

MINUTES
Troutdale City Council – Work Session
Troutdale City Hall – Council Chambers
104 SE Kibling Avenue
Troutdale, OR 97060-2099

Tuesday, April 10, 2007

1. ROLL CALL

Mayor Thalhofer called the meeting to order at 8:45pm.

PRESENT: Mayor Thalhofer, Councilor Kight, Councilor Ripma, Councilor Thomas, Councilor Canfield, Councilor Kyle and Councilor Daoust.

ABSENT: None.

STAFF: John Anderson, City Administrator; Jim Galloway, Public Works Director; Rich Faith, Community Development Director; Travis Hultin, Civil Engineer and Debbie Stickney, City Recorder.

GUESTS: See Attached

2. Discussion: A discussion regarding County road projects in Troutdale.

Jim Galloway, Public Works Director, stated I have been assigned to follow up on Council Goal 3D, which is “Ask Multnomah County to fund Project No. 97, Median Improvements on 257th.” I am coming to you tonight for guidance before I approach the County. Within the context of all of the projects that are on the County’s Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) that are fully or partially within the City of Troutdale, I would like to know where this project fits on the priority list. In my staff report I also outlined the process for funding of capital improvement projects. For a number of years our number one project in Troutdale has been the improvements on Stark between 257th and Troutdale Road. That project has not fared well in the process due to the very high price tag because you have to deal with the issue of the culvert on Beaver Creek. Because that project hadn’t fared well for several years, a few years ago we switched approaches and went with improvements to a stretch of road on 242nd between Stark and Cherry Park Road, which is an important project because of the high accident rate. That project has not fared well either. I would like Councils input on how to represent the new project that you have added, which is the work on the median on 257th. It would be helpful if you could provide me with what your top two or three projects are.

Councilor Daoust stated my top two priorities are the 242nd between Stark and Glisan and Stark between 257th and Troutdale Road. If we want to talk strategy, I wonder if we would have a better chance getting funding for some of the smaller projects if we put a higher priority on them. I haven’t identified which of the smaller projects I would put first, but I am just raising that as a question.

Jim Galloway replied I think it might. I think sometimes there is a particular niche that a smaller dollar value project would fill, especially when you have a dollar ceiling and folks are coming in with the real big multi-million dollar projects they may look for project to fill the gap. As the project works its way up if it doesn't have merit it may not compete well, but I think there is a certain value to having a project or two in the lower dollar value.

Councilor Kight asked what is the possibility of doing only a portion of the 242nd between Stark and Cherry Park Road?

Jim Galloway replied we have discussed that with the County and there was some talk about possibly putting in a center turn lane as part of that project, or perhaps only doing the improvements from Cherry Park Road south to the turn onto 23rd where the biggest problem is. I think they looked into that and realized that saves a small amount of money but probably not enough. I approached the subject of having Gresham, Troutdale and the County all pay 1/3 of the cost of the project and Gresham wasn't interested in that.

Councilor Kight asked what is the possibility of doing the 257th Median improvement project in increments? Councilor Kight expressed concern regarding 257th and the number of kids that are trying to cross 257th to get to school.

Travis Hultin, Chief Engineer, replied the 257th Study primarily addressed ways to make 257th more pedestrian friendly.

Jim Galloway stated we could probably do the project in increments; we would just need to identify logical sections.

Councilor Ripma stated I think that the 257th median project is a high priority. I have always thought that the Stark Street project has been a high priority mostly because of the number of pedestrians that have to use the dirt banks on both sides of the street. The fact that it narrows down to two lanes doesn't bother me as much as not completing the sidewalks. In general I favor the Stark Street, 242nd and 257th projects.

Councilor Thomas stated I think that the 242nd and Stark Street projects are the top two projects. I would like to see progress happen on the 257th median project to slow down traffic. I would favor doing that in sections.

Mayor Thalhoffer stated I favor having the 242nd and Stark Street projects as our top two projects.

Councilor Canfield stated we should just stick with 242nd and Stark Street as the top two priorities.

Councilor Kyle stated I think that the 242nd and Stark Street projects are still important projects.

Jim Galloway stated what I am hearing from the Council is that the consensus is that the main priorities for road improvements would be 242nd and Stark Street, but see if there is some way to fund at least a portion of the median work on 257th by doing the project in smaller pieces. Is that correct?

Council agreed.

3. Discussion: Mass Tram America: an emission-free freight and transit solution is presented to establish a cooperative agreement to explore routes, partnership and finance alternatives for clean power facilities and an overhead tram prototype.

