

## CLARK COUNTY HIGH CAPACITY TRANSIT SYSTEM STUDY

### Task Force Meeting #5

6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Monday, May 21, 2007

Clark County Elections Conference Room

1408 Franklin Street

Vancouver, WA 98660

#### Members present:

Kanathan Mom (Youth Council)  
Bob Byrd (Identity Clark County)  
Mike Bomar (Building Industry Association)  
Doug Ballou (Clark County Neighborhoods)  
Chuck Hoover (Neighborhood Traffic Safety Alliance - East)  
Lora Caine (Friends of Clark County)  
Todd Horenstein (School Transportation)  
David Rowe (C-VAN User, C-TRAN Citizen Advisory Committee)  
Kathy McDonald (C-TRAN Rider)  
Ian Sutton (for Steve Horenstein) (Downtown Vancouver Employer)

#### Public present:

Heather Tischbein  
Jim Howell

#### Members absent:

Steve Horenstein (Downtown Vancouver Employer)  
Bob Knight (Clark College)  
Gail Bauhs (Human Services)  
Dick Malin (Vancouver Neighborhood Association)  
Eva Cob (Leadership Clark County)

#### Staff present:

Dean Lookingbill (RTC)  
Dale Robins (RTC)  
Bob Post (URS)  
John Cullerton (URS)  
Cathy McCague (EnviroIssues)  
Jeanne Lawson (JLA)  
Kalin Schmoltdt (JLA)

#### Welcome/Committee Business

**Review agenda** – Jeanne Lawson described the meeting as a mid-point gathering to lay groundwork for upcoming decisions and review decisions that have occurred so far. She noted that the group would be reviewing potential alignments within the corridors and the criteria for further narrowing those options. She reminded the group that the study will not determine a final actual alignment, but will recommend an alignment that may be considered as a future HCT option. Lawson said that the team would also be seeking input from Task Force in preparation for the Sounding Board.

**Approve of April 23, 2007 meeting summary** – There were no changes to the summary.

**Public involvement update** – Cathy McCague explained that they would be revamping the study fact sheets, website, and display boards. She noted that David Rowe is planning to take the display board to Battle Ground and then it will go to C-TRAN. She noted that while they have been receiving fewer website hits recently, they expect to receive more when they send out notices for the June Sounding Board. She thanked members for passing out the survey cards. Lora Caine asked whether it would be possible to display the board at the mall. McCague said she would check.

McCague said they have been coordinating outreach efforts for the summer and fall with C-TRAN and CRC. She encouraged the group to let the team know about any festivals or events that might be appropriate venues for getting out information about the study. Dean Lookingbill noted that CRC will be visiting neighborhoods over the summer and the team might go along.

McCague encouraged the group to let her know whether the talking points are useful, and noted that they would be updated as the study progresses.

Dean Lookingbill noted that RTC had conducted some of its own community outreach. He said that the focus of the outreach had been to present the narrowed modes and corridors. Lookingbill noted that the groups seemed to understand the nature of the study as a system plan, though they had some questions about coordination with CRC and C-TRAN. He noted that there had been no disagreements with the recommendations at this point though Dale Robins noted some concerns about neighborhood impacts.

John Cullerton noted that the RTC Board had adopted and provided feedback on the narrowed modes and corridors as recommended by the Steering Committee and Task Force. He noted that there had been a coordination meeting with CRC staff dealing primarily with technical evaluation issues and also with coordinating public involvement efforts. He said that they were moving towards the conceptual design concepts and developing a strategy for the travel demand model.

Lookingbill noted David Rowe's suggestion of using DMUs—diesel powered vehicles on rails—in association with the potential Chelatchie Prairie alignment. Lookingbill said that the study was not yet at a stage where they can pick a specific project. Jeanne Lawson confirmed that the suggestion will be more appropriate to consider at a later date. Lookingbill noted that demand will have to warrant the service and said that questions will need to be answered regarding potential service and ridership. Rowe commented that he was interested seeing a two-way vehicle that was not scheduled solely for commuters.

Lookingbill noted that the final corridors map had been cleaned up and now lists the potential modes. Cullerton offered to make copies of the file available, and Robins offered to post the file on the meeting website.

