

## **Portland Planning and Sustainability Commission**

**March 26, 2019**

**5 p.m.**

### **Meeting Minutes**

**Commissioners Present:** Jeff Bachrach, Ben Bortolazzo, Mike Houck, Katie Larsell, Katherine Schultz, Chris Smith, Eli Spevak (by phone), Teresa St Martin (arrived 5:15 p.m.); (1 open position)

**Commissioner Absent:** André Baugh, Daisy Quiñonez

**Staff Presenting:** Eric Engstrom, Debbie Bischoff; Caitlin Reff, Mauricio Leclerc (PBOT); Megan Channell (ODOT)

*Chair Schultz* called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m. and gave an overview of the agenda.

#### Documents and Presentations for today's meeting

#### **Director's Report**

Eric Engstrom

- Commissioners have received the updated Better Housing by Design Proposed Draft report. This will be discussed during a work session at the April 9 PSC meeting.

#### **Consent Agenda**

- Consideration of Minutes from the March 12, 2019 PSC meeting

*Commissioner Smith* moved to approve consent agenda. *Commissioner Houck* seconded.

(Y7 – Bachrach, Bortolazzo, Houck, Larsell, Schultz, Smith, Spevak)

#### **Willamette River Greenway Inventory Update**

Hearing/Recommendation: Debbie Bischoff

#### Presentation

*Chair Schultz* noted she owns property on the Willamette River, but since this project is an inventory, she will participate in the hearing.

Debbie acknowledged BPS graphics and mapping staff. The Willamette River Greenway Inventory (WRG) was first completed in 1986. It is limited to what is specified in Statewide Planning Goal 15: “to protect, conserve, enhance, and maintain the natural, scenic, historical, agricultural, economic and recreational qualities of lands along the Willamette River.”

This planning goal requires jurisdictions along the Willamette to establish a greenway boundary, complete an inventory, and apply regulations to properties for development within the boundary that meet the statewide planning goal. The City completed this work in 1986 with the Willamette Greenway Plan.

In recent years, BPS staff have been working to update the WGP by reach. Plans for the Central Reach were updated in 2018 with the *Central City 2035 Plan*. Currently BPS staff are developing a plan for the South Reach. The PSC will be reviewing the plan late this year. The inventory informs the South Reach planning work.

Debbie shared the process for the inventory update, including public outreach.

There are 3 unique reaches of Portland's riverfront area: in the industrial north, most of the properties are zoned industrial/employment (1950 out of 2200 acres). The downtown area of Central Reach including South Waterfront, is mostly zoned for mixed-use urban development (190 out of 230 acres). The South Reach, known for its open spaces and natural areas including Oaks Bottom, has 400 acres out of 655 zoned Open Space.

Within the WRG boundary, there are 1000 acres of vegetation, with a large amount of forest lands (424 acres).

The Willamette River (and Columbia River) and adjacent lands, have long been of cultural importance to Native Americans for hunting, gathering, transportation and commerce for thousands of years (<10-12K years). A 2005 predictive modeling study concluded that there were likely Native American settlements along the Willamette River in the north reach area. Also, Native Americans traveled by canoes along the Willamette River to Willamette Falls for trading with other Native Americans and fishing.

BPS staff has identified a few minor amendments to make to the Proposed Draft of the inventory. These suggested changes were brought up by staff, PSC members and staff at the Oregon State Marine Board. They are noted in the amendments memo shared with the PSC.

*Commissioner Houck*: I was involved in the 1986 inventory with a couple staffers from the bureau. I would say based on the fact that we were walking around with paper maps that I would concur that the GIS work today has dramatically improved the data. I'm really impressed and think staff has done a fabulous job.

### **Written Testimony**

#### **Oral Testimony**

1. Roger Gertenrich: Central Greenway Committee; former Mayor of Salem. There is a historic value of the river, and the river is the most significant thing on our inventory. We really don't respect the river how we ought to; there isn't a sign on the river that says it is the Willamette. The history of the river is being lost. I finally have a vote for having the signage posted, so I just wanted to share this with you that the Greenway will show this soon. *See written testimony.*

*Chair Schultz* closed testimony at 5:20 p.m.

