

MINUTES OF SPECIAL BOARD MEETING/WORK SESSION WITH
EUGENE CITY COUNCIL
LANE TRANSIT DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Monday, January 24, 2011

Pursuant to notice given to *The Register-Guard* for publication on January 20, 2011, and distributed to persons on the mailing list of the District; the Eugene City Council and the Lane Transit District Board of Directors held a special meeting/work session on Monday, January 24, 2011, beginning at 5:30 p.m., in the McNutt Room at Eugene City Hall, 777 Pearl Street, Eugene.

Present:

Eugene City Council

Mayor Kitty Piercy
Betty Taylor, President
George Brown
Andrea Ortiz
George Poling
Mike Clark
Alan Zelenka
Pat Farr
Chris Pryor

Lane Transit District Board of Directors:

Mike Eyster, President
Michael Dubick
Greg Evans
Gary Gillespie
Dean Kortge
Doris Towery
Kim Young, Minutes Recorder

Absent:

Ed Necker

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL: Her Honor Mayor Kitty Piercy called the January 24, 2011, work session of the Eugene City Council to order at 5:30 p.m.

Lane Transit District Board of Directors President Mike Eyster convened the LTD Board meeting and called the roll.

WORK SESSION: WEST EUGENE EmX UPDATE

The Eugene City Council was joined by members of the Lane Transit District (LTD) Board of Directors, LTD General Manager Mark Pangborn, LTD Director of Planning and Development Tom Schwetz, and LTD Senior Project Manager John Evans, who were present to provide information about the West Eugene EmX Extension (WEEE) project and to answer council questions.

Mr. Schwetz and Mr. J. Evans shared a PowerPoint presentation, *West Eugene EmX Extension Update*. The presentation highlighted the policy direction that drove the project, the recommendations of LTD advisory committees and community organizations, mitigation concepts being considered for the route, key performance measures, anticipated capital and operating costs, travel time comparisons, ridership projections, and the Locally Preferred Alternative selection process.

Speaking to the recommendations of the advisory committees and community groups, Mr. Poling, a member of the LTD EmX Steering Committee, reported that he supported forwarding the West 11th/13th alternative as well as the Transportation System Management (TSM) alternative. He was unable to support the Committee's final action since the Committee did not forward TSM as well.

Mr. Pangborn highlighted the information in the presentation that indicated that because of \$8.3 million in federal funding for bus replacements, LTD should be able to maintain its current service level and add the WEEE without incurring deficits or requiring service reductions.

Mayor Piercy suggested that the presentation lacked mention of State and local goals related to carbon emission reductions. She anticipated that carbon levels would "move dramatically" with the full establishment of EmX. Mr. Schwetz responded that LTD had done some analysis of that issue and more would occur through the Environmental Impact Statement. He acknowledged that current methodologies to determine corridor-level greenhouse gas emission savings were not well-developed, but LTD had research that suggested that transit was a strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions both at the corridor and regional level. He cited reductions in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and transit passenger loads as indicators of savings.

Mr. Kortge emphasized Mr. Pangborn's point about the extra money that LTD received for buses. That funding removed some operating costs and affected the estimates for EmX. He said that the estimates had changed because of such factors.

Mr. Dubick emphasized that reducing VMT, congestion, and greenhouse gas emissions were of importance to the Board, and the Board perceived EmX as a way to achieve those goals.

Mayor Piercy acknowledged that LTD was working to decrease the negative impacts of the route on businesses and residents, but she did not want LTD's efforts in that regard to work against the goal of achieving a viable public transit system. She was pleased to see that even with mitigation, the buses would run on dedicated lanes on 75 percent of the route, which was an improvement over both the Franklin and Gateway EmX routes.

Ms. Taylor said that she determined from Mr. Pangborn's comments that the information generated by LTD was corridor-specific, and he did not know for how long the data would still be valid.

Referring to the committee and community recommendations, Mr. Clark noted the West Eugene Collaborative (WEC) position that it was not an option to maintain West 11th Avenue as it was currently configured. The WEC envisioned that the road would be rebuilt as a different sort of thoroughfare and that land uses in the corridor would fundamentally change. Currently, businesses along the corridor were auto-dependent and thus dependent on the current road configuration. Mr. Clark also noted that the Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce had pledged to work to ensure that West 11th Avenue businesses and property owners were not adversely affected by the route. That raised the question of the larger vision for West 11th Avenue and what would happen to those businesses. He acknowledged that the issue was one for the council to resolve.

