

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER: Chair Mark Frost called the meeting to order at 5:30

PRESENT: Commissioners Mark Frost (Chair), Bill Irving, Sue Powers, Tina Lassen, Megan Ramey, Amy Schlappi, Erika Price

ABSENT:

STAFF: Senior Planner Kevin Liburdy, Associate Planner Jennifer Kaden, John Bosket of DKS Associates

II. PLANNING DIRECTOR'S UPDATE: None.

III. PUBLIC HEARING:

File No. 2020-25 - Transportation System Plan Amendment - Continuation

Consider draft amendments to the City's Transportation System Plan.

Planning Commission Chair Mark Frost read the procedural script and asked the Commissioners to disclose any bias or conflicts in this matter. There were none. Frost asked for challenges from the audience; there were none.

STAFF REPORT: Kevin Liburdy, Senior Planner, provided a power point presentation on the matter including background and scope on the amendments, an overview of proposed amendments, a summary of projects proposed given current revenue estimates, a proposed list of projects if additional revenue is identified, and a brief overview of comments received via community survey and additional written comments.

John Bosket, DKS Associates, explained differences between the projects listed in the "Preferred Plan," Chapter 3 of the Transportation System Plan (TSP), and the projects listed in the "Financially Constrained Plan," Chapter 4. The financially constrained list includes the capital projects that can be funded with anticipated revenue through the year 2040. Projects that are not in the financially constrained plan still can be constructed if funding becomes available.

COMMISSIONER QUESTIONS:

Commissioner Irving asked about funding sources in addition to transportation SDCs. Liburdy said ODOT STIP funds are another source, as well as urban renewal funds. Those three are primary funding sources currently.

Commissioner Powers asked about accuracy of project cost estimates and how they were developed. Liburdy said the 2011 TSP cost estimates were starting point for projects adjusted by an annual index. In some cases there are known cost estimates for specific projects such as the Cascade/Rand signal, and Engineering department feedback were used to update cost estimates. Bosket added that there is stronger confidence in estimates for straight-forward projects than projects that involve steep topography or other complicated elements.

Irving asked about proportionate share districts. Liburdy confirmed there are two existing proportionate share districts, including for the Cascade/Rand signalization project, but they provide limited funding.

Liburdy presented a map of proposed projects assuming current revenue estimates (“without additional funding”) including interim improvements at I-84 Exit 62; right-of-way or easement acquisition for a section of a Henderson Creek trail; pedestrian crossings at Rocky Rd. & May St., and at 2nd & State; a roundabout at Mt. Adams & Cascade; sidewalk on one side of Rand Rd; and bike improvements on 17th, 18th & May in vicinity of Hood River Middle School.

Powers asked for clarification regarding “interim” for Exit 62 improvements. Liburdy responded the scope is narrower than a replacement of the interchange but the improvements would allow sufficient capacity of the interchange through 2040. Lassen asked about funds for this project; Liburdy responded funding is expected from ODOT for this project.

Irving asked about the new minor arterial, Westside Drive. Liburdy said it is recommended to be included on an expanded list of projects if additional revenue can be generated.

Commissioner Lassen asked for clarification about projects BL6b & BR6. Liburdy explained BL6b is a section of painted bike lane on May St. between 12th and 17th, and BR 6 is a bike route on 17th & 18th Streets that might include way finding signage and other minor improvements.

Commissioner Ramey asked for if project MV1/2 at Exit 62 includes vehicular improvements only; Liburdy responded that the project addresses vehicles, not bike/ped improvements, but a separate project for the Historic Columbia River Highway State Trail connection will revisit this.

Ramey asked how recommendations from other projects would be meshed with these projects. Liburdy responded that if recommendations of other projects such as the Historic Columbia River Highway State Trail corridor, Heights Streetscape Plan project, and Safe Routes to Schools Plan identify additional recommended projects, additional TSP amendments may be needed. Ramey suggested bike/ped improvements at Exit 62 need to be addressed soon.

Ramey asked about cost estimate for roundabout at Cascade/Mt. Adams; Liburdy said it’s \$5.5 million. Ramey asked for additional information about CR19 at 2nd & State. Liburdy it’s a pedestrian crossing at E. 2nd & State Street that receives a lot of pedestrian use from the Indian Creek Trail. She also asked about MV23; Liburdy explained this is a signal at 2nd & Oak that is in planning stages.

