

Lake Oswego to Portland Transit and Trail Alternatives Analysis

Steering Committee Recommendation

Alternatives to be Advanced into a
Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Work Program Considerations

Adopted September 10, 2007



METRO

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I. OVERVIEW

This document presents the recommendations of the Steering Committee to the Metro Council for alternatives to be advanced into a *Draft Environmental Impact Statement* for the Lake Oswego to Portland corridor. The transit alternatives and their accompanying trail components have been fully evaluated against the project's purpose and need and goals and objectives, and this evaluation is documented in the *Lake Oswego to Portland Transit and Trail Alternatives Analysis Evaluation Summary Public Review Draft* dated July 12, 2007. The Steering Committee recommendations also consider recommendations from the Lake Oswego to Portland Project Advisory Committee (LOPAC) dated July 31, 2007, the findings of the Project Management Group dated September 3, 2007, public input received during the two public open houses held on June 27 and 28, 2007 and the public hearing held on July 16, 2007 as well as all other comments received as described in the *Public Comment Summary* dated September 10, 2007.

This recommendation discusses transit mode, terminus of the transit project and specific alignments. In addition, a strategy is presented for further development of a trail connection in the corridor. The **mode** section presents findings and recommendations regarding the No-Build, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and Streetcar alternatives. The **terminus** section presents findings and recommendations about the three terminus options including the Trolley, Safeway and Albertsons termini sites. The **alignment** section describes findings and recommendations for the three potential streetcar alignments within the John's Landing area; the Willamette Shore Line right of way, SW Macadam Avenue and the John's Landing Master Plan alignment.

II. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Context

The Lake Oswego to Portland corridor is environmentally, topographically and physically constrained. Future roadway expansion is not anticipated and previous planning studies have concluded that a high capacity transit improvement is needed to provide additional capacity. In 1988, a consortium of seven government agencies purchased the Willamette Shore Line right of way connecting Lake Oswego to Portland for the purpose of preserving the rail right of way for future rail transit service. The 2004 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) identified the need for a corridor refinement plan for a high capacity transit option for this corridor, which was the genesis of this alternatives analysis.

Existing and future traffic conditions in this corridor are projected to worsen as population and employment projections for Portland, Lake Oswego and areas south of Lake Oswego in Clackamas County continue to grow. The corridor already experiences long traffic queues, poor levels of service and significant capacity constraints at key locations. Travel times in the corridor are unreliable due to congestion on Highway 43.

Project Sequencing

A transit project in the Lake Oswego to Portland Corridor is one of several regional projects that would seek funding through FTA's New Starts and Small Starts funding programs. The financial analysis prepared during this alternatives analysis evaluated the sequencing of funding for this project based on current regional commitments. The Milwaukie to Portland Light Rail Project is the region's top priority for FTA New Starts funding following projects currently funded and under construction. The Columbia Crossing Project would also include a New Starts transit component and is proceeding concurrently with the Milwaukie to Portland LRT Project. The Portland Streetcar Loop project is the region's priority project for FTA Small Starts funding.

The Lake Oswego to Portland Corridor Project would be the region's next priority for FTA funding, with construction funding capacity becoming available starting in 2012 and continuing through 2017. In order to fit into the regional sequence of projects, the Steering Committee recognizes that the Portland to Lake Oswego Corridor Draft Environmental Impact Statement would need to be initiated in Fall 2008 as the Milwaukie to Portland Light Rail Project Final Environmental Impact Statement nears completion. In the Work Program Considerations section of these Steering Committee findings and recommendations, a number of steps are outlined which would need to be taken prior to the initiation of the DEIS, including preparation of a more detailed schedule that identifies key New Starts milestones and deliverables for the project.

Willamette Shoreline Right of Way

The Willamette shoreline rail right of way was purchased from the Southern Pacific Railroad in 1988 for \$2 million dollars by a consortium of local governments including Metro, the cities of Lake Oswego and Portland, Clackamas and Multnomah counties, the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) and TriMet. Knowing that the Highway 43 corridor is very constrained; the purchase was made with the intent of preserving the corridor for future transit use.

