

CAT AD Hoc – High Capacity Transit Follow-Up

December 8, 2022

Ally Holmqvist – Metro (Presenter)

Attendees:

TriMet

Eileen Collins, Grant O’Connell, Joseph Camper, Charlie Clark

CAT:

Barry Lunsford, Dave Daley, Cassie Wilson, Annadiana Johnson, Claudia Robertson, Director Keith Edwards

Questions from the Group – Presentation with Answers and listening session



Started work in summer 2022. Establishing the policy framework based on the regional transportation plan. Examining how community needs have changed; intended to inform the next couple of milestones. Examined different transit plans and land use plans in the region; looking at how the region has grown and changed. Emerging trends since the last regional plan was established in 2018. Looked around the nation to see best practices that can inform priorities.

Division Transit, 82nd avenue, and TV Highway deeper dives

In the fall, before CAT presentation in November, METRO developed an approach to determine which corridors would provide the greatest benefit; move the most people to the most destinations, priority destinations evaluated. Based on transit vision, with frequent bus corridors, where can we start looking at a higher level of transit – frequent service, light rail, streetcar, etc. Which corridors are the most useful to communities? And where are there unmet needs. Now grouping the corridors into tiers, which ones should be evaluated first; Which ones are not ready now, but will be in the future when more critical connections are established. Likely to be examined in January. (bubble three above)

Which corridors are ready and what will it take to get all of the targeted corridors ready. That is when the modes will be established, station design/amenities. Have a list of high level considerations for the corridor or stops. It may be corridor specific. All corridors have sidewalks, and wide sidewalk, sidewalks

with curb ramps, station access; TV highway for example, is missing sidewalks, that is a deeper level of access more broadly needed. The next report will include many of the readiness strategies (aiming for summer 2023 for the report development)

Affordable Housing was brought up; travel time on the corridors, how much time it takes to travel between destinations; how much more time than that would take than traveling by car; jobs access; service more broadly – essential services, provide by county human services, grocery stores, educational institutions, access to jobs for historically marginalized populations; separate key indicator – greenhouse gas reductions; cost effectiveness, where there is funding to leverage today; where have jurisdictions done the work to develop the corridors.

Any specific questions:

Annadiana Johnson – when you were looking at important facilities; did you include medical facilities, doctors offices? Extremely important for people experiencing disability. A question of not just housing, but facilities, and those available to those experiencing houselessness. You put up bus shelters and next thing you know someone is living in them.

Ally – we did consider medical facilities. I did not include them in the list I shared, but they were considered. As far as houseless services – we did examine access to those services. We know that the houseless community uses transit to make critical connections to services. Transit Facilities – we have unmet needs, and transit facilities get used to provide those unmet needs (shelter); transit agencies are working to connect houseless individuals with human service agencies; TriMet using community ambassador program to conduct outreach and share services. There are funding considerations for those services to factor as well.

Dave Daley- a couple of different kinds of corridors – like Powell where the population has completely outstripped the available infrastructure. Versus other corridors that have the infrastructure, but not the same need?

Ally – great question . we’ve had to consider both. We tried with the Vision to determine where we NEED to establish corridors, and the infrastructure will have to follow. Some corridors with critical connections that were looking to 2040-2070 for investment; which are ready for near-term focus, those may be focused on sooner. Still planning for the corridors that are less ready to get them ready.

Dave – that confuses me. Powell has a critical need to be improved and a tremendous population to serve. What you’re saying is that you prioritize the ready with less need; over those that are more in need and less ready. PBOT- 82nd and Powell area. But they don’t have the money to take over Powell. The idea that the local jurisdictions will have the money to address the needs that are dire; versus those that have the readiness but less need, is troubling.

Ally – Powell is shifting to the high priority list. When Division transit was the Division/Powell strategy; we prioritized the area. From a readiness perspective, we’re evaluating the land use availability that can be improved to the level we would need. Routes in Clackamas, might not have to day the grid, compact urban environments, but in some cases do have plans for the development in the future. The structure is less in place than places like Powell. Not precluding an area that would be a strong area

Barry – What kind of land use planning development planning is underway to ensure that important corridors and land use planning and development is underway. It can take years, but it can lead to corridors that can support light rail versus bus. What kind of planning are you doing around transit oriented development?