### **High Capacity Transit System Framework/Corridor Alignment Options**

John Cullerton encouraged the group to think about the HCT system as a transit backbone that is fed by smaller feeder systems. He showed an example diagram that depicted where potential demand could feed into the broader corridors. He noted that these additional “transit demand flows” could connect with the system through park and rides or busses. Cullerton emphasized the importance of the overall system framework. Jeanne Lawson noted that an HCT system would function akin to a “freeway” for transit.

Cullerton said that they had identified issues for the roadways within each corridor. He noted that they would be looking at major roads, such as freeways/arterials, and what they connect, their continuity, and whether there is public right-of-way available.



Lora Caine asked whether the study was following the existing county classifications or whether there were considerations for reclassifying roadways. Cullerton said that the existing framework reflects current demand—with the exception of the Chelatchie Prairie corridor—and is what is being followed. Robins noted that the roadway classifications were regional and extend beyond the cities. Cullerton reiterated that any corridor selected for an Alternatives Analysis will have each of its potential alignments revisited.

Cullerton summarized the corridors and their corresponding potential alignments. He noted that some facilities like Evergreen and Hazel Dell had been considered but rejected. He noted that it would be possible to mix and match different alignments, so that part of I-5 and part of Hwy 99 (for example) could be combined into a different alignment. Robins added that potential alignments don't need to be in the middle of right-of-ways.

Cullerton noted that they still plan to look at the possible uses for the Chelatchie Prairie right-of-way. David Rowe asked whether a Chelatchie Prairie option could serve high frequency needs. Cullerton said that it was possible, though it would need to be analyzed on its merits. Rowe noted that communities like Ridgefield, Washougal, and Camas are growing quickly and asked whether potential growth in those areas is accounted for. Lookingbill pointed out that the growth forecast in the 2024 GMA plan will be incorporated. He also indicated the corridor-diagram that broadly indicates ridership potential. Jeanne Lawson recalled Mark Harrington's presentation regarding how travel demand is modeled. She noted that while the group asked for the flexibility to extend the corridors, they had also acknowledged that the growth must occur in smaller segments at-a-time.

Bob Byrd asked whether the GMA considers a range of possible growth projections. Lookingbill said it did not, and that the study assumptions are based on the adopted plan. He noted that while it's possible to play a little bit of "what-if" at the end of corridors where ridership decreases, it's still necessary to stay within the adopted plans in order to remain competitive. Byrd noted that he was concerned about accommodating unanticipated growth. Chuck Hoover noted the lack of density in the outlying areas. Lookingbill said that density will be considered when projecting ridership.

Lora Caine asked whether the corridors would be prioritized. Lookingbill said they were trying to create a system plan that indicated top priority corridors, though he noted that they do not yet know the specifics of what the community wants to do. Caine asked whether it would be possible to designate certain corridor segments as priorities. Cullerton said that they would look at the corridors as a whole and then at individual pieces within the system and how certain combinations might be valuable. Robins noted that it is still possible to eliminate corridors if they are considered inappropriate.

### **Evaluation Criteria**

Jeanne Lawson noted the previously developed screening criteria and the use of "fatal flaw" criteria to help narrow the modes and corridors. She noted that John Cullerton had put together evaluation criteria that they anticipate using to refine what will be included in the overall plan.

Cullerton explained how he had derived specific categories and corresponding measurable criteria that support different combinations of study goals. He noted that system ridership means not doing something that negatively impacts the rest of the system.

Dave Rowe asked for clarification on determining frequency. Lookingbill said that frequency will be determined by balancing capacity and ridership with operating costs. Lawson explained that the group isn't making decisions about frequency, but rather about alignments and modes by using reasonable assumptions. Lookingbill noted that a vehicle with a theoretically higher frequency doesn't automatically mean better performance. Rowe noted that frequent service does tend to attract passengers.

Cullerton noted that now that they are talking about specific alignments within the corridors, they can now try to understand potential environmental impacts. He noted that in his presentation, "flexibility" indicates whether the modes can operate both in mixed traffic and on an exclusive right-of-way.

Todd Horenstein and Lora Caine asked whether the categories were weighted. Lawson said that while there had been discussion of the possibility, they weren't planning to weight the categories at this point. She noted that weighting provides a tool for deliberation but doesn't make the decision. She added that they would be gathering feedback on the goals and objectives from the public at the Sounding Board.

Lawson noted that while some of the goals and objectives could be objectively measured, others were more subjective. She said they would be reviving the Consumer Reports style matrix that will assign good, neutral, or poor rankings to how each criteria is satisfied by each potential alignment. She noted that the Task Force will be asked for their opinions of the rankings.

