

MINUTES OF DIRECTORS MEETING  
LANE TRANSIT DISTRICT

SPECIAL LTD BOARD MEETING/WORK SESSION –  
JOINT MEETING WITH EUGENE CITY COUNCIL

Monday, November 26, 2007

Pursuant to notice given to *The Register-Guard* for publication on November 22, 2007, and distributed to persons on the mailing list of the District, the Board of Directors of the Lane Transit District held a work session with the Eugene City Council on Monday, November 26, 2007, beginning at 5:30 p.m., in the McNutt Room at Eugene City Hall, 777 Pearl Street, Eugene.

Present: Gerry Gaydos, President, presiding for the LTD Board  
Michael Dubick  
Greg Evans  
Mike Eyster, Vice President  
Mark Pangborn, General Manager  
Jo Sullivan, Clerk of the Board  
Lynn Taylor, Minutes Recorder

Absent: Debbie Davis, Treasurer  
Dean Kortge, Secretary  
(One vacancy, Subdistrict 4)

Present for the Eugene City Council: Mayor Kitty Piercy and Councilors Andrea Ortiz, Chris Pryor, Betty Taylor, Bonny Bettman, George Poling, Mike Clark, Alan Zelenka, Jennifer Solomon

**CALL TO ORDER:** Her Honor Mayor Kitty Piercy called the meeting of the Eugene City Council to order. Board President Gerry Gaydos called the meeting of the LTD Board of Directors to order.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS AND ITEMS OF INTEREST FROM MAYOR, CITY COUNCIL, AND CITY MANAGER**—During the City Council reports, Mr. Pryor reported that the West Eugene Collaborative (WEC), in which both Lane Transit District (LTD) and the City were involved, had met on November 20, 2007, to continue with its organizational and work plan development.

**WORK SESSION: Joint Meeting with Eugene City Council**

Ms. Piercy welcomed members of the Lane Transit District (LTD) Board of Directors to the City Council work session. LTD Board President Gerry Gaydos and Board members Mike Eyster, Mike Dubick, and Greg Evans and General Manager Mark Pangborn introduced themselves.

Mr. Pangborn indicated that the Board wished, time permitting, to discuss four items: West Eugene transportation, the Franklin Boulevard project, transit ridership and service performance, and the Commuter Solutions program. He noted that the first two items were of the greatest importance.

LTD Director of Planning and Development Tom Schwetz provided an overview of the West Eugene transportation project, which would identify the third EmX corridor. He said that bus rapid transit

(BRT), or EmX, was designated as the region's choice for high-capacity transit in TransPlan and regional transportation plans. He reviewed the agenda packet materials, including the proposed Purpose and Need Statement, proposed Goal and Objectives, and preliminary process and timeline. He pointed out that well over 1,000 comments had been received on the proposed Purpose and Need Statement, Goal and Objectives, and alternative alignments. He anticipated that the scoping process would conclude in February 2008 and a draft environmental impact statement (EIS) would be issued in early 2009, with a final statement in 2010. He said service was projected to begin in the corridor in 2014 or 2015. He stressed that at this point in the process the intent was not to select an alignment but rather to identify a set of viable alternatives to move into a more extensive analysis process.

Mr. Schwetz used a series of aerial photographs to illustrate the potential West Eugene corridor options and the varying characteristics along the alternatives. He said there were a number of environmental concerns—both natural and built—that would warrant consideration and analysis. He said the scoping process would result in identification of proposed alignments for further study. He stated that the environmental study and alternatives analysis considered three elements of alternatives: modal alternatives, alignment alternatives, and link alternatives; those could be mixed and matched during the analysis process. He said that along with build alternatives there were transportation system management (TSM) alternatives (scaled down BRT service) and a no-build alternative. He asked for feedback on whether all of the alignment considerations had been included.

Ms. Piercy pointed out materials from the West Eugene Collaborative (WEC) that had been distributed to the Council.

Mr. Poling asked for confirmation that the alternatives were not limited to those identified in Mr. Schwetz's presentation and that new options could be considered during the process. He expressed concerns about the West 11th Avenue, which he felt faced the same challenges as a Coburg Road route. He was reviewing reports from the West Eugene Extension Corridor Committee, but scheduling conflicts had made it difficult to attend meetings.