Ally – started the 2040 blueprint – growth pan. With a vision for growth plan and development. Looked at where station access and mixed use areas exist; determined where to focus densifying. Started there to determine the types of connections we want to make on a regional level. How do we implement – more at the local level. Zoning ordinances need to be in line with those visions. A little happening at the state level – when we look at corridor readiness one incentive was for jurisdictions who had implemented transit supported policies; zoning for higher density near transit oriented development, affordable housing; policies to support that type of density; policies to prevent displacement when the routes are constructed; all part of the readiness factors; less of a stick and more of a carrot. As we continue to implement the corridors, they are asking jurisdictions to make those corridors and investments, policy decision ready. A list of items to communicate in corridor planning; what is needed by a jurisdiction; planning and policy not supporting high capacity transit yet; TOD – both metro and TriMet are working on updating their Transit Oriented Development plans ; based on where HCT is today, and development of TOD housing; feeds directly into that analysis; near-term because they are working to develop more relationships with developers to set up next update of strategic plan. The analysis is tied together.

Barry – thank you. It is very important that you are looking at TOD in HC Corridors.

Annadiana 0- different stages of the planning process – all the way out to 2075; if original maps were produced with overlays for 5 year plans, etc., to help diagram or overlay to demonstrate the stages of development. It would help for the folks who are visual learners; add the facilities that would come into the zone with different layers/overlays, with 5 year breakouts for planning efforts. Might help simplify questions.

Ally - that is such a great idea. One of the things we want to do is communicate which corridors are next for study; with near-term and long-term goals. Developing a series of maps for January presentations; to better communicate some of the connections. We had some maps to show policy-makers, that connected to the 2040 maps; but they are a little harder to follow. We had some density maps showing housing, employment, jobs are located today. We are hoping to do that with the tiers as we go out to presentation;

Anna – so much of the population is visually oriented, not list oriented. And the visuals help them to understand better.

Ally – working for an online story map to help folks more easily grasp the concepts.

Dave (from Chat): Unless something changes the City of Portland is going to have a crisis on its hands as regards transportation infrastructure, parking revenue is off 60ish percent and road use tax down 20ish. Its really a funding crisis.

All – there is definitely more to the funding issue ; with inflation and construction costs are really outrageous right now. Part of the update to the regional plan will include how the impacts of inflation will have to be accounted for in the Regional plan execution.

Anna (From Chat): recreational facilities should not be overlooked.

Anna – one of the really important things for seniors is to stay active, nature walks, not bypassed by transit.

Eileen – locations for congregate meal sites need to be addressed as well.

Ally – Access to recreation/recreational policy is called out in the plan. Nice to hear that would be supported.

Jan – The High Capacity Transit – great to have it; but we need to consider where the stops are. E.g. on Division – by Mt. Tabor – retirement home ; they have to walk further than when there was a bus there. Consider not only distance between stops, but proximity from stops to key locations used by marginalized populations.

Ally – yes definitely something we want to capture for future planning efforts.

Dave – further to Jan’s point . that’s one of the advantages to BRT vs. Rail, you can be more flexible with where you put stops. With Division I think we may have been a shade too aggressive with the distance between stops. We need to evaluate where people live, and who lives there. The conventional wisdom seems to be that we have stops further apart, but I think the conventional wisdom is wrong.

Ally – yes, on the one hand, to get the speed to get HCT, we limit stops to plan for reliability; with more stops there are more opportunities for unknowns.

Dave – yes, you’re balancing the known vs , the unknown. We know that people having to walk a long distance to stops is a disincentive. High Frequency gets us passengers, getting into downtown 6 minutes faster, doesn’t get you passengers

Ally – one of the other ways we can get speed, is to have dedicated space for transit.