The value of the right-of way has increased dramatically over 20 years. TriMet estimates currently value the right-of-way at \$75 million in 2007 dollars. This value is critical to a transit project that would use the right-of-way because the value of the right of way can be counted as local match for federal funds. A request for New Starts project funding from the Federal Transit Administration would typically be for 60 percent of a project's capital cost leaving 40 percent to be supplied locally. If \$75 million in right of way value were applied as part of local match, the remaining share of local funds required would be significantly reduced.

For the reasons stated above, whether an alternative uses the Willamette Shore Line right-of-way is a significant factor in project funding. For the Streetcar alternative, the \$75 million value of the Willamette Shore Line right of way could leverage as much as \$112.5 million in federal funds. Because it would not be using the right of way, the BRT alternative would not be able to leverage value of the right of way as part of its funding plan.

A. Transit Mode: Streetcar

Streetcar is the transit mode that best meets the project's purpose and need and the goals and objectives for the Lake Oswego to Portland Transit and Trail Alternatives Analysis.

The Steering Committee recommends that the **Streetcar mode** advance for further study in a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) because:

- Streetcar would have the highest ridership of all the transit alternatives.
- Streetcar travel times would be up to 18 minutes faster between key corridor destinations and would be more reliable than the other transit alternatives. In peak travel periods, the Streetcar would provide faster travel times than autos between downtown and Lake Oswego. Faster travel time and higher reliability is gained through operation of streetcar in exclusive right of way on the Willamette Shore Line.
- Streetcar would have the lowest operating and maintenance costs of any alternative, including the No-Build. This is due to the marginal cost of extending a line that already operates in the corridor, the carrying capacity of the Streetcar vehicles compared to buses and the travel time advantage over BRT and No-Build. The Streetcar also replaces some corridor bus service, which results in a cost savings.
- The Streetcar alternative could leverage up to 3.3 million square feet of total new transit supportive development within three blocks of the proposed alignments.
- Streetcar is compatible with the existing transit system and would operate as an extension of the existing streetcar line that operates between NW 23rd Avenue and the South Waterfront.
- The \$75 million of value in the Willamette Shoreline right of way could leverage as much as \$112.5 million in federal funds if the project proceeds as a Federal Transit Administration (FTA) News Starts project.

The Steering Committee recommends that the **Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) mode** not advance for further study in a DEIS because:

- It may not be a practical option to achieve the travel time and ridership as modeled in this alternatives analysis. The queue bypass lanes used to bypass congestion at key intersections in the BRT alternative would have to be extended to between 500 and 1,000 feet instead of the 200 feet in the current designs and cost estimates.
- The BRT alternative would include property impacts at the key intersections where transit improvements are constructed. There would be additional property impacts associated with the additional queue jump length required to bypass congestion. This also would include removal of trees within the sidewalk area.
- Initial BRT capital costs were the lowest of all the transit alternatives, however, these do not include the additional costs of the longer queue jump lanes, which would be required.
- The BRT alternative would have the highest operating cost due to the greater number of vehicles required to meet demand, and the fact that the BRT line would require added service, unlike the Streetcar alternative which would replace existing bus service.
- For the entire length of the corridor, BRT travel times are subject to the same delays and congestion as the general traffic in areas where queue jump lanes are not provided, resulting in decreased reliability.
- The BRT alternative would not leverage transit supportive economic development beyond what would be expected with the No-Build alternative.
- The BRT alternative would not leverage the \$75 million value of Willamette Shore Line right of way, which could match federal transit funding of up to \$112.5 million.

The Steering Committee recommends that an **enhanced bus** alternative be studied as a more practical option for this constrained corridor. Such an option would avoid the property impacts of the BRT while providing improved service, bus pullouts where possible and better shelters and lighting at stations. Enhanced bus would act as the base case for comparison

to Streetcar alternatives in the DEIS. It would operate in mixed traffic, though this has implications for travel time, reliability and long-term efficiency of the line.

B. Alignments: Willamette Shore Line and SW Macadam Avenue

During the alternatives analysis process three alignments were evaluated in the John's Landing area: the Willamette Shore Line right of way, SW Macadam Avenue and the John's Landing Master Plan alignment. The Steering Committee recommends that two alignment options be studied further in the John's Landing area north of the Sellwood Bridge: the Willamette Shore Line right of way alignment and the SW Macadam Avenue alignment.