Ms. Bettman questioned the purpose of selecting a corridor from among such a broad range of alternatives. She confirmed with Mr. Schwetz that West 18th Avenue was not being considered. She thought that each alternative would have a different purpose and need and saw no reason for a route along the Amazon Channel. She asked when LTD wanted decisions from the Council on specific provisions of the plan and what disposition would be made of the Council's comments from this meeting. Mr. Schwetz referred to the preliminary process and timeline included in the agenda packet. He said that the major decision point for the Council would occur when the results of the environmental analysis were available; at that time the Council would be asked for its selection of a preferred alternative. He said that decision would involve the Council, the LTD Board, and the Metropolitan Policy Committee (MPC). He said there were points in the process preceding that decision at which LTD would provide project updates to the Council. He said the LTD Board would consider adoption of the Purpose and Need Statement and Goal and Objectives at its December 19, 2007, meeting; the Board would identify alternative alignments for further environmental analysis at its February 2008 meeting.

Ms. Bettman expressed concern with the amount of leeway in the process, which she felt could result in the Council not selecting any of the alternative alignments as the preferred alignment.

Ms. Ortiz said she was also concerned with the purpose of having BRT in West Eugene and the ultimate goal of the project. She was hopeful that there would be feasible alternatives, as she supported mass transit but did not want it to occur at the cost of constituents' quality of life.

In answer to a question about Veneta, Mr. Schwetz said one of the goals was to relieve commuter traffic from the west.

Ms. Solomon asked if an Amazon Channel alignment would be a bus-only lane or allow other traffic. Mr. Schwetz said a bus-only lane was envisioned. In response to another question from Ms. Solomon, Mr. Schwetz said that an extension of West 5th Avenue to Bertelsen Road was a problem because of intervening wetlands. Ms. Solomon pointed out that the entire area had wetlands and that some mitigation could be done. Mr. Schwetz agreed that there would be tradeoffs with any of the options and the process would allow mixing and matching alternatives to achieve the goal of the NEPA (National Environmental Protection Act) process to mitigate the project's impacts.

Ms. Taylor asked if the alternative alignments being considered were under discussion because there was a large demand for service in those spots. Mr. Schwetz responded that the concentration of demand was along West 11th Avenue, particularly west of Garfield Street. Ms. Taylor then asked if Highway 99 would be considered as a corridor. Mr. Schwetz said it was not under consideration at this point.

Ms. Piercy asked if the Council could provide comments on the Purpose and Need Statement. Mr. Schwetz replied that he would provide the Council with an updated version, based on public comments to date.

Regarding the Purpose and Need Statement, Ms. Bettman said that if the purpose was to create a commuter route for Veneta or capture "commuter sheds" from West or Northwest Eugene, that should be clearly stated and ridership gains analyzed. She hoped LTD would be responsive to the public input it had received. She asked if the cost was estimated at \$50 million. Mr. Schwetz said that was the estimate, but that would be refined during the planning process. Ms. Bettman also asked how much match was required. Mr. Schwetz said it was likely to be a 40 percent match.

Referring to the LTD annual report, Ms. Bettman opined that LTD did not have the capacity to meet increased demand for transit services because of the amount of money that had to be generated locally to invest in the West Eugene project. She said the Purpose and Need Statement should include a comparison of how investing that money in service instead of the project would impact ridership and capacity.

Mr. Poling said that a lot of people coming in from west of Eugene added to the congestion on West 11th Avenue. He said it did not make sense to oppose efforts to alleviate traffic problems in West Eugene, reduce dependency on automobiles, and encourage use of mass transit. He liked the concept of a Park & Ride facility at the end of the corridor and noted that the path along Amazon Channel was already used for more than recreation purposes; many people commuted to work along it.

Ms. Piercy pointed out the West Eugene Cooperative's recommendation on the Purpose and Need Statement, which identified a number of purposes for the project.

Ms. Bettman said the Amazon Channel would increase the distance that people had to walk and EmX already increased that by more widely spaced stops. She asserted that this was a reduction in

service. She thought the WEC's recommendation was an improvement, but did not take into account that those benefits should be realized without negatively impacting progressively improving service in the rest of the system. She asked if any of the alternatives involved the removal of street trees. Mr. Schwetz replied that the process had not yet reached that point. Mr. Pangborn said that this issue was addressed with the first EmX corridor, as there were historic trees along the route. He pointed out that the alignment was designed to protect the trees. He affirmed Mr. Schwetz's statement that it was too early to know the specifics of any of the potential alignments.