Claudia – during the design phase on Division Transit – as things worked out, we were really concerned about the space between stops; the population who uses that line are equity communities who use the service frequently throughout the day. It doesn’t help to have six blocks between stops. It was through the building phase that the “rapid” was dropped for the line to make it high capacity versus rapid transit. I don’t know that we have any reports of time being saved; especially with the new buses being dropped. Now it’s less accessible and slows down the whole route. Did the same thing on NE Weidler at the Retirement. Home. Now there is no one waiting, because they have to wait out in the street, and go down the street. The promise of affordable housing around transit never materializes. It’s always high end development and drives up property values, and then the people who live there who need it can’t afford to live there anymore. These elements have to be taken into account as you continue promoting and trying to sell this concept.

Ally – the did a lessons learned for Division and the Vine in Vancouver. There is more that we can be thinking about as we work on these new corridors. Even thinking about walking further, and the time it takes to walk, to further stop distances. I definitely appreciate all of the feedback, and comments around underlying service, there are considerations about funding and service planning, those are challenges; but we’re working on strengthening connections. When we worked on Southwest Corridor we developed templates for equitable development strategies. Since we are now working really closely

with communities to prevent some of the displacement and negative issues that we saw with the Yellow line. We see fewer impacts with high capacity bus versus light rail

Anna – (Most recent comment in chat) – you do not have enough information to assign any positive attributes to Division transit yet. I think Metro should remove it from their verbiage as any success story until there is sufficient time to effectively evaluate. 2 months down the road as the project has failed, you can't site it as a success.

Ally – I am more pointing to past examples, and much more time is needed to debrief on the outcomes of Division Transit. In some of our engagement we are hearing that people are finding it easier to access because of the branding. Includes also pedestrian and bike access is improved; but yes it is early and there have been challenges.

Director Edwards – what I see as a summary – as we look at this and decisions are made. I see a consistent theme that oftentimes we are inflexible. But 6 months or a year down the road, we need to have the flexibility to tweak and adjust where needed and not be too rigid to make those pivots. It's critical to have the flexibility and evaluate as we go to ensure that our efforts are meeting our desired outcomes. We have more information now, and we need to make some changes. That is a critical piece that has to be factored.

Jan – Thank you ally, I'm sure we'd love to have you back. Thank you so much!

Dave – the driver anger is palpable on outer division with more road rage incidents. We need to be clear with people about what we have or have not accomplished.

Ally – you're absolutely right, We have that as something we are including in some focus groups, to learn more and be thinking about how we can address some of these issues. I'll just mention too, that we have some information about some of the HCT priorities. I can come back in January or February.

Chat:

from Dave Daley he, him, his to everyone: 9:38 AM

Unless something changes the City of Portland is going to have a crisis on its hands as regards transportation infrastructure, parking revenue is off 60ish percent and road use tax down 20ish. Its really a funding crisis.

from Annadiana she/her to everyone: 9:46 AM

recreational facilities should not be overlooked

from Annadiana she/her to everyone: 9:49 AM

I feel that if you put in a rapid transit, the regular transit which exists now should not be removed!!

from Annadiana she/her to everyone: 9:51 AM

we still need to keep the ability of courtesy stops

from Annadiana she/her to everyone: 9:53 AM

the articulated buses can NOT accommodate courtesy stops during bad weather

from Annadiana she/her to everyone: 9:55 AM

many many of us need to only go 1/2 mile to shop using the bus.. or no more than 2 miles

from Annadiana she/her to everyone: 9:56 AM

more and more lower income use the bus to get food

from Annadiana she/her to everyone: 9:57 AM

yet the metro cited the division project as a success.. that still needs to be proven

from Annadiana she/her to everyone: 10:00 AM

it's too new to judge that yet

from Charlie Clark to everyone: 10:00 AM

I have to hop off for another meeting. Thank you

from Dave Daley he, him, his to everyone: 10:06 AM

There is also quite a bit of anger from drivers about these improvements slowing them down. At a minimum we need some outreach to address that.

from Dave Daley he, him, his to everyone: 10:08 AM

I'm out, nice to see everybody