implementation of TOD*
- *Resolution on 4th Plain of lane*
- *On Hwy 99, neighborhood acceptance at Main*
- *Community conversation*
- *Tax incentives*

Bin

- *I-205/18th St. – Need to make a decision*