Mr. Gillespie pointed out that the WEC had stated that it was not an option to maintain the road as a congested retail avenue. He said that there was no intent to eliminate retail uses in the corridor. In response, Mr. Clark pointed out that through the Envision Eugene process, the City had looked at a concept of the future of the corridor, and there was discussion of multi-story businesses close to outside edges of the core, which he interpreted as meaning that existing businesses along West 11th Avenue would change.

Responding to Mr. Clark, Ms. Ortiz said that was not what she heard at all. She believed that LTD was definitely listening to the affected businesses and attempting to address their concerns through mitigation. She never heard anyone say that LTD was trying to eliminate those businesses, change the faces of businesses or replace the existing businesses with multi-story buildings. She believed that people understood that there was value in maintaining existing businesses, although they were not thriving as they once were due to the economy. She thought the EmX route would augment those businesses. Ms. Ortiz shared what she had learned in Cleveland, saying that Cleveland had

established kiosks in association with routes where businesses could deliver products for pick-up by riders.

Mr. Eyster reported that several Board members participated in a listening session facilitated by Eugene Consensus-Building Consultant Bob Chadwick to hear the concerns of the opponents to the West 11th Avenue route. Mr. Eyster acknowledged the risks that business owners face from such projects and reported that a representative of "Our Money Our Transit" had recently spoken about the extent to which LTD staff have gone to mitigate potential damage to businesses. Staff had met individually more than 150 times with owners along the corridor. Mr. Clark expressed appreciation for that.

Mr. Clark asked if the City's vision for West 11th Avenue was one of a denser transit corridor with different businesses than were in place now, or was it to protect and maintain what was there. Mr. Zelenka asked Mr. Clark what his vision was. Mr. Clark indicated that he was inclined to support the No-Build option at the moment because of concerns that the system was too costly at this time and that the process was being rushed through. He also felt it was important to consider how decisions from the Envision Eugene process affected the question. Mr. Clark pointed out that the Council was talking about large-scale community changes, and he wanted to ensure that those changes occurred in the context of a larger vision. He believed that the plan LTD had developed was the plan it was asked to develop, but he was unsure that the Council and community had the appropriate conversation about what West 11th Avenue should be.

Mr. Pryor acknowledged that people felt the impacts of such a project now, while the benefits were realized in the future. It was challenging to have a conversation about the future when living in today, particularly when one was still trying to quantify the benefits of the project. He suggested that the City Council could help by discussing the future of West Eugene and transit's role in that future, and he believed that the work LTD had done in regard to EmX was essential to that conversation. He pointed out the vision of the WEC was not the only vision for the area. Mr. Pryor anticipated that the land-use conversation would happen next.

Mr. Zelenka commended the first phase of the EmX system, calling it a resounding success. He found it convenient and useful and said its ridership was "off the charts," and said that was why other communities were looking to Eugene-Springfield as an example. He believed that the Gateway route would meet or exceed the success of the Franklin route. He was impressed with the many public meetings that LTD staff had held and their receptiveness to changes.

Mr. Zelenka emphasized the importance of articulating the benefits of and need for the system, which he maintained was all about the future. He thought it was particularly important to acquire right-of-way for a future light rail system. He maintained that the benefits of the system were clear. He said the population and jobs in the corridor as well as the transformation he envisioned would occur along West 11th Avenue were all factors supporting the EmX route.

Mr. Zelenka maintained that over time, the entire community, particularly its transportation corridors, would grow denser. He envisioned the EmX system would realize travel time decreases that made it an attractive alternative to the automobile, and that its implementation would result both in reductions in green house gas emissions and in lower operating costs.

Mr. Zelenka went on to state that the system would result in no reduction in transit services, no financial deficits would be created by the system, and that EmX was the most cost-effective of the options examined. He commended the mitigation that LTD staff had done and said that they had listened to the community, no matter what anyone said. He asked how many trees LTD would plant along the new route. Mr. Schwetz indicated that LTD would plant more trees than it removed. Mr. Zelenka spoke enthusiastically about the physical changes that EmX had produced on Franklin

Boulevard and along the Gateway route. He considered the Gateway route much more attractive than it had been before. Mr. Zelenka pointed out that in spite of the dramatic reduction in property acquisition, the proposed route would still run in dedicated rights-of-way 75 percent of the time. He also commended LTD's plans to stage construction.