#### **Motion**

*Commissioner Houck* moved to accept the amendments to the Willamette River Greenway Inventory and for the Inventory, as amended, to be forwarded to City Council for a final vote. *Commissioner Smith* seconded.

(Y8 – Bachrach, Bortolazzo, Houck, Larsell, Schultz, Smith, Spevak, St Martin)

The tentative date for this project to be at Council is May 30 at 2 p.m.

## **I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project**

Briefing: Caitlin Reff, Mauricio Leclerc (PBOT); Megan Channell (ODOT)

### Presentation

Tonight is a briefing and discussion about the I-5 / Rose Quarter project update, an overview of the project elements, and a planning history of how we got to where we are today. The comment period is open until April 1.

This project is led by ODOT with the City as a key partner. PBOT has been leading the City team to date in collaboration on the project concept and studying it further to understand potential impacts and benefits and outcomes. A number of City Bureaus have been involved, and we only expect this list to lengthen as we start design in the next stage.

Caitlin noted that we've been working with key stakeholders including Metro and TriMet as well as major land owners in the area (Portland Public Schools [PPS] and Moda), also the Portland Streetcar and the public – including communities that were originally disadvantaged by construction of I-5 and the Albina Vision Trust.

Mauricio provided an overview of the planning history (slide 5-24) including the new Multimodal Mixed-Use Area (MMA) Designation. This is a new state rule which is applied to areas inside Urban Growth boundaries that have:

- Good connectivity for modes of transportation other than the automobile
- Denser development than surrounding areas is acceptable
- This will allow greater flexibility for how ODOT looks at transportation impacts in the central city.
- Safety still a concern for ODOT

The C2035 Plan includes ODOT's concurrence on MMA designation:

- Facilitates increases in density and the buildout of the Central City.
- Lifts congestion/mobility standards that apply to land use changes.
- Safety standards on ODOT facilities still apply but TSP projects (including Rose Quarter project) help address freeway safety needs.

Megan shared the timeline for this project:

- Environmental study published February 15, 2019 for public review.
- We are currently in the 45-day comment period, with comments due by April 1 at 5 p.m.
- Design will begin this spring – information from the environmental analysis and public comment will inform future project design.
- Construction would begin around 2023, with construction expected to be complete around 2027.

*Chair Schultz* asked about what percent the design is at this point.

- Megan: The project is at about a 5 percent design level.

I-5 carries about 120,000 vehicles each day. The Broadway/Weidler corridor is on the city's High Crash Network for cars, biking and walking. Coupled with that, Vancouver and Williams are the city's busiest bicycle corridors with peak season average of over 5,000 daily trips. People may also be transferring from the Streetcar or bus to the MAX at the Rose Quarter Transit Center. And at game time for the Blazer's or Winterhawks, there are thousands of additional cars added to the mix.

The purpose of the project is to improve safety and operations on I-5 between I-405 and I-84, as well as within the Broadway/Weidler interchange.

The project is aiming to address:

- Congestion on I-5 – This portion of I-5 carries some of the highest traffic volumes in the state, serving not only Portland, but people traveling in our region, in our state, and along the west coast. I-5 also is a critical part of the national freight network, yet it sees 12 hours of congestion each day. This congestion is recognized as a statewide issue, as it affects the reliable movement of the traveling public and freight, which hinders the efficient movement of goods and effects our statewide and regional economy.
- Frequent crashes on I-5 – this segment of I-5 has the highest crash rate in the state for urban interstates. The crash rate within the approximately 1-mile segment in the project area is 3.5x higher than the state average for similar facilities. There also are no shoulders on this segment of I-5, limiting space for disabled vehicles to move safely out of traffic.
- Difficult highway transitions, with closely spaced interchanges and a complex interchange configuration that further compound the operational and safety issues for all users.
- These needs were recognized at the state level by our State legislature, as they provided funding and direction to move forward with the proposed improvements as part of House Bill 2017.

*Commissioner Smith:* What is the crash rate compared to urban arterials?