Frost asked for more info about CR 15 & CR 19. Liburdy said these pedestrian crossing projects are primarily thermal plastic striping on pavement.

In response to a question from Lassen, Liburdy explained the rationale used to develop the list of projects by staff: funding, projects that have other funding sources (e.g. ODOT and urban renewal), safety concerns, survey responses, and routes near schools previously identified. Lassen asked about projects along 12th & 13th in the Heights. Liburdy said the Heights Streetscape Plan project will look at that area so it was not addressed in these amendments.

Commissioner Schlappi asked if flashing lights or similar improvements could be added to project CR15 at 13th & State. Liburdy said it could be added to the Planning Commission's recommendations to the City Council.

Liburdy then presented a map of potential projects for a financially constrained plan that would need to be funded with additional revenue. The map generally excludes projects associated with separate planning efforts including the Historic Columbia River Highway State Trail project, Heights Streetscape Plan project, and Safe Routes to Schools Plan project. The broader list of projects primarily addresses recommendations from the Westside Area Concept Plan Report with more bicycle, sidewalk and off-street trail improvements.

Lassen asked what changes to Henderson Creek trail in the broader project list; Liburdy responded the project includes paving a segment of trail in addition to right-of-way or easement acquisition.

Ramey suggested the alignment of BR3, a bike route on Montello, might need to be refined depending on upcoming projects.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY:

Chair Frost asked for public testimony.

Mary King – said she likes seeing the sidewalk along Rand Rd on the list of projects; she emphasized that the crossing at 13th Street at Sherman is especially problematic for cyclists; and asked commissioners to consider the written testimony she submitted for additional detail.

Liburdy noted that the 13th/Sherman intersection was outside the study area for the Westside Plan so it wasn't looked at in detail for these amendments. Commissioners agreed it's a problematic location and a design challenge.

There was no other testimony. Chair Frost closed the public hearing.

DISCUSSION/ADDITIONAL COMMISSIONER QUESTIONS:

Irving said he wanted to discuss allowing curb-tight sidewalks for new projects where they already exist. Liburdy said he shared Irving's concern with the Planning Director and City Engineer; PC can include it in a recommendation to the City Council.

Frost asked for a summary on funding needed for additional projects. Liburdy said the existing projected revenue is approximately \$15.7 million; the broader list of projects would require approximately \$18.6 million more. The gap could be filled with by increasing the transportation SDC for a single-family dwelling from \$2,059 current to approximately \$4,900. He does not have Council feedback on that idea.

Irving asked about a current project to examine & restructure SDCs. Liburdy explained the current effort is looking at water, sewer & stormwater SDCs; the project could be amended to add transportation SDCs. Powers asked about other funding options. Liburdy responded that options may include shortening the project list, and using other sources such as urban renewal, Local Improvement Districts, grants or sole source SDCs. Irving asked about tax increment financing. Liburdy said it's used in urban renewal districts and is a possible funding source.

DELIBERATION:

Commissioners discussed how to scope their recommendation. Ramey suggested they also acknowledge the community comments received that prioritized Indian Creek trail, 12th/13th Street corridor & Cascade & Rand intersection; included strong interest in bike/ped projects generally; as well as ADA mobility improvements; and the HRCH connection.

Powers agreed the community comments were helpful and noted the interest in bike/ped projects. She acknowledged that the city can't fund everything; said she thinks the SDC increase is reasonable compared to other cities; and wishes they could add the Ridgeline trail. She suggested including a statement about looking at improvements at 13th/Sherman.

Lassen also noted desire for bike/ped improvements in the comments received.

Schlappi noted that the bike/ped improvements were characterized as transportation mode, not just for recreation and asked how they can encourage additional funding for bike/ped projects. She also supports SDC increase. Liburdy noted that there may be grant opportunities for bike/ped projects for Safe Routes to Schools.

Irving also noted the significant comments re: bike/ped projects as well as critical areas such as Heights and HCHR that are addressed in other projects. He suggested reiterating the importance of those projects in the PC recommendation.

Frost suggested the PC use the expanded project list with additional funding as the starting point for the PC recommendation and discuss other wish list ideas. He noted that the SDC increase would disproportionately impact missing middle housing and Westside development.

Lassen agreed about the impact to missing middle housing and new development on west side. She suggested a bond or property tax might be worth discussing. She's concerned if improvements along 12th/13th aren't included now, they will get passed over. Liburdy reiterated that there might be a need to revisit the TSP if the projects identified in the Heights Streetscape project can't be funded with urban renewal funds.