Mr. Zelenka agreed that the current businesses along West 11th Avenue were important and should be taken into consideration. He suggested there were mitigation mechanisms and funding that could deal with concerns. He pointed out construction would not occur until 2014-15, and he envisioned that the economy would have improved by then.

Mr. Zelenka did not believe any businesses along the other routes had failed because of construction. He determined from Mr. Pangborn that LTD did not have to resort to eminent domain on the other system phases.

Mr. Zelenka suggested that businesses along West 11th Avenue could make eminent domain a self-fulfilling prophecy, or they could negotiate with LTD.

Mr. Poling recalled that a previous City Council had viewed schematics of the corridor that included several mixed-use centers identified along the route, none of which had come to fruition. He observed that in his eight years on the Council, only one of the identified mixed-use centers had been built.

Mr. Poling endorsed the recommendation made by resident Jozef Siekiel-Zdzicnicki that the decision about the West Eugene EmX route be incorporated into the Envision Eugene process.

Mr. Farr suggested that LTD's ridership statistics did not take into account the volunteers that used the bus to reach Food for Lane County.

Mr. Farr suggested to Mr. Clark that the WEC vision for West 11th Avenue was a long-term picture, and EmX was a long-term solution for travel on the road.

Mr. Farr suggested that more people in Bethel would be able to access a system that turned around at WinCo. He asked what process LTD went through to select West 11th Avenue, as opposed to Highway 99, which had more residential neighborhoods. Mr. Pangborn said that the Eugene City Council had selected West 11th Avenue as the next corridor for LTD to pursue.

Mr. Farr referred to the fact that West 11th Avenue also was State Highway 126 and recalled that Highway 126 was to have been relocated to the West Eugene Parkway, a project that the Council terminated. That meant Highway 126 would continue to be on West 11th Avenue. He understood that the EmX system was intended to complement the parkway and asked how Eugene could change the vision for EmX on West 11th Avenue now that Highway 126 would not be relocated. He asked LTD staff to respond to that at a future meeting.

Mr. Farr said that he had heard many business owners along West 11th Avenue complain that they had not been able to provide input earlier in the process.

Mr. Brown asked questions clarifying the location of dedicated lanes along the route. Mr. Pangborn indicated that current maps of the route could be found on LTD's website, and LTD staff would provide paper copies of those maps to the Council. Mr. Eyster added that staff continued to work on route revisions with input from the businesses.

Mr. Clark suggested that the route would better serve neighborhoods, manufacturing, and employment centers that were less retail oriented than a corridor dominated by retail uses. He asked

if a Highway 99 alignment that reached into Bethel would serve more neighborhoods and employment centers. Mr. Dubick suggested that the Council needed to factor in that retail establishments had employees that needed an economical way to reach their places of employment. Mr. Pangborn did not think that people realized how many people live in high-density housing within a short distance of West 11th Avenue. He stated his belief that LTD needed to serve both employment centers and residents where they lived, and that such routes needed to have good connections to other parts of the community.

Ms. Towery suggested that discussion of the transit-dependent population was missing from the conversation. She said that much of the high-density housing mentioned by Mr. Pangborn was low-income housing, and she believed that an EmX route would make it possible for those people to be connected to the community more effectively and efficiently, which would add positively to their quality of life. She said that LTD worked to connect to those individuals who lacked the money to place signs and four-page advertisements in newspapers. She maintained that the West Eugene EmX route was an important corridor for those reasons. Mr. Clark agreed. He emphasized his question was on the merits of the routes relative to one another. He wanted to ensure that the community was receiving the appropriate service with the appropriate tools.

Mr. Gillespie emphasized that LTD was building a system, and each route deserved a systematic approach. As a transit-dependent person, he found EmX important because he did not have to know the schedule, and the most time he would have to wait for a bus during the day was ten minutes. He emphasized the importance of such frequent headways to those shoppers who sought to visit West 11th Avenue on their lunch hours and other short periods of time.