- Megan: They are compared facility-by-facility. This area of I-5 are mostly rear-end and side-swipe crashes. With no shoulders, there is no place for drivers to move out of the traffic lanes, which compounds the safety and operational issues in the area.

Caitlin added there are difficult connections between the highway and local streets, also the lack of alternatives in the area forces all users into the highway interchange area. The area is classified as a Pedestrian District and there are existing pedestrian crossing and sidewalk gaps. Transit access in the area is challenged by narrow sidewalks and some missing connections.

Megan shared the recommended design (slide 28) and followed up with a video (slide 29). She then discussed the public outreach to date. There were over 50 outreach events held during 2017 and 2018.

The project outreach also focused on communities of color and low-income populations. Prior to kicking off the NEPA environmental assessment for the project, ODOT felt it was important to do early and focused outreach within the African American community given the well documented history of development and infrastructure impacts in this geography to Black Portlanders.

Between December 2016 and January 2017, ODOT conducted interviews with 17 people in the African American community, representing different ages and sectors who work in government, non-profit advocacy arenas and business.

The interviews focused on the project area's history and how to meaningfully engage communities of color and low-income populations in the process. We documented what we learned, which included negative repercussions related to developments (e.g., Rose Garden, Memorial Coliseum, Emanuel Hospital, I-5, N. Williams Safety project and urban renewal) to people of color and low-income populations in the I-5 Rose Quarter project area.

This step allowed for collecting early input to shape the project. A copy of the interview summary document is on our project website, at [https://i5rosequarter.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/I5RQ.EJ\\_Interview.Summary.pdf](https://i5rosequarter.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/I5RQ.EJ_Interview.Summary.pdf).

Based on what we heard during the interviews to ensure engagement from communities of color, ODOT and the City established a 16-person Community Liaison Group, with half of the members appointed being people of color. The group included neighborhood, business and community members who advised ODOT and the City on our community outreach strategies and provide us with feedback on project messaging and visuals to represent the project with our stakeholders.

In June 2018, ODOT, in partnership with the City of Portland Bureau of Transportation, held an open house, titled “What’s Happening in Our Streets?”, focused on providing an opportunity for Black community members living in and traveling to N/NE Portland neighborhoods to inform transportation investments. The forum was focused on the I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project and other PBOT projects and initiatives. Over 70 individuals attended.

The project team also did targeted outreach at community events, providing an opportunity for the public to discuss the project with project leaders, and an interactive survey for the public to provide input.

Based on what we heard through this outreach, we’ve also established a program for the project design and construction to provide economic opportunities to local, small, minority owned businesses. Key issues raised by the public are shown on slide 31.

Megan shared details of what an Environmental Assessment (EA) is (slide 32). For NEPA, you can do different studies based on the project. The Categorical Exclusion is when you know there are no significant impacts. The EIS is where you know you have significant impacts that you can’t mitigate. In the middle is the EA approach. There are the same technical reports and assessments for the EA and EIS. Technical reports were prepared for each study topic (slide 33).

Megan and Caitlin elaborated on a few key topics and findings (vehicle operations; transportation safety; active transportation; transit; air quality & GHG emissions; noise; built environment).

*Commissioner Smith:* The BAC has commented that they don’t know if the facilities is useful or not. What’s the elevation gain to get over the crossing?

- Megan: I can get this number to you.

*Commissioner Smith:* The concern is that there are people who avoid the Tilikum Crossing because of total elevation gain. So that’s the same concern with the proposed Clackamas Bike/Pedestrian bridge too.

*Chair Schultz:* It seems like this is a circuitous connection that I feel like would take me out of my way, so I might avoid it.

- Mauricio: It provides an efficiency from the Green Loop. With the area building up with more jobs and housing in the area, it will be an efficient connection.
- Megan: As part of the upcoming urban design work, we will be revising the images.

The new Hancock/Dixon bridge and highway covers provides much-needed improved east-west connectivity in the area. While it does have a relatively short section with grade challenges, the project is studying a multi-use path that would come off the east side of the bridgehead and have ADA-compliant reduced grades.

