

Joint Steering Committee and Technical Advisory Committee Meeting (SC meeting #7)

November 14, 2017

5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Fire Station #4, Community Room

365 SW Tunison Ave

Corvallis, Oregon 97333



Members Present

Steve Rogers, Chair, *retired City Public Works Director*

Tim Bates, *City of Corvallis*

Ali Bonakdar, *CAMPO*

Barbara Bull, *City Council Liaison*

Mac Gillespie, *Benton County Health Department*

Sal Hernandez, *Freight Representative*

Rebecca Houghtaling, *OSU Planning Department*

Mark O'Brien, *Corvallis Chamber of Commerce*

Jay Thatcher, *South Corvallis Neighborhood Association*

Chuck Thierheimer, *Community Member At Large*

Jason Yaich, *City of Corvallis*

Kevin Young, *Community Member At Large*

Meredith Williams, *OSU Transportation Services*

Members Absent

Jim Boeder, *Planning Commission Liaison*

Meghan Karas, *Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board*

Juliana Recio, *Access Benton County*

Staff and Project Team

Mat Dolata, *DKS Associates*

Greg Gescher, *City of Corvallis*

April Hasson, *JLA Public Involvement*

Paul Leitman, *NelsonNygaard*

Mary Steckel, *City of Corvallis*

Adam Steele, *City of Corvallis*

Stacy Thomas, *JLA Public Involvement*

Stephanie Wright, *NelsonNygaard*

Members of the Public and Other Attendees

Cameron Broadbent

James Feldmann, *ODOT*

Ben Hernandez

Dave Rabinowitz, *Sustainability Coalition Transportation Action Team*

Welcome and Introductions

Steve Rogers, Steering Committee (SC) Chair, thanked everyone for attending this first joint meeting of the SC and the Technical Advisory Committee to discuss the Transit Development Plan. Steve led introductions of the committee members, project team and attendees. Steve reviewed the meeting agenda and stated that the purpose of the meeting is to provide a refresher overview on the Corvallis transit system, community input received on the system to date, and have a discussion on how the transit vision and framework meets the TSP goals.

Transit Framework

Stephanie Wright from Nelson\Nygaard discussed the transit framework – the goals and policies for the transit system. The project team has worked with the City to develop some route level and system wide scenarios. The scenarios were informed by technical work and analysis, conversations with transit operators and riders, and community input.

To ensure the Transit Development Plan (TDP) is operating in the same overall policy framework as the entire transportation system, the project team reviewed the Transportation System Plan's (TSP) four main goals and accompanying objectives. The Project Team focused on objective 3A that calls for increasing transit ridership through better quality of service (which can be defined as convenience, frequency, and days/times available) and objective 4G that calls for increasing non-motorized modes inclusive of transit.

The Project Team developed three high-level objectives and accompanying strategies for the TDP and Stephanie provided an overview using the following table:

TDP Objectives	TDP Strategies
1. Make service CONVENIENT	1a. Increase service frequency
	1b. Operate peak period high-frequency service
2. Expand service COVERAGE	2a. Serve additional areas of the city
	2b. Extend service later in the evening
	2c. Add more Saturday service
	2d. Add Sunday service
3. Make service more RELIABLE	3a. Revise schedules and stops to ensure buses run on time

Stephanie noted that the technical memorandum includes many details, including specific route changes. The purpose of this meeting is for the group to provide high-level input around whether the TDP objectives align with the overall TSP goals, furthering the transportation system in Corvallis. Specific project-level input was directed to the end of the meeting.

Group questions and discussion (note that discussion and questions are summarized and are not verbatim)

(Italicized text indicates a PMT response):

- TSP Goal 2 addresses the health and safety of residents. Corvallis transit system is a very safe mode of travel. Did the team analyze specific times, places or particular causes that are causing concern?
 - *Safety and security are concerns, and there are a couple of spot projects on the list such as where a bus blocks a crosswalk or has to make a hard turn.*
- Supporting vibrant public spaces is important. Transit stops and nodes, particularly the downtown center can become vibrant, exciting places.
- Transit can make denser development more viable.
- When the term “convenient” is used, it should consider people’s comfort, for example, shelters and good pedestrian walkways.
 - *The capital section of the memo addresses bus needs, but shelters and lighting at bus stops would fit into that and will be added to the memo.*
- We don’t need to be so concerned if the TDP objectives are consistent with the TSP objectives. They are different documents with different purposes. As long as the goals are the same, that is sufficient.
 - *It is important to ensure the community can see the compatibility between the two documents, and that there is coordination.*
- Consider changing Objective 3a to more specifically allow the removal of low performing routes. It may already allow for this.
- There needs to be a balance between adding service and routes and efficiency. New routes should be tied to performance.
 - *Increased frequency is a result of taking resources from underperforming services and moving them to performing ones. We are working on service standards. For example, at what point do we say a route is underperforming? In Corvallis it might mean 10-15 passengers per hour.*
- Do these service standards consider seasonality with OSU? Would you consider taking out a low performing route when students aren’t here?
 - *It’s difficult for the transit system to expand and contract. It has implications for the operator and staff. While OSU is a big part of Corvallis, we do want to increase ridership among the rest of the population. We want frequent, reliable service that people are looking for year-round.*
- Is there a way to run smaller buses in response to demand?
 - *Many of the vehicles are overcrowded now.*
- The TSP looks to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT), emissions and improve air quality. If people are taking transit, VMT is reduced and should be called out.
 - *The Tech Memo 18 focuses on capital improvements. We can indicate bus type, i.e. electric or hybrid.*

