

Tempers flare as Portland participants find out they don't get a vote

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR PLAN

By Erik Vidstrand
The Southwest Portland Post

As the Southwest Corridor Portland workgroup came to order last month, word circulated that a pedestrian had gotten struck by a car at Southwest Capitol Highway and Terwilliger Boulevard.

One of the main reasons most citizens attend these ongoing meetings is to address just this issue, pedestrian safety; that and increased congestion, bicyclist access, and making it easier to commute with rapid transit.

The workgroup met on June 2 one last time before the June 9 meeting with Metro, the city of Portland, and Southwest Neighborhoods, Inc., commonly known as SWNI.

"We're hoping to come up with a clean line drawn in the sand," said Joan Frederiksen of the Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability. "Some issues still need to be looked at," she continued. A few proposed items during the scoping stages of the drafts will be presented to the executive steering committee firmly moving forward with the environmental impact study.

The workgroup has been providing input on the high capacity transit alignment alternatives, and associated roadway and active transportation projects for the past 12 months.

"The (workgroup) does not vote on proposals or products," Frederiksen explained, "however, all (workgroup) perspectives on (high capacity transit) alignment alternatives and associated transportation projects will be shared with decision

makers for their consideration."

Frederiksen stated that an assortment of appendices, including reports, minutes, and public comments, would be put together as well. The committee heard public comments at the beginning of the hearing that lasted about 30 minutes.

"All minutes of the meeting will be sent out to workgroup members," Frederiksen promised. "All comments will be read, coded, and analyzed."

"Will there be opportunity to comment in the future?" Roger Averbeck, SWNI transportation committee chair asked.

A nod of heads by all bureaus and organizations was in the affirmative. Averbeck reported that comments from the SW corridor forum on April 29 were posted on the SWNI website. SWNI's recommendations were then sent to the transportation committee and all the neighborhood association chairs.

A brief overview of the draft environmental impact statement was then provided.

"What's next?" the workgroup wanted to know.

A decision on the June 9 meeting deemed further study, and federal transportation folks must review the mandated DEIS.

"All MAX lines have been built with this (DEIS) statement, except the Red Line," stated Denver Igarta of Metro. "After the federal guidelines are reviewed, then everything is reopened back up for consideration by public involvement in late summer."

Another part of it will be looked at in early fall with detailed profiles being reopened for additional comments.

Don Baack of SW Trails requested



Cartoon by Karl Vidstrand

to add the funding plan in all the decisions along the process.

"Where will the city get a billion dollars?" Baack asked.

"State bonds, Tigard/Tualatin bonds, etc.," was the reply.

"Some of the money for the Orange Line came out of school/fire/police funds," someone else said. "It wasn't out in the open!"

"Let's work this in a calm, collaborative manner," Frederiksen pleaded. "We appreciated the letter from SWNI."

Many of those items requested from SWNI were adopted in 2013.

For example, one item proposed was a more walk-able and vibrant safe place to move around.

One example for the SW corridor would more resemble the Interstate 84 access as a better illustration, although a few cautioned about the

MAX station islands like the Hollywood stop.

Another example was the Yellow Line where the MAX runs down the center of the street. Link light rail in Seattle was also presented as an example, with four lanes and light rail down the center with pedestrian crossings every 600-700 feet.

Some areas were taken for right-of-way, including parking lots, fields, and entire streets like Lincoln to make way for the Orange Line route to Milwaukie.

All photos in examples presented were with light rail in mind, not high capacity bus transit.

"Does bus transit have less impact?" Averbeck asked.

He added that the plan was for traffic calming, more pedestrian access, and for more bikes. Noise, dust, and fences were all brought up as well. Isolation from stations was mentioned.

The issues go on and on.

Igarta mentioned that Barbur Boulevard can act like a zipper, bringing two parts on either side of Interstate 5 together. It also appeared that the tunnel is out of the question for now.

Talia Jacobsen, Associate Planner from Oregon Department of Transportation, had the last words.

"There are no easy answers," she said. "Our goal is to get everyone clear facts so that we can make an informed decision."

"The perception that ODOT wants to kill high capacity transit is not true," she added. "We want to see both proposals and will fight for either one. We are looking forward to working with city and Metro to keep bringing in the trade offs and bring them to the public."

A plausible scenario from this reporter includes two light rail tracks, two sidewalks, bike lanes, four auto lanes, and the tunnel put back into planning. There are no easy answers.

Frederiksen thanked everyone for their perseverance over the last year and relayed to continue being involved.

Stay tuned.

Spring Garden Park

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proactive efforts and diligent focus towards a much-needed new neighborhood park in an underserved part of the city," said Fritz.

Spring Garden Park neighbor Lori Howell said, "I look forward to watching our kids grow up in this park. And to passing down the legacy of nature play from generation to generation."

The Spring Garden Park Master Plan calls for features designed to create connections with neighbors and park visitors.

When complete, the park is planned to have: a picnic area and lawn; a new playground and places to sit; and park paths for walking.

A grassy meadow with native grasses for picnics or free and unstructured play like tossing a Frisbee and such are planned. The park's upgrades will provide new trees for shade, cleaner air, rest and reflection. Park entry points with signs, and other amenities are planned to build on the land's features and existing improvements.

The Bureau of Environmental

Services built a stormwater basin and wildlife habitat area last year in part of the park.

The bureau also re-established an above-ground creek located towards the bottom of a hill in the park. The creek previously flowed underground. The park's final design will incorporate those changes as well.

"I am thrilled that the Friends of Spring Garden Park, and their many community partners, will finally see their vision of connecting children to nature realized," said Sylvia Bogert, executive director of Southwest Neighborhoods, Inc.

"It is heartwarming to know future generations will be able to enjoy this special park and learn to cherish the natural world. We are grateful to Commissioner Fritz for finding a way to fund our dream," said Bogert.

Currently, Spring Garden Park is the site of a temporary nature-based playground, installed at the park November 2011 thanks to collaboration between the park bureau, Friends of Spring Garden Park, and Umpqua Bank's

Multnomah Village branch.

The nature play area was designed to be temporary, and lies on the site proposed for the new play area in the park's master Plan.

According to Ross, "It is possible that Portland Parks & Recreation could look at incorporating part of the nature play area, the existing climbing boulders, into the new park's design. However, we will review the feasibility of this as part of the community conversations during project planning."

A park bureau project manager will be touching base with the neighborhood coalition, neighborhoods and the Friends of Spring Garden Park this fall on project timeline and specifics. Further design work is expected to begin in 2015, with construction expected to begin in 2016.

The Spring Garden Park site was acquired in 1999, and the park currently has a master plan. According to Ross, park planning development will be in alignment with the master plan. For more information, call 503-823-5300 or visit portlandparks.org.