*Commissioner Smith:* There is a 10 percent grade for more than 100 feet, so it’s not a pedestrian or bicycle street. How does this actually open the Blanchard site for anything other than cars?

- Mauricio: As a whole, the project does increase connectivity. We have steep grades in the city, but we're trying to provide alternatives. This will have sidewalks, trees, freight, though it won't be as convenient as a flat route.

*Commission Smith:* The multi-use path takes you back to Broadway, not to Blanchard. And you're replacing Flint (low-grade), and I'm not sure this is better than just keeping Flint. It only connects to the east to Vancouver and Williams, but you can't cross MLK on Tillamook.

*Commission Smith:* PPS has asked you proceed to a full EIS to see impacts on the Tubman school since you'll be moving the freeway closer to the school site.

- Megan: Yes.

*Commission Smith:* You've touted 2.5 million hours of delay averted. Have you calculated per person delay for bike/ped and the bus line? TSP prioritizes these alternative modes over SOVs. Delaying these modes is contradictory to the TSP. The streetcar CIC has requested a dedicated lane here too.

*Chair Schultz:* If through signalization we're getting safer, you can still say this is an improvement. They are intertwined.

*Commission Smith:* We only need to add the signals because we're making bikes move from side to side. So we're introducing delay to both modes... and we're only doing this because we're getting rid of Flint for Dixon instead.

*Commission Smith:* Emissions go down because we have more freely-moving traffic, but that only happens if you assume no induced demand. I have some challenges with that assumption. I believe the modeling assumes all the project in the Metro 2014 RTP, which includes the Columbia River Crossing (though we know politically that hasn't come to anywhere near fruition). If we're loosening the bottleneck, how do you have the magic reduction in emissions you're showing? If you make the road more reliable, there will be more users coming to it.

- Mauricio: We're adding an auxiliary lane for a limited length. We don't see this adding capacity enough to increase demand to the corridor.

*Commission Smith:* I distributed an [article](#) that documents the many projects where road improvements have induced demand.

The construction period will be about 4-5 years in total. We will be looking at how we stage and keep things moving during the process.

There are a number of ways to engage in the Project's environmental review. We recently held two public meetings and continue to accept comments via an online open house, written comments sent via email or mail, and by phone.

Looking forward, we are looking at economic and wealth-creation opportunities by establishing a workforce training program to maximize opportunities for engagement of local, small and community contractors. We also have a number of advisory committees continuing or beginning to be involved in the project.

*Chair Schultz:* Can you explain the sawtooth configuration of the caps?

- Megan: The highway covers are still in design. We've evaluated the footprint (box) they'd go within as part of the environmental assessment, but we can look at the configuration and angles so long as

they remain in the same footprint. They are two separate covers because if you connect them, they become a tunnel, which potentially has impact to what you can carry, as well as cost.

*Chair Schultz:* It's unfortunate to not have the lids be able to support some sort of built structure. I know open space is a good thing, but that would support and tie the neighborhood together.

- Caitlin: we have been working with ODOT and the Albina Vision group. We have some preliminary studies to see what the residual structural and development capacity can be.

*Commissioner Bortolazzo:* I'd recommend adding a north arrow and name of streets on every image. Broadly speaking, I'm still struggling to understand the real driver of this project – safety – as it relates to other streets in the city. There has not been a fatality here for a long time.

- Megan: It's both safety and operations here. By reducing frequent crashes and with the addition of auxiliary lanes and shoulders, there is a safe space to pull out of the way of moving traffic. We're addressing safety in other areas as well.

*Commissioner Bortolazzo:* Regarding the lids and PP&R letters, what's your perspective?

- Megan: We still are going through a community process to determine what the uses will be on the lids.

*Commissioner St Martin:* In Seattle, the art museum did a sculpture park on a lid that connects a part of downtown to the waterfront.

*Commissioner Bachrach:* I'm trying to understand where the PSC is in terms of you process and where the future work will be done. There have been letters about the comment period and when design materials were available. This project is moving quickly, but I'm concerned the design and urban planning details will always be trying to catch up. I saw the final funding decisions are due in less than a year. I'm concerned this is a difficult process for the public to comment and participate in.