In addition, combinations of the two alignments should be evaluated to maximize the potential benefits and minimize impacts in the John's Landing area. The Steering Committee recognizes that alignments, which would avoid or minimize impacts through John's Landing, may need to be developed that are not part of either the Macadam Avenue or Willamette Shoreline alignments. These could include all or portions of the John's Landing Masterplan alignment or other rights of way.

The Steering Committee recommends that the **Willamette Shore Line right of way alignment** advance for further study for the following reasons:

- Streetcar on the Willamette Shore Line right of way would yield higher reliability and faster travel times than the other alignments due to the 100% exclusive right of way.
- The Willamette Shore Line right of way is in public ownership and could potentially be used as local match towards the capital cost of the project. Current estimates value the entire right of way at \$75 million. For the portion north of SW Nevada Street, the value of the right of way is estimated at approximately \$35 million, which could leverage an additional \$58 million in federal funds.
- The Willamette Shore Line Right-of-Way alignment has received public support from Lake Oswego residents because it has faster travel time, better reliability and less impact to Highway 43 traffic operations and safety than an alignment that would use Macadam Avenue in John's Landing.

The Steering Committee recommends that the **SW Macadam Avenue alignment** advance for further study for the following reasons:

- The SW Macadam Avenue alignment would leverage the most potential transit supportive development, approximately 2.2 million square feet of total new development in John's Landing.
- The SW Macadam Avenue alignment would avoid some of the potential property impacts associated with use of the Willamette Shore Line right of way.
- The SW Macadam Avenue alignment has emerged with the most public support from residents and businesses in John's Landing.

Note: The Steering Committee recognizes ODOT's expressed concerns regarding the SW Macadam Avenue alignment option and will ensure that questions related to potential streetcar operations in mixed traffic on SW Macadam Avenue are addressed.

South of the John's Landing area and north of the Trolley Terminus site in Lake Oswego, the Willamette Shore Line right of way was the only alignment to advance to the completion of the alternatives analysis. As part of its design option narrowing decision, The Steering Committee eliminated Highway 43 south of John's Landing from consideration as a

Streetcar alignment for safety and operational reasons, making the Willamette Shore Line alignment the only option in this segment of the corridor. The *Evaluation Summary Report* contains a description of the alternative and design option narrowing decisions that were made during the alternatives analysis.

C. Termini: Albertsons and Safeway

The Steering Committee recommends that the Albertsons and Safeway termini should advance into the DEIS. The Trolley terminus should not be advanced into the DEIS. These termini options are preferred because they would serve more population and employment, have higher ridership, disperse park and ride spaces, and have greater potential for transit-supportive development while demonstrating similar traffic impacts.

The Steering Committee recommends that the **Albertsons terminus** advance for further study for the following reasons:

- The Albertsons terminus would allow for the possible future extension of Streetcar south to West Linn or Oregon City.
- The Albertsons terminus has strong public support from the residents south of Lake Oswego and citizens within Lake Oswego. In 2006, Lake Oswego's Downtown Transit Alternatives Analysis Committee (DTAAC) recommended the Albertsons terminus site, partly because it would intercept traffic from the south before it reaches the center of downtown.
- The Albertsons terminus could generate substantial transit supportive development in Lake Oswego (0.9 million square feet).

The Steering Committee recommends that the **Safeway terminus** advance for further study for the following reasons:

- The Safeway terminus would allow for the possible future extension of Streetcar to the west.
- The Safeway terminus could provide park and ride access west of downtown Lake Oswego, intercepting traffic before it reaches the center of downtown.
- The Safeway site could leverage the most potential transit supportive development (1.1 million square feet in Lake Oswego), as compared to the Albertsons or Trolley terminus options.
- The Safeway site would allow the Streetcar to act as a circulator for trips within downtown Lake Oswego between the Foothills district and the west end of downtown.

The Steering Committee acknowledges that an at-grade crossing of streetcar with Highway 43 under the Safeway terminus option would require additional study and coordination with ODOT and the City of Lake Oswego to ensure that a safe and efficient crossing is feasible.

Additionally, the Steering Committee acknowledges that it may be necessary to construct a project that would utilize the **Trolley Terminus** as a **temporary interim terminus** while joint development construction plans are finalized at either the Albertsons or Safeway terminus sites.