Ramey suggested including a recommendation to Council to reform funding for bike/ped projects. There is existing friction with homeowners who have to pay for sidewalk improvements.

Liburdy asked the Planning Commission for a set of recommendations.

Irving summarized what he heard as support for the broader financially constrained project list to be funded by an increase in SDCs with a recommendation that the Council consider tiered SDCs by dwelling size to help address affordability, and to also examine other potential funding sources such as bonds. He added that the commission recognizes the need for additional projects in the Heights, along the Historic Highway corridor, and for Safe Routes to Schools.

Frost asked if they wanted to add anything related to the Henderson Creek trail. Irving asked if the Parks District (HRVPRD) will be helping with that project and Liburdy responded that the District is prioritizing land acquisition for parks. Lassen noted that the diagonal access created by the Henderson Creek trail will provide non-motorized transportation benefits, not just recreational benefits. Liburdy added that pedestrian & bike access is also a component under consideration for the affordable housing strategy project at 780 Rand Rd.

Schlappi asked if the PC wants to make add a recommendation to make the CR 15 crossing more robust and include a bicycle element; Lassen agreed. There was consensus that the crossing at 13th & State/13th & Sherman needs more engineering consideration.

Lassen asked if MV 11 (intersection improvement at Cascade & Mt. Adams) is premature without Westside Drive. Commission consensus was to leave it in. Staff and commissioners noted the importance of a roundabout in this location to improve the ability to exit town in the case of wildfire or other emergency. Ramey added that design of the intersection improvements need consider all travel modes, not just motor vehicles, and roundabouts work well for bikes.

Irving raised the issue of allowing curb-tight sidewalks in some cases. Liburdy said the cross section in the TSP includes language that allows the City Engineer to approve modifications to the standard. Written testimony supported planter strips and suggested that if the commission wants to recommend curb-tight sidewalks, it should provide criteria for when they should be considered. Price and Frost agreed it makes sense to continue curb-tight sidewalks on blocks where it's already constructed that way, to tie into existing curb-tight sidewalks, or under circumstances such as saving a mature tree. Consensus was that Irving would work with Liburdy to refine the recommendation provide criteria for applicability.

Ramey raised the issue of Advisory Shoulders and noted an exception in state law to the prohibition of vehicles in a bike lane (ORS 811.440(3)). The commission did not have consensus to require Advisory Shoulders on streets for bike routes.

Ramey asked about Neighborways and said using "bike route" as a blanket label misses the idea behind bike boulevards. Liburdy noted bike routes are depicted on lower volume streets and that the city does not use speed humps because of the conflict with snow plowing. Liburdy said the staff recommendation is to use the plain language of "bike routes" and allow for neighborhoods to advocate for Neighborways. Frost suggested a preference for consistent treatment of bike routes (e.g. green paint, intersection treatments, signage) and said he is less concerned with what they are labeled. After additional discussion, the consensus was to recommend improvements to bicycle and pedestrian facilities generally. Ramey offered ideas such as wayfinding signage and diverters at intersections. She explained the purpose of Neighborways is to prioritize the movement of rolling and walking over driving. Price, Frost & Lassen supported the idea of exploring the Neighborway concept; Schlappi said it was important to identify the routes and identify optional tools/improvements.

MOTION: Commissioner Powers made a motion, seconded by Lassen, to direct staff to draft a Planning Commission recommendation based on the deliberation discussion that includes support for the broad list of project to be funded by an increase in SDCs with a recommendation that the Council consider tiered SDCs by dwelling size to help address affordability, and to also examine other potential funding sources to help spread out costs; noting that the PC recognizes the need for additional projects beyond the scope of this amendment in the Heights, along the Historic Highway corridor, and for Safe Routes to Schools; and adding a recommendation to allow curb tight sidewalks under some circumstances. The motion passed unanimously with direction to staff to work with Chair Frost on the final wording of the recommendation and to work with Commissioner Irving about the curb-tight sidewalk recommendation.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioners approved the minutes for March 1, 2021 with one minor correction regarding attending commissioners. Commissioners postponed approval of the February 16, 2021 minutes until the next meeting.

V. ADJOURN

Frost adjourned the meeting at 8:42 p.m.



August 11, 2021

Mark Frost, Chair

Date



August 11th, 2021

Dustin Nilsen, Planning Director

Date (Approved)