Mr. Evans said the purpose of the project was to expand LTD's capacity to provide service to the community and EmX provided a unique opportunity to do that on several levels. He said that LTD was rapidly approaching saturation in terms of the ability to deliver service, particularly with traffic congestion in West Eugene. He noted that part of the problem was that planning and development occurred without considering mass transit in the equation, resulting in a focus on the automobile and making it more difficult for transit to reach its potential ridership. The scoping process would examine a range of alternatives in order to identify the best alternative for the community. He said there were traffic problems in northwest Eugene that were approaching gridlock and transit was the only alternative to alleviate that. He emphasized that transit should be part of a total transportation solutions package to move people around the community.

Ms. Piercy remarked that the City was also looking at short-term traffic solutions with the West Eugene corridor study. She pointed out that the West Eugene Cooperative had recommended including objectives related to neighborhoods, redevelopment, connections to future routes and corridors, and many other issues important to the community. She also noted that three additional route alternatives were suggested for consideration.

Ms. Bettman asked why Eugene Water & Electric Board (EWEB) was not listed as a potential participating agency on undergrounding utilities as part of the Franklin Boulevard redesign project. Mr. Pangborn said that was an oversight, as LTD had worked closely with EWEB on undergrounding utilities during the Franklin Boulevard corridor project.

Mr. Evans addressed the costs of EmX and BRT. He said a light rail system, for which Eugene was not suitable, would cost \$30 to \$50 million per mile, compared with \$6 million per mile for BRT.

Mr. Pangborn said there appeared to be a perception that the fixed-route service had suffered as a result of EmX and the funds spent on EmX could have been spent on service. He explained that the matching funds for the Franklin and Pioneer Parkway corridors were money the LTD Board had reserved during the 1990s with a one-time allocation earmarked for BRT. He said that LTD would be asking the State for matching funds as TriMet had during the last legislative session.

Mr. Pryor commended LTD for working to make mass transit part of the solution to traffic problems in West Eugene and for providing the Council with a progress report. He said it would be challenging to find an acceptable corridor, but the process would not be abandoned just because it was difficult. He was pleased with the number of people involved in attempting to find a creative solution. He said it would short-circuit that process to have specific information on a route at this point.

Mr. Zelenka said that one of the things learned from the first phase of EmX was that acquisition of right-of-way was critically important. He said that likely would be a consideration in selection of an alternative because once Eugene reached a size where it was feasible, a light rail system would

replace the bus. He supported the WEC recommendations. He was also concerned about the potential habitat impact of a route along the Amazon Channel.

Eugene Public Works Director Kurt Corey remarked that the Franklin Boulevard redesign and Walnut Station mixed-use center were closely related. He said the Franklin Boulevard project's purpose was the redesign and reconstruction of that street from the Springfield Bridge to the Ferry Street Bridge, using the concept of a multi-way boulevard, including doubling EmX lanes. He said the Walnut Station mixed use center project was currently before the Planning Commission and staff were available to answer questions.

Ms. Bettman asked to what extent the Franklin Boulevard project would impact the existing BRT route and investment in infrastructure. Mr. Pangborn said the existing route would not be changed. Mr. Corey said the staff recommendation was to leave open the option of adding double lanes where they did not currently exist; the concept was to augment and expand what had been built to date.

Ms. Bettman supported the multi-use boulevard concept and thought it would also be useful on West 11th Avenue, west of Garfield Street, if West 11th Avenue became the EmX corridor.

Mr. Zelenka commented that the Fairmount neighborhood had been very involved in the project and commended staff for taking into consideration neighborhood feedback and incorporating that into the process.

Ms. Piercy said the project could result in a new entry to the community and she supported the multi-use boulevard concept. She stated that she now used EmX frequently and was interested in converting more people to its use.

Mr. Zelenka hoped that the Franklin Boulevard project would also result in the millrace becoming a functional park and recreation area.

LTD Service Planning, Accessibility, and Marketing Director Andy Vobora announced that ridership levels were record-setting, both for EmX and systemwide. He said that EmX ridership had far exceeded expectations and continued to grow each month. He said systemwide ridership was at capacity during peak periods, and LTD was taking measures to alleviate that. He said the success of school programs had an impact on that, and added that LTD did not have the capacity to add more hours of service.