Mike Bomar asked how feedback would be solicited from the public. McCague said they were planning to use the internet to gather information on public values. Bomar expressed concern that individuals could stack the deck with responses. Lawson noted that it's the job of the Task Force to balance the perspectives from the surveys, constituents, and the Sounding Board. Lookingbill noted that the public aren't being asked to vote, only to comment on process information. Lawson noted that the results of web surveys tend to more closely emulate statistically valid public opinion polls than do findings at public meetings. Lookingbill noted that a community value regarding access to jobs and activities has already emerged as important to those who've taken the survey.

Kathy McDonald asked about demographic information collected from survey respondents. Cathy McCague said that some respondents provide a zip code, while others do not. Robins noted that they can't track exactly where the surveys come from and there isn't a way to keep many people from returning. Lawson noted that they have typically found people to be honest, though there are ways to check for repeat users. Mike Bomar asked whether the Task Force could see copies of the actual comments. Robins said he would work with Cathy McCague to make the comments available.



Jeanne Lawson asked the Task Force to review the goals and objectives to see if there were any that were not reflected in John Cullerton's evaluation criteria.

Lora Caine observed that the Port of Vancouver did not appear to warrant service. Robins said that while it did not appear to warrant HCT service, it could be served by a shuttle or bus. He noted that the Port is not very dense and working hours vary widely. Caine said that she had heard concerns about increasing jobs and resulting traffic. Robins noted that they are considering more than work trips. Lookingbill noted that there would be future discussion of activity centers and the jobs and trips they create. Cullerton noted that industrial areas have been hard to serve well with transit because of the scale of the sites. Lawson asked whether the Port could warrant consideration as a future extension in accordance with the flexibility goal. Lookingbill reiterated concerns about the lack of specific focus within the industrial area and said that HCT would not be particularly cost-effective. Ian Sutton noted that they don't want to focus too exclusively on work trips, as they want to serve a variety of activities. Lora Caine asked whether Goal 3 was written so as to provide for the balance between work trips and other trips. Lawson recalled that Goal 3 and its related objectives concerned job creation and attracting patrons. Bob Byrd noted that only 50% of trips tend to be job related. Lookingbill said that it's probably reasonable to make that assumption.

Doug Ballou noted that the first bullet of Goal 3 emphasizes supporting family wage jobs. Lookingbill pointed out that transit modes like light rail do affect proximate land uses.

David Rowe noted that he felt Amtrak should be considered as an intermodal connection under Goal 2.

Ian Sutton noted that the criteria for "performance" and "access" seemed redundant and could both be covered under "performance." Lookingbill confirmed that "performance" means "transit performance" and whether travel times and capacity match demand. Cullerton said it did, and offered to change the category to "transit performance" for clarity.

### **Sounding Board**

**Overview** – Jeanne Lawson noted that the next Sounding Board is scheduled for 6pm Wednesday, June 13<sup>th</sup> in the Elections Office conference room as before. She said they were not planning on CVTV coverage because the meeting will be small group oriented. Lawson noted the feedback on the modes from the previous Sounding Board and explained that the next Sounding Board will present the outcomes thus far concerning the modes, broader corridors, and alignments. She said they would be reviewing the goals and objectives and engaging in a tradeoffs exercise so as to ascertain public priorities and help guide the technical analysis.

**Tradeoffs Exercise** - Jeanne Lawson noted that many HCT tradeoffs tend to boil down to the issue of access vs. travel time. John Cullerton noted that it's helpful to imagine what HCT is trying to achieve: Is it trying to move people quickly to their destination, or to serve intermediate trips with a larger variety of destinations? He explained that fewer stations mean faster travel times, but more stations mean greater access. He noted that it's important to balance the needs. Kathy McDonald noted that MAX was not an express line because of its many stops. Ian Sutton suggested that the balance should depend on the corridor itself; downtown would have the most

stops, while outlying areas would have the fewest. Cullerton noted the possibility of developing transit markets that might not be immediately apparent. Lookingbill suggested that priorities within the different corridors might vary, as some would prioritize travel time, while others might prefer access. Lawson suggested assessing preferences for access versus speed by corridor. Bob Byrd suggested that offering a tangible number of stops would be helpful.