D. Minimum Operable Segment (MOS)

If a full-length project cannot be built for financial or other reasons, the FTA allows for Minimum Operable Segments (MOS) to be considered as interim termini for a project. In this corridor, preliminary analysis was done for a MOS for Streetcar that would terminate in the vicinity of Nevada Street in John's Landing on either the Willamette Shore Line right-of-way or the Macadam Avenue alignments. The Steering Committee recommends that this alternative advance for further study for the following reasons:

- Significant public support was expressed for this option from participants in the process all through the corridor.
- A minimum operable segment (MOS) provides flexibility to initiate a project with available funding while pursuing additional funding to complete the remainder.

III. TRAIL CONSIDERATIONS

Context

As part of the Willamette River Greenway vision, a trail was proposed to run along the Willamette Shore Line right of way from Willamette Park in Portland to downtown Lake Oswego between Highway 43 and the Willamette River. As part of this Alternatives Analysis, the feasibility of a continuous trail between Portland and Lake Oswego was evaluated. Each transit alternative carried with it a complementary trail component. The BRT alternative would have used the Willamette Shore Line right of way for exclusive trail use. The Streetcar alternative, which the Steering Committee recommends further study, would require shared use of the Willamette Shoreline between Streetcar and a trail. The discussion below focuses on the trail components that would accompany the Streetcar alignments.

A. Trail Component

The bike and pedestrian trail component of this study has received tremendous community support. A trail in the corridor would provide a critical link in the regional transportation system, connecting other regional and local trails. A continuous, safe and level trail component is a desired outcome in this corridor.

However, as currently designed, the trail component may not be practical to build for its entire length because of the high capital costs associated with shifting the Streetcar alignment to accommodate the trail in a tightly constrained right of way and very difficult topography. Because some portions of the trail are more easily implemented than others, and because funding for the entire trail may not be available at one time, the trail may need to be developed in phases.

B. Trail Component Refinement Next Steps

The Steering Committee recommends that a trail component advance for further study. However, additional refinement is needed to determine how to advance the trail and the

transit alternatives, either together or separately. The following identifies additional considerations for the trail and next steps:

- Further consideration is required to determine trail project sponsors and potential funding sources. Metro may or may not be the appropriate agency to lead the effort to advance a trail in the corridor.
- Additional design work is needed to identify ways to design and construct a trail in this corridor with lower capital costs and impacts while still accommodating the transit project. The trail design should change and adapt to constraints in the corridor. The width of the trail does not need to be the same for the entire alignment and flexibility will be required with regard to various jurisdictions design standards and requirements.
- Trail phasing should be considered so that the most cost-effective segments could move forward. The additional design work required for the more difficult and expensive portions will take more time and effort.
- Additional study is needed to evaluate the potential for the Portland and Western railroad bridge and an eastside connection to the Sellwood Bridge to provide a useful pedestrian and bike trail connection between Lake Oswego and Portland
- Further study is needed regarding the outstanding legal questions in order to facilitate decisions about the Willamette Shore Line right of way and its use for a trail.

IV. WORK PROGRAM CONSIDERATIONS

Several actions are needed prior to advancing the project into the *Draft Environmental Impact Statement* phase of project development. Because a DEIS for the Lake Oswego to Portland Corridor is not included in Metro's current fiscal year budget, it is recognized that there will be a gap before the DEIS can commence.

1. **The following actions are recommended by the Steering Committee to advance the project into the *Draft Environmental Impact Statement*:**
 - a. **Metro should work with the FTA to Publish a *Notice of Intent to Prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Statement in the Federal Register***, and initiate the DEIS Scoping Process. The FTA has recommended that this action be taken immediately. This action would ensure that all of the work completed during the alternatives analysis would be documented under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Public comment received prior to the Metro Council action on advancing the project into the DEIS phase would also be included as part of the NEPA record. The Scoping phase of a DEIS includes meetings with the public as well as local, state and federal agencies and affected tribal jurisdictions. The dates of the public, agency and tribal meetings would be published along with the notice of intent. The Scoping meetings present proposed alternatives and solicit input on potential additional alternatives that could be included in a DEIS.
 - b. **Metro should prepare a work scope, budget and schedule for the DEIS.** In order to secure funding for a DEIS, a cost estimate is required. The estimate is based on a scope of work and schedule that meet all appropriate FTA and NEPA requirements. This DEIS will need to meet new requirements for public and agency participation covered under Section 6002 of the SAFETEA-LU Act.