- One suggestion for TSP Objective 3 is to focus on passengers getting where they want to go on time, versus buses being on-time. The focus should be on people and not vehicles.

Snapshot: Corvallis Transit System & Community Input

Paul Leitman from Nelson\Nygaard explained that currently, eight standard transit routes circulate Monday through Saturday, eight hours a day. Most operate every hour, with two routes operating every thirty minutes. An additional five routes operate during peak hours or intermittently, primarily when OSU is in session. Night Owl service operates during the OSU session on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights. The primary markets transit serves are downtown and OSU, but it also connects to other areas in the City.

Community input played a key role in the team's assessment of the transit system. Onboard surveys, interviews with bus drivers and passengers, input from the public open house, and field work (the Project Team rode buses observing how they operate) were all considered. The team also worked collaboratively with the City to analyze the service route by route, by trip, and by stop.

Paul reviewed some key concerns and issues identified through community input.

The onboard passenger survey asked, "what is the key change you want to see in the service?" The majority (53%) want Sunday service, followed by: more frequent service, nighttime service, and increased Saturday service. Better on-time performance is also desired.

From the Project Team's analysis, there is a lack of east-west service in the central part of Corvallis. While there's an abundant level of service on Monroe and to OSU and downtown, the next closest east-west route is on Walnut Blvd. This gap between Monroe and Walnut is considered a transit hole.

Public input noted a lack of service within downtown, with riders wanting to be closer to the downtown destinations they are headed to.

Paul reviewed a map representing ridership, showing that many riders board and alight on 9th Street, but service there is only once per hour. Another issue noted is duplication of service, where multiple routes are serving the same location. There should be a better way to serve these areas with fewer routes, to reduce confusion.

On-time bus performance was identified as another important component in transit ridership. When the Project Team looked at data by route, only 56% of buses run on-time. On-time is defined as when a bus arrives at its stop between one minute before, to four minutes after, it is scheduled. The industry on-time standard is 80%. Routes 1, 2, 3, and 8 run less than 50% on-time. The Project Team is focused on improving this key issue.

The distance between two consecutive stops affects the speed of the route because the bus cannot achieve speed on the roadway if the stops are too close together, affecting on-time

performance. The current average spacing on each route is less than one-fifth of a mile; the industry standard is one-quarter of a mile. The close stop spacing became more of an issue when the Corvallis Transit System (CTS) converted to a fare-less system in 2011, as the lack of a fare allowed riders to frequently get on and off the buses, resulting in some riders only riding for one or two stops.

Group questions and discussion:

- Is there a relationship between the level of ridership and on-time performance?
 - *Yes. C1, C1R, C2, and C3 have lower ridership and have good on-time performance.*
- Congestion on Monroe could impact timeliness of buses.
 - *Schedules are timed with roadway conditions. The schedule takes into account the operating speed on the roadway.*

Before moving to the next agenda item, Steve asked Mary to address where transit improvement funding might come from. Mary noted that HB2017 will likely provide new funding for improvements. Revenues won't be available until January 2019. The City currently has local and federal funding sources, but HB2017 could provide an infusion of new revenue. The way the bill is currently written, State funding allocated to the Benton County area will be transferred directly to the County, who will determine how the money gets spent. It will likely be handled like a grant program, every year or two each recipient will reapply for funds. There are projections regarding how much money the County will receive, but not how much CTS might receive.

- A federal operating grant currently provides half of the CTS budget. If we receive less than this from a federal source, what will happen?
 - *We haven't heard about any federal changes. The funds are used primarily for operations. Last year there was actually an increase in our federal funding.*
- What about other agencies and services that may be interested in the Benton County funds, for example Dial-a-Bus?
 - *There is a piece of HB2017 that encourages inter-city transit. There's ongoing operations money and a piece for capital and short-term related infusions. The ultimate goal for ODOT is to reduce highway usage, and therefore reduce maintenance and modernization of the highway. Currently, most people get between cities via the state highway.*
- A common theme in HB2017 is more service for lower income residents.

