

M I N U T E S

Eugene Downtown Commission/Lane Transit District Board of Directors
Wilder Room--Eugene Conference Center

September 23, 1986
6:00 p.m.

PRESENT: Julie Aspinwall-Lamberts, Anne Bennett, Dean Owens, Stephanie Pearl, Michael Schwartz, Commissioners; Janet Calvert, Peter Brandt, Gus Pusateri, Keith Parks, Janice Eberly, Dean Runyan, Rich Smith, Board members; Abe Farkas, Development Department Director; Phyllis Loobey, LTD General Manager; Bob Hibschan, Grey Byrne, Stephano Viggiano, staff.

I. INTRODUCTION

Ms. Bennett and Ms. Calvert made some introductory remarks.

II. PRESENTATION OF LTD POLICY STATEMENT

Ms. Calvert discussed the LTD Board of Directors' policy statement concerning the development a new transit station. She said that the station should be located near the employment and retail centers in downtown, and that it would have to function conveniently for transferring LTD patrons. She said the current station was too long, making transfers more difficult and less safe. Ms. Calvert also said that the new station should allow buses to enter and leave the station efficiently and safely. She said that an off-street-type station would be most advantageous: with no competing traffic, such a station would be safer; an off-street station would be easier to protect from poor weather; and such a station would be more compact, making transfers easier. Ms. Calvert said that reasonable cost was a priority, and that LTD would be looking for more-or-less vacant property on which to locate its new station. Finally, she said the project should be jointly financed by the City and LTD. She added that "jointly" was not meant to imply a 50-50 split; rather, she said LTD wanted some form of commitment and assistance from the City in locating its new station.

III. RENEWAL PLAN UPDATE PROCESS

Mr. Hibschan said he would discuss the Urban Renewal Plan update process to show the LTD board how a decision on the transit site would fit into the Urban Renewal Plan and Report. Mr. Hibschan said the original document was the 1968 Urban Renewal Plan which heavily emphasized acquisition and redevelopment of downtown, and resulted in the pedestrian mall, the street circulation system, and the consolidation of parking areas. He said that

in 1984 the Downtown Plan identified how the elements of downtown work together, and that after this plan was adopted the intent was to update the Urban Renewal Plan. He said since that time three major issues for the update process had been identified: expansion of the district, location of a transit site to meet LTD's future needs, and redesign of Willamette between 8th and 10th. He said that these issues would go into the report on the Urban Renewal Plan, at which time a preliminary cost analysis would be conducted as part of a Finance Plan. Mr. Hibsichman said that the Central Area Transportation Study would be another information base. He said the study would be a refinement of the City's overall transportation study to see how minor adjustments in the streets would affect downtown traffic circulation. He said the Finance Plan would then be put into the draft of the Renewal Plan Report, which would then be discussed in a series of meetings and public hearings.

Mr. Hibsichman then identified the major elements of the Renewal Plan: legal description of renewal district; goals and objectives; scope of project activities; and adoption by City Council. He said that any recommendation on a site for the transit station would be included in the plan. He also said that under the goals and objectives which were worked on in February 1986, the commission had supported the notion of a transit facility that would meet the needs of downtown users.

Mr. Hibsichman then identified the major elements of the Renewal Plan Report: technical information and background data to support the plan; project descriptions; financial analysis; not formally adopted. He said the report would not be adopted formally because of its level of detail. He said the report would have to be continually updated (particularly as the City went through its annual budget process). He said the intention was to not adopt the report so that updating the report would not require a formal amendment.

IV. DISCUSSION OF THE STATUS OF THE EXISTING STATION

Mr. Viggiano said that although the existing transfer station was an improvement over LTD's previous facility, it had three major problems. First, he said that the station did not function efficiently enough as a transfer point because of its elongated shape. He said sometimes patrons had to walk three blocks in five minutes (crossing streets en route) to make a transfer. He said that if the arriving bus is delayed for some reason, or if the patron has a disability which impairs walking, the transfer could be missed. Mr. Viggiano said to prevent such aggravations and to make transfers easier for patrons, LTD would like a more compact site, with a maximum transfer walking distance of 1 to 1.5 blocks. Second, Mr. Viggiano said that the existing station was too far out on the fringe of downtown. He said that the major retail and employment activity was north of the station. He said that ideally LTD would like to locate on 8th and Willamette or Oak--closer to downtown's center, the 5th Street Market, and expected future development. Third, Mr. Viggiano said the station had safety deficiencies. He said that because it is an on-street station there is too much potential for bus-vehicle conflict, and that

because people have to cross streets to make transfers, there is too much potential for pedestrian-vehicle conflict. He added that another area of concern was the perceived safety problem caused by the so-called undesirable element near the plasma center. He said that some people had expressed their worry about this segment of the population. He said LTD did not want to alienate potential customers by having a station which did not seem safe.

Mr. Smith said he would like the commission to give LTD an idea as to whether a move to the north would actually be a move in the direction of future development. Mr. Hibschan said that the thrust of the City's proposed expansion and development would be in the underdeveloped areas north of the existing transit station. Ms. Bennett added that the Willamette parking lots on 8th and on 11th were on the market to be sold and developed. Mr. Schwartz said that even without future development, an 8th and Oak site would be superior to the existing site because it would be closer to downtown's heavy employee base.

In response to a question from Mr. Runyan, Mr. Viggiano said that a location such as the butterfly lot would satisfy the needs of LTD fairly indefinitely (20 years perhaps), because as the system grew, although the frequency of use of the station would increase, the actual size of the station could remain constant.

