

Lake Oswego streetcar

(Continued from Page 3)

Doug Oblatz argued that the proposed study would not commit any of the participating jurisdictions to do the project, but simply supply them with better and more reliable information to make that decision.

At one point, when streetcar supporter Donna Jordan said opponents didn't understand the financial data they had been given, the audience shouted in anger and Mayor Jack Hoffman adjourned the hearing for ten minutes. Eventually streetcar supporters agreed to a public "advisory" vote on the project in May 2012 and an independent public survey.

The next day, in Portland, Hoffman complained of a "well-organized, highly politicized opposition." The Lake Oswego City Council received more than 300 e-mails opposing the project but Jordan said, "I represent the whole community, not the repetition of parroted e-mails."

TriMet planner Alan Lehto told the Portland City Council, "This is a choice to go forward, not necessarily to do the project. It's typical for the financial plan to be conceptual rather than concrete at this point."

According to Lehto, "This is a real opportunity for a new transit option in this corridor. The streetcar is the most cost-effective, most effective long-term for this corridor. TriMet cannot and will not provide any money for capital development, so there will be no effect on bus service."

Referring to an alternative transit choice, Lehto said, "To handle increased demand with an enhanced bus would actually cost more." He said that because the streetcar is so much cheaper to operate once it is in place, it would give the agency more money to restore curtailed bus service.

However, in response to a question by Portland City Commissioner

Amanda Fritz, Lehto said the agency is considering reducing service on Line 35, requiring some riders to make new transfers.

Fritz asked if parking meters might be installed in parts of South Portland. Mayor Sam Adams replied, "I wouldn't assume meters but I wouldn't rule them out. We're looking at a variety of options."

When Fritz asked if part of the neighborhood might be upzoned, Adams said, "Land near new stations are opportunities for development we're looking at, and zoning is part of that."

When Commissioner Dan Saltzman asked if TriMet is committed to operating the streetcar once built, Lehto replied, "I assume we are. We don't budget that far out."

Planners said that the Streetcar will not go to Lake Oswego without that

city's support, and Fritz expressed discomfort with this.

Chris Smith, longtime streetcar supporter, said that taking the line to the Sellwood Bridge could be viewed as Phase One of a route to either Lake Oswego or Sellwood. Under the proposed financing plan, he said, "We get to spend Uncle Sam's dollars to cut our operating costs."

Fritz said that she had become a streetcar fan and said, "If I were on the Lake Oswego Council I would have voted for this...but I'm not, and I don't find some of the arguments compelling. There's not enough development potential in Johns Landing to pay for this."

Fritz said TriMet should use enhanced bus service here, saying, "Streetcars are the show horses of our transit system, but buses are the work horses. We have limited time, staff and money,

and \$235,000 could be used for other services. I can't support this."

Commissioner Randy Leonard recalled that there had been skepticism of the original MAX and every other recent rail transit project. "We need to develop infrastructure that does not depend on gasoline," he said.

Saltzman and Commissioner Nick Fish voted for the appropriation, but both said they were not yet committed to the project. "I support moving forward, but I do so with many, many questions," Saltzman said. "A half million dollars is more than we've spent on all previous streetcar projects combined."

Lehto's reply as to TriMet's commitment was "not a very robust answer," Saltzman said. "I'm not giving my support until all my questions are answered."

School tax measures

(Continued from Page 1)

ad hoc coalition Learning Now, Buildings Later, which supports the levy but opposes the bond measure. The levy is necessary, Fruits said, "because support from the state just isn't there." However, he added, "Families in Portland just can't afford both."

The bond will raise property taxes "an average of \$500, in southwest \$800," Fruits said. "I know several families that almost lost their homes. It was the cause of a murder-suicide. We will see 1,000 more foreclosures" if the measure passes. "We're still stuck in a recession. This is a very expensive bond at a very bad time."

Moreover, Fruits said, "Once schools are rebuilt, how will we keep them open? The measure was rushed through, pushed on us as take-it-or-leave-it. Not a single dollar will be used for education, and they won't break ground for two years. The levy will

have an immediate effect."

Following the presentations, audience members either addressed the group or submitted questions in writing to Dora Perry and Stephanie Solerzano, volunteers from the League of Women Voters.

Some questioned the use of a "median" property assessed at \$147,000 as a model, rather than an average one. Others criticized past district policies. In contrast, Warner said that the bond is related to education because the current state of disrepair "impacts our children's working environment."

One woman said she had moved to the southwest rather than the suburbs because of the city's historic support of libraries, parks and schools. "I know it all adds up on tax bills, but we can't afford not to do the bond measure."

Asked what would happen if the bond failed, Roach said, "There is no Plan B currently. It would be a huge setback."

Fruits responded, "If the bond fails, we should start planning on day one. I'm not against a bond, I'm against this bond. We need the community involved. In two years we would have emotional and financial support."

Breshear argued that the bond would be disastrous for businesses as well as homeowners. "Most business owners are small, and can't afford to eat the cost of these tax measures. People will not be out there spending money."

Warner countered, "If everyone waited for the right time to have kids, we'd die out as a species. This is helping to keep our neighborhoods the strong, vital places they have been."

Roach said, "If the Hillsdale viaduct fell down, none of us would say, 'Times are too tough to fix it.' We'd say, 'We have to fix it.' Our parents and grandparents supported the schools, and now it's our turn. Times are tough, but they were probably tough for them, too. Our children are our bridge to the future."

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