

CLARK COUNTY HIGH CAPACITY TRANSIT SYSTEM STUDY

Steering Committee Meeting #12

4-6 p.m. Wednesday, October 30, 2008

WSDOT Southwest Region

11018 NE 51st Circle, Vancouver, WA

DRAFT MEETING SUMMARY

Members present

Jeanne Harris (C-TRAN)
Tim Leavitt (City of Vancouver)
Scott Sawyer (City of Battle Ground) (for
Bill Ganley)

Members Absent

Bill Ganley (City of Battle Ground)
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)
Bob Post (URS)
John Cullerton (URS)
Jeanne Lawson (JLA)
Kalin Schmoldt (JLA)

Others

Jeff Hamm (C-TRAN)
Thayer Rorabaugh (City of Vancouver)

Purpose of Meeting

- Review proposed 2030 HCT System
- System discussion and recommendation

Welcome/Committee business

Review agenda – Dean Lookingbill welcomed the committee. This will be the last Steering Committee meeting and will focus on reviewing the proposed system and group discussion of a recommendation. The recommendation will be carried to the RTC board which will hear an overview on Nov. 4. The board will be asked to take action on the System Plan at their December meeting. C-TRAN will then consider the System Plan as they develop their 20-Year Transit Development Plan and will be responsible for choosing a priority corridor. RTC will then formally amend the RTP based on C-TRAN's decision. The study Task Force has provided feedback on the selection of a priority corridor, though it is not a formal recommendation.

Minutes from October 1, 2008 Meeting – The summary was not approved because of the low turnout. There were no comments on the summary from the group members present.

Proposed 2030 High Capacity Transit System

Jeanne Lawson noted that the Task Force had unanimously recommended the proposed System Plan. One member was absent at the time of the recommendation though the member had been briefed and was comfortable with the proposed system. Prior to their last meeting, the Task Force had requested a comparison between the proposed system and a bus-only system. In response, the team prepared the Goals Comparison sheet to illustrate how well each goal and

objective would be satisfied by the proposed system, a bus-only system, and a full LRT or BRT system. The sheet notes that the proposed system performs reasonably. Lawson noted that the proposed system is cost-effective, improves reliability, and sets up a system that helps to preserve HCT guideway for future use.

The Task Force's discussion of a priority corridor focused quickly on Highway 99 and Fourth Plain. While the committee did not want to make a direct recommendation, there was slightly more support for Fourth Plain.

Review of HCT System – John Cullerton summarized the components of the proposed system:

- **Highway 99** – Would use center-running BRT and mixed traffic operations along Main Street and Highway 99 to provide service between Salmon Creek and downtown Vancouver. The route would circulate through downtown as far south as 7th or 8th in order to avoid the need for extra transfers and to facilitate connections to LRT. The corridor would include park-and-rides at Lincoln, 78th Street, and 99th Street. Express bus service would be retained.

Thayer Rorabaugh asked how the park-and-rides were sized. Cullerton said that the park-and-ride assumptions were rough at this point, and they were not sized to meet the specific demand at each location. He noted that the corridors are implementation *concepts* and not final project plans. Additional analysis will be required before moving forward with any of the corridors.

- **Fourth Plain** – Would use center-running BRT along Fourth Plain to provide service between Fort Vancouver Way and NE Ward Road. The exclusive lane would require reducing Fourth Plain from a four lane facility to two lanes in some locations.
- **Mill Plain** – Would use BRT-Lite operating in mixed traffic along Mill Plain except in the congested area near I-205 where it would use a new crossing structure. The alignment connects to downtown Vancouver and splits at 164th to provide access to the Clark College satellite campus and the Fishers Landing transit center.
- **I-205** – Would be stepped back from BRT-Full and would use a median alignment and amenities such as direct access ramps. The all-day service would connect Salmon Creek with Gateway Transit Center. The alignment would serve Van Mall as well as and park-and-rides at Salmon Creek, Central County, and a facility at 18th Street that would essentially replace the Evergreen park-and-ride. The alignment would also include express bus service to downtown Portland.

Jeanne Harris noted that she has heard conflicting priorities when considering the I-205 and Highway 99 alignments. She also noted concerns that center-running transit on Highway 99 could inhibit access and left turn movements. Lookingbill noted that the corridors and modes have only been considered from at a high level and that recommending the system would not constitute an adoption of any specific alignments without further consideration. Specific design opportunities will be clarified through an Alternatives Analysis when the system reaches a project level. He noted that access changes may prove beneficial to some businesses and that it would be difficult to make any improvements to Highway 99, regardless of mode, without

limiting left turn movements. Cullerton said that reduced access had been recognized in consideration of the Highway 99 alignment.