Julie Mikalson stated with me this evening is Ben Missler who is the design engineer and President of Mass Tram America. We have provided you with a packet of information about Mass Tram America and some sketches of the tram (copy included in the packet). We are proposing tonight to begin a conversation to see how many ways the Mass Tram design can benefit Troutdale and the region. Mass Tram America is an overhead transit system. This is a rapid transit system that is being proposed city to city that will carry tons of freight, which sets it apart from all of the other trams because it not only moves freight but it moves people. The public/private partnership that we would propose would be to develop the Mass Tram System beginning with renewable power. The infrastructure of the transit system that runs overhead is basically the same as the wind towers that you have probably seen near The Dalles. We propose a different kind of wind farm, one that potentially, if successful, can go coast to coast serving many small communities all along the route with renewable power. We would propose to deliver megawatts of community based power that could help reduce the congested pressure on the grid. On the same structure we would propose to bring our transit system to help reduce congestion pressure. The transit system will not require much of the renewable power for the transportation when it is added to the infrastructure and your communities will have a long term stable source of power. The renewable power we are proposing is both solar and wind. Wind is one of Troutdale's primary free resources. You could help finance some of your transportation improvements if you use the Mass Tram design. Why Troutdale? Troutdale is the gateway to the Metro area and partly because of your wind resource. The renewable energy facilities we propose to put in first, even if the tram is never added, will begin to repay the cost of the facilities and will begin to pay the bills for the transit additions. We would like to engage with Troutdale as the key first city for prototype development conversation. We would like to build one really quick, but things do require a public process.

Councilor Daoust stated a transit system that doesn't emit any kind of pollution is intriguing. As far as going from Troutdale to Mt. Hood, I would much rather get to Portland in 5 or 10 minutes than go to the top of Mt. Hood if I were to pick a place to put this type of transportation system. Going through the Columbia Gorge is probably not going to happen because it is a National Scenic Area; building your towers would be a problem.

Councilor Kight asked exactly what is it you expect from Troutdale?

Julie Mikalson replied an agreement to explore the feasibility of bringing renewable power to Troutdale in a manner that can provide infrastructure for future transportation systems.

Councilor Kight asked are you asking for support financially?

Julie Mikalson replied no. We are in a partnership development and finance phase. The process for start-up funding for any transit alternative normally requires or encourages a cooperative agreement. What I would like from Troutdale is an agreement to explore creating such a vehicle.

Councilor Ripma asked are you coming here first because we have wind? In my mind we are too small to build an overhead transit system.

Julie Mikalson replied the gateway to the natural area is really the major feature for Troutdale. We are looking at other regional hubs and networks at the same time for potential routes.

Councilor Ripma asked so Troutdale would be the beginning of the line and folks would drive up I-84 in their trucks and transfer their freight into a rail yard type of location onto this overhead transit system?

Julie Mikalson replied the Metro Regional Plan identifies freight loading and unloading sites.

Councilor Ripma stated I suggest you call a halt on that. We spent several years fighting a major rail yard here. In Troutdale we have many citizens who want to have improved transit, I am one of them. I am on the Energy Facility Siting Council and I know a lot about wind and I know what is involved in setting up wind farms. One of the reasons that Troutdale doesn't have a wind farm is because they are very carefully sited for not impacting scenic values but also capturing wind at the correct speed that goes over grassy hills with no trees or obstructions. I am trying to grasp something that we can start with rather than a dialog because that can take years. My suggestion is that you think of some piece of the puzzle that Troutdale could get behind. I think there will be too many problems with building huge towers that would have solar cells on the top and wind turbines. Could you come back at a later date with a business plan that we could work with. I appreciate your vision.

Councilor Thomas stated I don't think I can endorse anything until I have more details.

Mayor Thalhoffer stated we will need to find alternative ways to move freight in the future and this sounds like it has some promise, but we aren't prepared to enter into any agreement tonight.

Councilor Canfield stated I went to your web site which had information about how it works, how much it would cost but a lot of the information in your presentation wasn't on your web site. I think I am confused about what this is all about. Is the project about generating a transportation system or is it about generating ways to create, spend or buy energy tax credits? There is so much information here it is hard to get a handle on exactly where you are coming from. Lets just say we did the study and we are all ready to go. Complex financing strategy, you said you would start in Troutdale with 11 wind towers and 5 solar, how much would that cost and who would pay for it?

Ben Missler stated there are over 50 different lenders and each one of these towers could be financed by itself. If we can finance the towers by themselves they will produce enough that they will get a good return for the investment.

Julie Mikalson stated our main objective was to relieve your concern about us coming here for a handout; that is not the case. Alternative financing, facilitated through partnerships, is what I was hoping to identify. There is more than one federal highway grant and technical assistance proposal that are a possibility this year. The green tag sells is another significant part of advance financing, cash up front. There is a waiting list of companies and individuals who want to write \$20,000 checks to projects.

Councilor Canfield stated I don't see a benefit to Troutdale.

Councilor Kyle stated I think this is a great concept. I do think that we need a lot more information. It appears futuristic but it doesn't seem unrealistic to me. I would much rather see freight moving through Troutdale in something like this than in the trucks that are on our roads.

Mayor Thalsofer stated I favor looking at this further. I would like to suggest that you come back to a future work session when you have a specific proposal for Troutdale that outlines what it is you would want us to do, with the understanding that we are not interested in putting up any money.

4. Adjournment:

Meeting adjourned at 10:29pm.

Paul Thalsofer, Mayor

Dated: Approved Aug. 28, 2007

ATTEST:

Debbie Stickney, City Recorder