The Vision for Transit in Corvallis

Stephanie provided a high-level overview of the long-term vision for transit in Corvallis, which is to have a frequent, connected network with reliable service, coupled to destinations, operating until 10:00 pm Monday-Saturday and with some Sunday service. To

achieve the vision, the Project Team identified the following for the proposed new CTS routing:

- Make routes as short and direct as possible, for example omitting looping around the hospital
- Streamline service in the western part of the City
- Combine low-ridership routes
- Simplify system naming structure, to numbers and remove the C route distinctions.
- Add service to downtown and crosstown

Group questions and discussion:

- The new crosstown route runs by the high school. Did the Project Team consider that the City ran a route there in the past that wasn't successful? There were only three or four riders and it was unproductive.
 - *The old route was primarily designated to serve Corvallis High School, and only operated a couple of trips per day. The proposed Route 9 will operate all day and is intended to serve the general public.*
- As we're exploring adding services and looking at changing where stops are located, we should maintain the relationship between our land use maps, transit corridors and zoning.
 - *The crosstown route also captures people up on Witham Hill who don't want to go through OSU and then downtown, but want to go downtown directly.*
- Do bus routes typically follow collector streets? Is that where density makes sense? It might evolve over time. There is a chicken or the egg concept – should one follow the other?
- Is flexibility built in to the TDP since we're taking some guesses on ridership? For example, I can walk the downtown route. I don't see the utility there, but maybe some people would. It would be good to know that if it doesn't work out, we can make adjustments.
 - *We are phasing that route in by adding a downtown loop onto an existing route and it won't necessitate buying a new bus. The downtown route is only running every half hour, and this will increase the presence of downtown transit. There is flexibility built into the plan. We know there may be substantial growth in certain parts of the community and we want to provide them with service. The changes are planned in phases, if a phase doesn't work, we will be flexible as funding allows.*

Stephanie reviewed the existing transit service as well as short- medium- and long-term improvements as they relate to the TDP strategies.

Overarching goals and improvements:

- An overarching vision includes how to manage transit on Monroe Street, such as when and how it will be running.

- All of the phases focus on increasing reliability. Buses are currently 56% on-time, and the goal is 85%. Routes 2, 3 and 6 have consolidated stops to help on-time performance. The Project Team also used more conservative travel speeds, versus assuming the bus is going the speed limit. The next step of the TDP process will be to have bus drivers drive the routes to test the timing.
- Short-term improvements:
 - Short-term improvements are 1-5 years.
 - Extend service by starting at 6:00 am and running until 10:00 pm.
 - The public is interested in increased weekend service. The existing system has no Sunday service and limited Saturday service. In the short-term, the plan adds 32 hours of Sunday service. Sunday service is tricky, because some people say they'll ride, but might not actually do so. In the short-term, service on Saturday evenings will increase to help capture the employment commuter ridership, and Sunday will run 10:00 am – 6:00 pm.
- Medium-term improvements:
 - Medium-term improvements are 5-10 years.
- Long-term:
 - Long-term improvements are 15-20 years.
 - Long-term, Saturday service will start earlier.
 - 71% of today's service hours operate on 30 minutes or longer frequencies. In the long-term vision, almost half of the service hours are at a 15 minute or shorter frequency.
 - Regarding where routes will run and their alignment, increased population is captured in terms of households and employment, utilizing the 2040 future land use predictions.
 - Of the 10 routes, four operate every hour (with two of those running every half hour during peak times), two run every half hour, one runs at 20 minute frequency, and the remaining three run every 15 minutes. Long-term, several routes will run at increased frequencies throughout the day as illustrated in Figure 9 of Tech Memo 18.

Stephanie asked the group if this vision aligns with what Corvallis needs. Did we miss anything?

Group questions and discussion:

- What's changing and what are the driving factors that establish this strategy of the transit system? How did we determine three phases?
 - *Typically, cost-neutral improvements are developed for the short-term. For example, where there is high ridership, we can add another run. In the medium-term, we use the City's projected transit funding to determine which projects the City can afford. The long-term is fiscally unconstrained. HB2017 was passed as this project was underway, and so we assumed additional funds for the short- and -medium terms, which is unusual.*
- Whose bill is HB2017?