Mr. G. Evans believed that community growth in West Eugene during the last 20 years had changed travel and development patterns and had placed pressure on existing arterials. He believed that transit planning had lagged behind other types of planning, with consequences for LTD travel times on corridors such as River Road. He maintained that West 11th Avenue had changed dramatically over the past few years and it would continue to change. He said that if LTD did not act now, congestion would increase in the corridor because of planned growth in the west and north. He predicted deep trouble in the future. He stated his belief that the previous council was wise to select West 11th Avenue as the next EmX route. He believed that people are avoiding West 11th Avenue for the most part; however there are times they are not be able to avoid such routes to get back and forth. Mr. Evans added that by stating in the final analysis, the only real solution was a transit solution.

Ms. Ortiz emphasized the importance of transit to a healthy viable community.

Mr. Poling referred to the summary of operating costs provided to the Council and LTD's assertion that it was able to offset the operating costs of EmX by delaying the purchase of buses and equipment. Mr. Pangborn clarified the amount involved was \$500,000. Mr. Poling asked how LTD proposed to fund operating costs in the future. Mr. Pangborn said that LTD had projected out to eight years and anticipated that its budget would be balanced. The projected budget shows that the District would not have to cut services while adding the West Eugene service.

Responding to a question from Mr. Farr, Mr. Pangborn clarified that LTD had not selected a No-Build option for Coburg Road; Coburg Road was still a critical link in the EmX system. He said that at the time that Coburg Road had been under discussion, LTD was considering both the Gateway route and the Coburg Road route. As the process went on, more controversy about Coburg Road was raised while the Springfield City Council had indicated that it was ready to move forward with Gateway. Subsequently, LTD began to build the Gateway route and put the Coburg route on hold because it could only build one route at a time.

Mr. Poling clarified that at the time of the decision to postpone Coburg Road, the Eugene City Council had required that 80 percent of the route be in dedicated lanes, and it had been impossible to physically achieve that level of dedication. The Council had then decided to drop the EmX route on Coburg Road.

Mr. Zelenka contrasted the jobs that existed in the West 11th Avenue corridor as opposed to the Highway 99 corridor and suggested that the numbers were not even close. He was puzzled by discussion of the Highway 99 route. He did not think that it was a matter of which route; he said both were needed, as was the Coburg Road route. Mr. Zelenka said that the decision on those routes was made long ago. He hoped that the Highway 99 corridor was constructed next. He did not want to start all over again given the time it took to reach this point. He feared further delay would delay construction by a decade. Mr. Zelenka questioned if the Highway 99 extension would be constructed at all if the West 11th Avenue option were stopped.

Mr. Eyster recalled that the TransPlan had called for a regional transportation system, and all of the EmX corridors were identified in the TransPlan. He maintained that it was a question of when EmX would be implemented, not if EmX would be implemented, and in what order the corridors would be built. ~~He did not want to hear further discussion of reordering the routes.~~¹ He said that the City Council had come to the LTD Board in 2006 to request that it proceed with the West Eugene route. It was now 2011, and he did not think now was the time to rethink the corridor selection. Mr. Eyster concluded by stating that the system was based on community values.

Mayor Piercy stressed the importance of the local elected and appointed officials acting with one voice to secure the needed federal funding to construct the WEEE. She recalled discussion of LTD proceeding with EmX on both Highway 99 and River Road to ramp up construction of the system. She acknowledged that it would be a challenge. Mayor Piercy suggested that the Gateway phase represented a step forward because then EmX would begin to look more like a whole system. She believed the West 11th Avenue extension would really help the system function as such.

Mr. Poling stated that he did not interpret the Council's questions as suggesting a need to stop what was occurring now, but rather as seeking clarification of why the system was moving forward in the order that it was.

ADJOURNMENT: Mr. Eyster adjourned the LTD Board of Directors at 7:23 p.m. Mayor Piercy adjourned the work session at 7:23 p.m.

LANE TRANSIT DISTRICT

ATTEST



Dean Kortge
Board Secretary



Jeanne Schapper
Administrative Services Manager/
Clerk of the Board

Date Approved as Amended: October 19, 2011

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¹ Approved as amended. See Minutes of October 19, 2011, Board Meeting.