Referring to the recent opening of Willamette near LTD's existing station, Mr. Brandt said that he did not want to be in a position of spending a large sum of money, only to find out later that the City would be making a change that would damage LTD's operation. He said the board needed to have a clear understanding of the City's future plans, so that it could make a wise decision on the transit site question. Mr. Schwartz said that he did not think the opening of Willamette had had a major effect on the station's operation. Mr. Brandt said patrons had to cross the re-opened street to make transfers; he said this decreased the overall safety of the station. Mr. Viggiano said that no accidents had been reported at 10th and Willamette since the reopening.

In response to Mr. Brandt's general concern, Ms. Bennett said that one purpose of the Urban Renewal Update would be to provide developers, citizens, and LTD with an up-to-date document that described the City's future plans. Mr. Farkas added that downtown development, especially with the new plan's emphasis, would be influenced primarily by the private sector. He said the City could only use its resources to estimate what the private sector might do and to encourage development in certain ways and areas. Mr. Owens added that the City could make no guarantees to LTD about the future of downtown because the private sector would play the major role, and because the City would have to make its decisions based on the general public interest, not just on transportation.

Ms. Bennett asked whether the board was in agreement about the butterfly lot as the future transit site. Ms. Calvert said that of the sites examined it seemed to meet LTD's needs best. But she added that the butterfly lot had certain problems, particularly whether or not LTD could

actually acquire the property. She said the board did not want to be stuck with no alternatives should acquisition of the butterfly lot be impossible.

Mr. Schwartz thought that work should be done to secure the butterfly lot. He said he could envision a cooperative venture between LTD and the City as far as developing the property would be concerned. He added that while general fund money from the City would be possible, he did not think the commission had any extra money to earmark for LTD's new station.

Ms. Loobey said \$1.6 million was the rough cost estimate for acquisition of the butterfly lot and construction of a transit station. She also said that some discussion of mixed-use development with the City had been considered, but added that such a venture would probably require at least a two-story structure; she said this would significantly raise the cost above what it would take to simply construct a transit station.

Mr. Brandt said that the board had not yet thoroughly examined all possible sites for a new station, and that it should not hastily assume that the butterfly lot would be the best location. Ms. Calvert said that while the best specific site had not yet been determined, generally the board wanted the new station to be in the central business and government area of downtown. She said that with this in mind the board wanted a commitment from the City that transit would be an important part of the downtown.

Ms. Aspinwall-Lamberts asked what the board wanted from the City to illustrate a commitment to transit in the downtown. Dr. Smith said one thing the board wanted to know was which streets would be open, and which closed. Ms. Bennett said the Downtown Plan and especially the Urban Renewal Plan update would provide fairly specific answers to questions about downtown development. She suggested to staff that the board be given copies of the commission's notes with regard to the Urban Renewal Plan update, and also given a schedule of upcoming meetings and hearings.

Mr. Byrne said that the Urban Renewal Agency viewed the transit station from a development perspective. He said that the elongated, on-street station limited visual access to many redevelopment sites owned by the agency, and restricted auto and pedestrian flow. Therefore, he said, the agency shared LTD's desire for a better station. He also added that as downtown became more intensely developed, employee parking would become more difficult to find. Mr. Byrne said that an efficiently functioning transit system would ease this problem facing the agency, and that the agency therefore strongly supported the goal of having such a system.

Dr. Smith said the board wanted to know what sort of help it could expect from the commission to get over the potential legal hurdles blocking LTD's acquisition of the butterfly lot.

Ms. Loobey said that in the Miles study the focus had been primarily on sites which were publicly-owned; she said the board had not examined all of its possibilities for a new location. She said that two potential

privately-owned sites were a service parking lot east of the Citizen's Building and a lot west of the Greyhound terminal.

Ms. Bennett said that the commission's assets were primarily in land, and that the commission had a very limited capital budget. Mr. Byrne added that the development strategy would be to take those land assets and incrementally develop them according to a publicly-generated master plan. He said the entire financial structure of the Urban Renewal Plan update would be predicated on the notion that those holdings be put back into private ownership and back onto the tax rolls, so that public projects could be funded.

Mr. Schwartz suggested that the board develop a list of priorities, indicating its first, second, third, etc. choices for a new transit site location. Mr. Runyan said he was not yet convinced that the existing transit site was not the best choice; he said the two blocks west of Willamette Street might serve very well as an on-street site which would meet LTD's future needs. Ms. Eberly said that her major concern was how, beyond any particular site, transit fit into the City's overall picture for the future of downtown. Ms. Pearl said the commission viewed transit as a crucial part of downtown development.

Ms. Bennett suggested that staff and perhaps some commission members attend a board meeting and review the Downtown Plan and the Urban Renewal Plan update. Ms. Loobey said that a presentation could be scheduled for the board's next meeting on October 15. She added that the two groups could consider a joint subcommittee structure to work on transit issues and to make sure that the groups' mutual goals were reached.

Mr. Runyan asked the commission what it needed from LTD in order to integrate the goals for a transit site with the Urban Renewal Plan. Mr. Farkas said LTD was already included in the plan. Mr. Runyan also asked whether there were any sites about which decisions were about to be made, and which would then not be available to LTD because LTD had not gotten involved in the process soon enough. Ms. Bennett said that the only two sites set aside for specific projects by the commission were 8th and Willamette and 11th and Willamette (both for subsurface parking).

Ms. Bennett suggested that the groups establish a joint committee to work on the issues relating to LTD's transit station. She also said the board should review the commission's work on the Urban Renewal Plan update. Mr. Runyan said that the board should first review this information at its October 15 meeting, and then discuss the formation of such a joint committee. The group supported this suggestion. Mr. Farkas said that staff should begin considering criteria more specific than those in the policy statement for possible transit site locations.

The meeting adjourned at 8:18 p.m.

(Recorded by Monty Hindman)


LTD Board Secretary