Lookingbill referred the group to sections of the study Executive Summary for lists of HCT supportive plans (page 41), transit supportive land use and transit supportive development ideas (45), corridor evaluations, potential actions by jurisdiction (51), and system recommendations (53). He noted that the HCT system will require corresponding transit supportive land use recommendations in order to be successfully implemented.

Tim Leavitt said he wanted to know more about plans to bring BRT to 7th or 8th Street in downtown Vancouver. He noted that BRT, along with regular bus and light rail, appeared to be bringing a lot of transit traffic to downtown. Lawson noted that the new BRT will replace some of the current bus traffic. Lookingbill agreed that increased transit could pose challenges to automobile traffic and raises questions about where to maintain auto oriented streets vs. transit streets. Rorabaugh noted that there is much to be determined before the transit layout in downtown Vancouver is established. He said that they would need to determine if it is appropriate to bring BRT south of the Mill Plain station, though a park-and-ride at the interchange would be a HCT destination. The process for making those decisions with the City Council is forthcoming. Lookingbill said that the proportion of transit that serves businesses within the corridors will be increasing and transit supportive development will be necessary in order for the plan to work.

Jeanne Harris noted that the waterfront development would benefit from transit and should be connected to the system. Jeff Hamm said that C-TRAN's preliminary recommendation in considering BRT service within downtown Vancouver was that local routes would not go farther south than Evergreen. He noted that C-TRAN is sensitive to the issue of transit congestion in downtown. Rorabaugh said that there were no plans to provide a direct LRT connection to the waterfront.

Lookingbill said that while the presence of transit would have a bigger impact on downtown, it wouldn't be unworkable. Cullerton noted that downtown Vancouver is the biggest transit market in the County.

Tim Leavitt said that the City Council would need to discuss what level of transit is desired in downtown. Lookingbill raised the question of whether desired land use goals were possible without a new level of transit and he noted that changes within downtown will require conscious policy choices. He noted that the system itself should be able to work regardless of how the City Council decides it should interface with downtown Vancouver.

Jeanne Harris raised the question of how the system will connect with service for the rest of the county. Lookingbill said that the study uses a level of enhanced transit service as assumed by the CRC project and recognizes the ridership that comes from the rest of the transit system and park-and-ride facilities.

Jeanne Harris noted that residents of Battle Ground don't see a benefit from the HCT system. Lookingbill said that satellite residents will be able to benefit from the better service when they

connect to the HCT system through regular C-TRAN connections. Lawson noted that the proposed system can eventually be expanded and that it would never reach Battle Ground if the component pieces aren't built in the interim.

Jeanne Harris posed the question of how to decide between competing corridors like Highway 99 and Fourth Plain, each of which serves different areas and different opportunities. Jeff Hamm said that the conversation about priority corridors will be included in C-TRAN's 20-Year Plan discussion. Harris asked how the HCT System Plan would influence the C-TRAN plan. Hamm said that the HCT corridors make enough sense that C-TRAN would be improving the same corridors with higher frequency bus service even without HCT.

Jeff Hamm noted that it would be important to discuss concerns about downtown Vancouver. He noted parking policies in downtown as well as previous disagreements about parking policy at Lincoln. Lookingbill said that parking would be a policy discussion. Jeanne Harris noted that parking is difficult to add in retrospect, but also noted that transit may prove to be more convenient and attractive option than driving. Hamm observed that Vancouver doesn't have a significant parking problem, relatively speaking.

Does HCT System meet goals and objectives? – Lawson reiterated that the goal comparison sheet is intended to help clarify whether the proposed system meets expectations. Jeanne Harris noted that the BRT-Full and LRT system outperforms the proposed system in almost all cases. Lawson said that fundability and cost-effectiveness make BRT-Full and LRT systems infeasible at this time. She noted that the proposed system protects the same corridors for future use.

System Discussion and Recommendations

System recommendations – Jeanne Harris asked whether the proposed system runs counter to any current Transportation System Plans. Thayer Rorabaugh said that the Fourth Plain Plan would need to be considered, but otherwise the proposed system is generally consistent with existing plans.