Ms. Piercy thanked LTD for continuing the school bus pass program, which she felt helped to build future ridership. She asked how many people had bus passes. Mr. Vobora said that 60,000-75,000 people in the community had group passes.

Ms. Ortiz asked how much of a discount was given to nonprofit agencies. Mr. Vobora replied that private, nonprofit agencies received a 50 percent discount. He said the current limit per program was \$350 per month and LTD currently discounted about \$90,000 per year to the 110 participating programs. He said the cap had been extended several times by the Board because of increasing need, and another extension could always be considered, although the limitation tended to be related to an agency's available resources. He applauded the City for its contribution of \$50,000 to the program, which helped many agencies increase capacity.

In response to questions from Mr. Zelenka, Mr. Vobora said ridership on the Franklin corridor was 60 percent greater than it was previously on the fixed-route system. He said that the loss of revenue because of free EmX service was minimal because 80 to 85 percent of the riders on that route had passes.

Mr. Zelenka noted that statistics showed that accidents between buses and cars on that route were declining and asked if that was expected to continue. Mr. Vobora said the accident rate was actually lower on that route after an initial period of the public's adjustment to the new service and traffic configurations.

Ms. Bettman did not think it was productive to dismiss rail service because no overarching cost benefit analysis of rail and BRT had been done. She said dismissing rail on the basis of the per-mile cost was unrealistic because rail systems accrued numerous benefits and cost less to operate. She asserted that rail was a viable solution in the future, even though the community had chosen to invest in BRT.

Ms. Taylor stated that she had attended a workshop on sustainability, and a participant from Charlotte, North Carolina, had described that city's recent positive experience with light rail and economic development and plan to add streetcars to the system.

Mr. Zelenka pointed out that he was not dismissing light rail, but since every city with a light rail system was substantially bigger than Eugene, it did not appear to be financially feasible at this time. He asked if LTD had conducted an analysis of light rail versus BRT for a community of Eugene's size. Mr. Pangborn said there had been considerable analysis at the national level. He said any mass transit system that was built in Eugene required federal funding and LTD had been told explicitly by the Federal Transit Administration that it had concerns about Portland's ability to sustain a light rail system; Eugene would not begin to qualify for federal funds for light rail and would need to seek another alternative. He said that resulted in BRT as the mass transit choice.

Mr. Zelenka said his point was that Eugene was just too small to have a light rail system, but right-of-way acquisition for BRT could set the stage for light rail 20 to 30 years in the future when the population was large enough to support a rail system.

Mr. Gaydos emphasized that LTD's goal was to create a successful system for the community, whether it was BRT, light rail, or some other future option. He said the LTD Board had exhibited great leadership in responding to the community's need for transportation options.

Mr. Evans pointed out that large cities such as Cleveland, Dallas, and Tampa were adding BRT to their light rail systems, demonstrating that a combination of different transit modes could work well together. He said that BRT made the best sense for the Eugene/Springfield area at the present.

Mr. Dubick commented that one of the purposes of the LTD Board's and the Council's decisions was to alleviate congestion and minimize carbon emissions associated with growth. He said it was better to plan for than react to growth and find a way to get more cars off the road in a way that was environmentally sensitive.

Mr. Eyster was appreciative of Mr. Pryor's endorsement. He said it was important to the Board to know that the Council was supportive, because LTD was not interested in trying to impose

something on the community. He hoped the Council would endorse a direction to assure the partnership between the City and LTD in planning for the future.

Mr. Zelenka asked staff to provide population statistics on cities with light rail systems.

Ms. Solomon emphasized with respect to the EmX extension that doing nothing in West Eugene was not an option.

Mr. Clark said he would be watching with great interest as plans developed.

Ms. Bettman thought it was premature to ask for the Council's support until more information was available.

Mr. Poling stated he was supportive of LTD's efforts and the process at this point.

Ms. Ortiz concurred with Mr. Poling's remarks.

Ms. Piercy thanked the LTD Board and staff for participating in the joint meeting. She hoped that would occur on a regular basis. She noted that many communities around the country viewed EmX as a pilot program as it was an interesting innovation that combined BRT with the feel of a light rail system. She said that if it was successful, it would be replicated in other communities.

**ADJOURNMENT:** The meeting adjourned at 7:20 p.m.

  
Board Secretary

Q:\Reference\Board Packet\2008\01\Regular Board Meeting 01-16-08\BADMIN joint CC 11-26-07.doc