- *It's income tax at the state level beginning in 2018. The employee pays 0.1 of 1%.*
- We could do more to incorporate more fun into the transit system. For example, the City of Bend provides a river bus to get people to and from the river for floating. In Corvallis, there are opportunities around da Vinci days, the Red, White and Blue festival, and OSU games.
 - *In terms of fun and vibrant spaces, the first objective, which is to make the system more convenient, should make mention of some of the special things we already do for events, and public art near shelters, etc.*
- The fiscal situation is increasingly constrained and some transit fee should be charged for service.
- A bus route along Country Club Drive is desired.
- The TDP consolidates routes and moves some stops. Are we also considering changes to the road configuration or other pedestrian route traffic management to help get buses through?
 - *These issues will be addressed in the TSP versus the TDP.*
 - *In the TDP, one route includes accommodations for a bus making a tight turn and for pavement marking changes on new routes.*
- From a business perspective, it sounds like the ROI is good and ridership is high.
 - *Typical federal money is based on population. We're similar in population to Albany, but we receive significantly more federal funds because Corvallis achieves high performance in the STIC program (Small Transit Intensive Cities) through five different criteria, based on service and ridership.*
- The plan is good but only serves those who live and/or work in Corvallis. There are 9,000 more people coming into town for jobs every day. It helps Corvallis if single occupant vehicles get off the roads by replacing those trips with a bus. We need more consideration for regional services to connect Corvallis with other communities.
 - Steve noted that we have a City system. It has always been difficult to provide transit between here and Albany and Philomath. A solution is a regional transit district. But that district would compete for the funds that CTS could lose. It is challenging to provide a robust system that serves areas outside the City but the need exists.
- Our jurisdictions do currently talk about how money might be coordinated more regionally. We should be coordinating and documenting these discussions.
- A specific location at the intersection near the OR 34/I-5 interchange, next to the gas station, is being considered as a park and ride as part of a three county study. Service from the Park & Ride will include connections with OSU and downtown.
 - A committee member asked if connecting to a park and ride system is part of the plan's long-term goals.
 - *Adam explained that because this study is happening when the TSP and TDP are well underway, it is difficult to reboot to incorporate this new information. However, the TDP is very flexible and will not prohibit considering this type of information in the future.*

Group comments on specific route changes:

- OSU staff has concerns about the proposed changes to Route 3, through campus. There are 30,000 pedestrians in the heart of campus, and bringing in large buses is a safety issue. Large buses traveling through campus, especially during passing time, are going to get stuck, and not help on-time performance. Washington or Western are preferred to Jefferson Way or 26th Street.
 - At a previous transit meeting with OSU, there was discussion about buses going up 30th Street to 35th Street instead of 26th, and I didn't see representation in this plan.
 - *At this point it isn't a viable corridor. It could be an opportunity in the future.*
 - Important to route buses through campus at times different than class changing time.
- Include a performance measure to consider ridership by route frequency – the number of boardings versus vehicle trips. Service by frequency does not clearly indicate the higher ridership that occurs on the more frequent routes.
- Route 8 that runs by the low-density housing on West Hills Road and through the subdivision on the edge of the City limits is a low performing route and is a difficult area to serve. Crescent Valley service was also hard to serve.
 - New Route 8 is a combination of Routes C3 and 8.
 - There is significant high-density development planned around West Hills Road. The future long-term vision should include a route on West Hills to respond to this future development.
 - Once performance of whole system is enhanced, the lower ridership will likely increase.
 - Crescent Valley service is financed through the 509J School District because 95% of the riders are students. Part of the low ridership is due to the requirement that it needs a commuter run after 5:00 pm to comply with federal funding criteria, and only one or two people ride it then.
- There's a sidewalk improvement listed on the east side of Witham Hill between Grant and Circle Blvd, which is discussed in the TSP. The topography on the east side of Witham Hill is challenging and putting a sidewalk on the east side does not serve a lot of purpose. This might be a better TSP plan item.

Public Comment

- Dave Rabinowitz asked if anybody talked to churches regarding a 10:00 am start time for Sunday service. Churches could be a good entry point into the bus system. Also, is there a possibility to get a parking lot off of OR34 over the bridge and getting a shuttle service to downtown? This might be a major win for everybody. The Project Team should look at what percentage of riders have to change buses at the transit center and what would work better for them. Each bus stop could have a laminated schedule of when buses stop there, and a map, which could increase ridership.

- *Mary noted that for those who use a smart phone, there are accessible real-time transit schedules available.*
- A committee member noted that if we used and promoted one transit app, it could have the potential of increasing ridership.

Closing

Steve Rogers thanked everyone for attending. The next TSP SC meeting will be Monday, December 11, 2017 from 5:30-7:30 pm at the Madison Avenue Meeting Room. Kevin Young will be chairing that meeting. The TAC will hold their next meeting earlier that same day. Adam will send meeting invites to these two meetings soon.

Key Proposed Changes to TSP and TDP:

Suggested Change	Plan
Add safety and security	TSP
Reduce VMT as a result of increased transit ridership	TSP
Add safety and security	TDP
Support vibrant public spaces	TDP
Make service convenient and comfortable (This includes shelters, walkways and pedestrian infrastructure, shelters, lighting)	TDP
Change strategy 3a to indicate “to ensure passengers/people run on time”	TDP
Add strategy or goal focused on service efficiency and financial accountability	TDP