

MINUTES

Eugene City Council and Lane Transit District Board of Directors Virtual Work Session Eugene, Oregon 97401

February 28, 2022
5:30 p.m.

Councilors Present: Claire Syrett, Matt Keating, Emily Semple, Alan Zelenka, Jennifer Yeh, Mike Clark, Greg Evans, Randy Groves

LTD Directors Present: Caitlin Vargas, Emily Secord, Susan Cox, Don Nordin, Michelle Webber, Gino Grimaldi, Pete Knox

Mayor Vinis opened the February 28, 2022, work session of the Eugene City Council.

Board President Vargas opened the February 28, 2022, meeting of the Lane Transit District (LTD) Board of Directors.

1. **JOINT WORK SESSION: MovingAhead Project Update**

City of Eugene Transportation Planning Manager Rob Inerfeld and Lane Transit District Development Planner Andrew Martin provided a MovingAhead project update.

Council Discussion:

- Councilor Clark – asked about public engagement for this project and discussed a signed petition received from Coburg Road area residents who are opposed to the enhanced corridor; asked if staff plans to reach out to individuals who signed the petition opposing a Coburg corridor; asked for a comparison of pre-project ridership estimates versus current numbers for West Eugene, Riverbend and Glenwood transit loops.
- Director Nordin – responded to Councilor Clark, noting that a recent meeting of the American Association of Public Transit questioned the use of ridership metrics and that chasing peak ridership is not necessarily best for determining community need.
- Councilor Syrett – stated the choices presented today seem like the most logical and are an appropriate use of public dollars spent for the amount of public benefit generated; noted she has received a great deal of support for the River Road EMX option from Ward 7 constituents; encouraged colleagues to listen to the experts and planners who have been engaged in this process for its entirety; noted some do not support further investments in public transit, but she does not believe they represent a majority of the public.
- Director Knox – stated support for staff recommendations; noted resident concerns center around the potential for increased congestion and asked staff to clarify why that is unlikely to occur; highlighted the amount of review and analysis that has been completed and the ways with which the plan has been responsive to new information.
- Councilor Keating – thanked staff for the report; asked about the 30th Avenue corridor and if anyone from Lane Community College participated in discussions; stated the Amazon Station appears to be wholly underutilized, with data points from the Southeast Neighbors Transportation Committee suggesting the potential for greater utilization; asked about preserving neighborhood routes and expressed hope none will be sacrificed for MovingAhead, as it could negatively impact more vulnerable residents.

- Director Grimaldi – noted expectation that implementation of MovingAhead will increase operational costs, and is working with staff to better understand how those costs will be absorbed.
- Councilor Yeh – thanked staff for presentation; asked about 30th Avenue corridor and whether the City would forego county-sponsored improvements by selecting the “no build option”; stated Highway 99 planning is not complete and this may not be the right time to consider a larger transit package.
- Councilor Groves – thanked staff for the report; expressed support for wider sidewalks and anything that can be done to separate children from transit corridors; highlighted efforts along River Road to install a pedestrian/bike bridge over the Beltline; noted shared lanes seem to work well on West 11th Avenue; advocated for transit corridors as an ideal place to build new housing and other connections to the community.
- Councilor Semple – noted there has been much analysis and discussion on this complicated effort; recognized it is still the beginning of this project and final outcomes have yet to be seen; noted concerns about unknowns such as falling ridership; stated she is looking forward to future work on and discussion of this topic.
- Councilor Evans – stated the need for a comprehensive planning effort along Highway 99 to assess growth and considerations related to schools and other public services; stated more work is needed before moving ahead.
- Director Nordin – asked about designs showing bikes on the left of buses and if there are plans to make bike lanes more protected.
- Councilor Clark – stated public transportation is a critical public utility and the bigger questions are important and worth taking the time to ask; stated that ridership numbers are a critical metric which inform service levels and types; noted he has received many emails from people with concerns about the transit corridors, but the vast majority of residents from the River Road and Santa Clara areas are positive about them; asked what percent of a River Road corridor would be paid for by the City versus other funding sources.
- Councilor Syrett – regarding comments on planning for Highway 99, reminded everyone it is up to Council to decide when neighborhood planning happens for the Bethel Area; stated proposed investments into transit corridor are such that if a planning process for Bethel results in changes to the transit corridor, those could easily be adjusted at minimal cost; noted a new multi-family development on Highway 99 that is about to apply for permits, for which the transit corridor could have a meaningful impact on its future residents.
- Councilor Yeh – expressed appreciation for the analysis done on MLK Boulevard and Coburg Road; stated the enhanced corridor proposal for Coburg Road makes a lot of sense; stated support for an enhanced corridor on MLK Boulevard; asked about further refinement of plans and ongoing community engagement along Coburg Road.
- Councilor Keating – asked what creative concepts, such as “free ride Friday”, have been discussed at the LTD board level; stated he is a champion of such concepts and would like to be included in any future opportunities to advocate for them; thanked drivers and other LTD frontline operators for their efforts throughout the pandemic.
- Councilor Zelenka – stated support for additional EMX routes (except the 30th Avenue corridor); noted in 10-15 years officials and residents will look back on this initiative wishing more had been done; stated such projects will only become more costly and desirable in the future; stated his support for staff recommendations.
- Councilor Evans – noted previous work experience with LTD customer service; discussed local dependency on public transit; advocated for a more robust outreach to business owners; concurred with the need for determining how to fund an expanding system and its increased operating costs.
- Councilor Clark – stated Eugene residents will pay more for the River Road/Santa Clara leg of EMX than non-residents; asked if there has been work completed by staff on promoting cost

- equity for residents who will use this public utility; advocated for the future of transportation being individual transportation on a public scale (micromobility).
- Councilor Evans – reviewed funding history of LTD, noting payroll taxes support LTD in Eugene, as opposed to other municipalities using property tax revenue; stated his desire for all to be clear about how this system runs and how it is funded.
 - Councilor Syrett – clarified that all pay for LTD transit services and objected to assertion that River Road residents will pay more.
 - Mayor Vinis – stated the work being done here is for the city of the future, not necessarily what is needed now; noted each corridor has a unique mix of safety and congestion issues but an overall need for greater bus service; stated support for project; advocated for direct outreach to those who have petitioned against expansion efforts; stated this project is fundamentally a question of safety and equity; anticipated a future in which public transportation is much safer, cleaner and viable.
 - Councilor Clark – added that fewer people would use their personal vehicles under a micromobility model.
 - Director Vargas – provided an opportunity to discuss feedback from constituents and address misinformation on project.
 - Director Secord – stated it is helpful to hear questions, recommended areas of focus and what councilors have on their minds; noted strong community support for River Road corridor; noted challenges with Coburg Road corridor but also opportunities that exist therein.
 - Director Webber – thanked councilors for their thoughtful questions and comments; stated this is a large project and emphasized connecting with people on their needs and concerns.

Mayor Vinis adjourned the Eugene City Council meeting at 6:56 p.m.

Board President Vargas adjourned the Lane Transit District Board of Directors meeting.

Respectfully submitted,



Brooke Freed
City Recorder AIC

(Recorded by Jay Ferris)

Link to the webcast of this City Council meeting [here](#).