Todd Horenstein asked whether it would be possible to consider different times of day and changing vehicle speeds. Lora Caine asked whether it was possible to run different frequency vehicles on the same alignment. Bob Post said it was possible, though easier with buses than trains.

Chuck Hoover noted that the length of time that doors are left open at each stop makes a difference in timing and has an impact on the sense of urgency felt by passengers.

Lawson noted that they want the tradeoffs to be more than an input exercise, but also a way to get people engaged in an educational exercise and thinking about benefits and consequences.

Doug Ballou noted that alternatives such as express bus services can accommodate different types of riding habits and would make sense as a service between Battle Ground and Vancouver, while service should be more frequent in Portland. He noted that service would be somewhat dependent on employment centers. Robins noted that employment centers would also develop around the stations. Lawson noted that the discussion of service will be a source of some tension and that it would be useful to bring the issue to the community.

Lawson also noted tradeoffs in terms of avoiding impacts to existing businesses and neighborhoods versus emphasizing long term investment. Lookingbill noted that because they are creating a system plan, those who are located directly adjacent to the changes may be adversely affected while others benefit. Lora Caine suggested that proximity to the system could be considered as an asset. Todd Horenstein suggested keeping the questions focused on the benefits for the system as whole so as to avoid dividing people. Lookingbill suggested stepping back to the corridor level so as to avoid the implications associated with specific alignments. He reiterated that the discussion will be focused on obtaining public values and principles. Lawson noted that it would be possible to structure the discussion to as to look at principles on a corridor by corridor basis.

Mike Bomar noted that he would like to see a cost versus level of service tradeoff and price increases correlated with specific advantages. He suggested that this would reveal what people want and what they are willing to pay. Kathy McDonald noted that such an exercise would get the community used to the idea that HCT won't be a free option. She suggested that people often feel that government hides information and that it would be prudent to demonstrate and compare costs for each mode. Robins offered to show national construction and operation average costs. Lookingbill noted that they can make it clear that HCT will cost more than what C-TRAN costs, though the question is whether the perceived benefits will outweigh the expense. McDonald suggested that highlighting benefits would create awareness and support. Lawson noted that cost is often ranked low early in the process, and agreed that it is important to start making cost an issue.



Todd Horenstein cautioned against bringing costs into the process before the community is fully informed and aware of the potential benefits. Doug Ballou noted that the primary benefits are getting people out of cars and reducing congestion. He noted that convenient mass transit is necessary to create the benefit. Robins offered to highlight the difference between regular transit and HCT.

Ian Sutton suggested that people would be receptive to hearing the potential benefits of HCT to the wider community, such as increased property values or reduced congestion. Lawson cautioned against pushing the benefits too much and appearing to “sell” the system. Doug Ballou noted that they need to be clear how everyone benefits. David Rowe noted that it would make sense to demonstrate current invisible costs to car users in comparison to costs associated with an HCT system.

Chuck Hoover suggested leading the tradeoffs exercise by asking people how their lives might be different with an HCT system in Clark County. He noted that the responses, either positive or negative, could then help shape the message during the discussion of benefits.

Lora Caine urged that people without vehicles be recognized as an important group.

Mike Bomar noted that while it would be a risk to propose concrete costs, it is possible to gather information on values such as the importance of taxes. He noted that he would like see the percentage of the population that needs or wants HCT regardless of whether or not they plan to use it. Bob Byrd suggested looking at the value the public places on certain benefits *before* looking at the prices.

Jeanne Lawson noted that the team might formulate a different set of exercises based on the conversation with the Task Force. She encouraged the members to reach out to their constituents for feedback.

### **Public Comment**

*Jim Howell* – Noted that he felt the study was putting the cart before the horse, as demand usually precedes an HCT system. He said that the county needs a multi-directional transit system and that a system that doesn’t run 20 hours per day and seven days a week won’t support HCT. Lookingbill acknowledged the concern and noted that they are anticipating continued growth.

*Heather Tischbein* – Noted that she appreciated the work being done by the Task Force. She said that transportation costs drive many of her decisions and that while she has a philosophical commitment to public transit, she had to consider whether she would support public transit even if she wasn’t going to use it.

### **Wrap up**

Lawson thanked the group and encouraged them to attend the Sounding Board. Robins reminded the group that the next Task Force meeting will be on July 23<sup>rd</sup>.

### **Close**