Lawson asked whether the committee members supported the proposed system. Those present agreed. Harris said that she felt the process was good and kept people engaged. Jeff Hamm commented that he was pleased and impressed with the study Task Force. He described the group as broadly representative and he said he was surprised to get a unanimous recommendation. Robins noted the Task Force members:

- Doug Ballou (Clark County Neighborhoods)
- Gail Bauhs (Human Service Transportation)
- Mike Bomar (Building Industry Association)
- Bob Byrd (Identity Clark County)
- Eva Cobb (Clark County Leadership)
- Todd Horenstein (School Transportation)
- Bob Knight (Clark College)
- Dick Malin (Vancouver NHA West)
- Kanathan Mom (Youth Commission)
- Ross Montgomery (Vancouver NHA East)
- Kathy McDonald (C-TRAN User)
- David Rowe (C-VAN User, C-TRAN)
- Ian Sutton (Downtown Vancouver Employer)

Lookingbill recognized the lack of quorum and offered to report that the Steering Committee met and that those present supported the proposed system recommendation.

Priority Corridor Guidance – Lookingbill indicated the corridor comparison sheet and suggested that the committee consider it as an initial review of how the corridors compare with regard to elements like ridability. The ratings are both subjective and objective. Mill Plain performs reasonably but is not exceptional. I-205 has high and low points. The Task Force easily arrived at Fourth Plain and Highway 99 as the preferred corridors and slightly more preferred Fourth Plain. The group noted the potential for reduced traffic lanes on Fourth plain, but seemed to prefer the higher ridership. Lawson noted that the committee was resistant to choosing a single corridor without more information on feasibility.

Tim Leavitt said he preferred Fourth Plain. Jeanne Harris said she was undecided. She said that choosing Highway 99 could help kick start development, though it would be challenging to place park-and-rides on Highway 99 and it poses challenges with regard to how it connects to Main Street. Choosing Fourth Plain would seem to dovetail with the Vancouver Transportation Plan and could demonstrate how an HCT corridor could work as an example for Highway 99, though Fourth Plain might also be able to wait longer for HCT improvements.

Lookingbill reminded the group that the Steering Committee didn't need to make the decision. Lawson noted that Fourth Plain and Highway 99 presented different challenges and opportunities and that more information would likely be necessary before a selection is made. The choice also raises the question of where the best chance for success is.

Scott Sawyer noted that either corridor would be good for Battle Ground. Lookingbill noted Bill Ganley's concerns that developing the HCT corridors could pull development away from Battle Ground, though Lookingbill disagreed with that prediction.

Jeff Hamm noted that the projected ridership comes from the adopted Comp Plan and that both corridors would work for meeting FTA Small Starts criteria. Harris asked whether downtown Portland could be counted in the ridership estimates for each corridor. Cullerton said that it would be difficult to make the case that downtown Portland is part of the same corridor, particularly with the use of a different mode and with express bus in place.

Lawson noted that the corridors were intended to portray only representative alignments and that selection will still need to pass through a NEPA process.

Jeanne Harris asked whether either corridor is more fundable. Lookingbill said it was unknown, as there is still much to investigate. Cullerton commented that no engineering answer makes one corridor obviously better than the other. Both are feasible and the ridership markets aren't dramatically different.

Harris asked how the eventual selection of a priority corridor would be made. Lawson said that while the team had anticipated having the Steering Committee select a priority corridor, the decision will now have to be based on regional policy decisions regarding transit and land use.

The final choice will vary depending on how the region wants to prioritize its investment. Robins added that the ability to implement and teaming opportunities could help either corridor. He said that changing circumstances over the short or long term could help one corridor or the other.

Harris and Leavitt agreed that the priority corridor should be either Highway 99 or Fourth Plain. Harris noted that the feasibility of the Mill Plain corridor was also appealing. Robins noted that the crossing structure over I-205 does raise significant challenges.

The members made several suggestions regarding the selection of a priority corridor:

- The chosen corridor should be able to serve the extended region. (*Jeff Hamm noted that Fourth Plain serves intra-regional travel better.*)
- The chosen corridor should have mechanisms for successful implementation in place.
- Engineering challenges should be weighed in the decision.
- Community acceptance of one corridor or another should be considered.
- The corridor selection should consider the future potential to reduce the regional carbon footprint. (*Lookingbill noted that the effect would likely be marginal at this time.*)

Wrap Up

Lawson said that the recommendations would help C-TRAN know what to consider in their selection. Lookingbill said that the process would continue after the committee stops meeting. RTC will now be engaging the C-TRAN board and C-TRAN staff in figuring out what the priority corridor should be.

Jeanne Harris thanked the study team and Jeanne Lawson thanked the committee members.

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