- Megan: The environmental assessment included all the technical information. There were additional requests for information that we provided, as well as engineering drawings. The direction is from the state legislature in terms of the funding decisions.
- *Chair Schultz:* Understanding building design process, in 10 months you'll still be at a small percentage (Megan: yes, about 15 percent) of complete design.

*Commissioner Houck:* My concern is about prioritization and safety: when we hear about deaths in east county, will the project suck away resources to address those issues?

- Megan: This is separate and dedicating funding for this project.

*Commissioner Larsell:* What will the covers support?

- Caitlin: The graphics are used to show the new area and opportunities, but we didn't want to make them seem overly designed. Open space landscaping will be supported, and we're looking further into the mix with buildings as noted previously.

*Commissioner Larsell:* What about noise in terms of this being at the freeway?

- Megan: This is an important question that we'll be working with the community about. Urban design and landscaping features to make the spaces an asset for the community are still to be developed.
- Caitlin: We are beginning to get an understanding of what other cities have been doing with freeway lids.

*Commissioner Larsell:* What about low-income housing? And coupling that with transportation changes?

- Megan: Funding for this project would not be used for affordable housing. But the transportation infrastructure does support the City's land use vision that includes the provision of affordable housing.

*Commissioner Smith:* Shared his slides and asked about congestion pricing.

- Megan: We're still in premature phases of value pricing. We don't know the specific termini of where pricing could begin or what the type of pricing program would be, so it's too speculative at this point. There are a number of ways we'll need to address congestion.

*Commissioner Smith:* Is the project cost about \$560M? Or is there a new range?

- Megan: \$450-500M based on current dollars. The larger number may be projected to year of expenditure.

*Commissioner Smith* noted the generous shoulders proposed in the plan. If you take all the pavement and cut the shoulders down, you could squeeze another lane inside. What would prevent this from being a 4-lane cross-section?

- Megan: At 5 percent design, they are designed to standards of urban interstates. They provide safety benefits for accidents and emergency responders. The parameters of the project are to add an auxiliary lane and shoulders, not to add a lane for traffic.

*Commissioner Spevak:* I've lived in N/NE Portland most of the time I've lived here. I find that by biking, I don't have anything slowing me down here as it is currently designed, but driving downtown I do think more about this interchange, which makes me think about driving. This project, by creating more free-flowing conditions, might make many cyclists more auto-oriented since it could increase auto through-put... which is against Portland's mode split goals. I've yet to find a rationale for this project based on the City's goals.

Eric: Mauricio, you mentioned the MMA. Is it correct that the MMA is contingent on a package of infrastructure improvements in the Central City... and this is one of those projects?

- Mauricio: Yes, it's this project and 3 others in the Central City. ODOT agrees with the proposed package.

*Chair Schultz:* I see the concern about shoulders being interestingly the same size as lane. But, for example, your garage typically allows for "more" space than you need to pull in to get in and out safely. I accept these larger shoulders

*Commissioner Smith:* I move we submit formal comments

1. Surface improvements are inconsistent with the TSP policy on people movement, impeding the flow of people walking, biking and using transit.
2. The Hancock/Dixon connection as a primarily auto-oriented street with a 10 percent grade does not meet the N/NE Quadra Plan aspirations for opening a new connection to the Blanchard site.
3. We are skeptical of the claims that the freeway improvements will not induce additional demand, which would have very negative impacts on air quality and GHG emissions.
4. We join with other City advisory committees and request a full EIS and request specific consideration of a congestion pricing alternative.

*Chair Schultz* seconded. I support 2 of the points (2 and 4).

*Commissioner St Martin:* I would vote no because I don't feel like I have enough information to make the claims.



*Commissioner Houck*: I'm not sure I understand a couple of these, and I didn't think we were acting on these today. But I do have lots of confidence in *Commissioner Smith's* expertise and technical knowledge on this project.

(Y4 – Houck, Larsell, Smith, Spevak; N3 – Bortolazzo, St Martin, Schultz)

## **Adjourn**

*Chair Schultz* adjourned the meeting at 7:19 p.m.

Submitted by Julie Ocken