

# Steering committee meeting, public forum scheduled for April 6 at SWCC

## SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR PLAN

By Erik Vidstrand  
The Southwest Portland Post

An upcoming Southwest Corridor steering committee meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 6 from 6 – 7 p.m. at the Southwest Community Center at Gabriel Park located at Southwest 45th Avenue and Vermont Street. This meeting is open to the public but has no testimony.

Immediately following is a public forum from 7 – 8 p.m. featuring a 20-minute panel discussion with steering committee members. Small group table discussions will take place in which to provide input for staff recommendations and PCC options.

The committee plans to review the most recent technical report on ways to serve Portland Community College's Sylvania Campus with improved transit. The college has been pushing for direct service to the Mt. Sylvania campus, the largest in its system with roughly 14,000 students.

Committee members will review staff recommendation on a tunnel and decisions between bus rapid transit and light rail.

"We want people to understand that this forum will focus primarily on the mode and PCC (Sylvania) tunnel decision," explained Noelle Dobson, Metro senior public affairs specialist, "and not every aspect of the project."

If light rail is chosen, direct service would need a tunnel beneath residential areas between Southwest Barbur Boulevard and the campus.

Residents in that neighborhood have generally opposed a tunnel which would also add more than \$300 million

to the overall cost of light rail in the corridor.

Without a tunnel, the closest light rail to the campus would be a station a half-mile away at Barbur Boulevard and 53rd Avenue.

As the leaders prepare to make a decision this spring, members of the public have been weighing in with their thoughts. A month-long online survey ended in February and attracted more than 2,400 responses.

"The survey results aren't necessarily representative of public opinion overall," Dobson said, "but they do give some insight into the factors residents think should drive the mode decision."

Among people taking the survey, light rail was a clear preference over bus rapid transit with two-thirds of respondents saying they moderately or strongly prefer light rail.

"This is the last major leg of the MAX system," wrote one respondent who strongly prefers light rail. "Not completing the system would be unfair to the thousands of daily (Southwest) commuters who have so far supported light rail in every other part of the metro area."

Another respondent who strongly prefers bus rapid transit disagreed.

"Expanding the light rail system is prohibitively expensive to build and operate, impractical and inflexible for changing transportation needs," he wrote.

Others commented that the project must include housing and development components, and the need for safer ways to walk and bike to transit. Growing congestion was a common theme and a need for better transit overall. The most frequently selected factors included shorter travel time, enough capacity to serve rush hour



This montage shows a bus rapid transit vehicle from Eugene's EmX system (left) and a more-familiar Portland MAX light rail train. (Photos courtesy of Metro)

demand in the future, higher ridership, and greater reliability.

By early April, Metro will release staff recommendations to the steering committee regarding which mode is the preferred choice for the corridor and whether to continue a study of an underground light rail tunnel to serve PCC Sylvania.

Assuming the steering committee moves forward with these two decisions, then as scheduled on May 9, the shift moves the conversation back to the Southwest Corridor Plan as a whole.

In June, the steering committee will review and confirm the preferred package of high capacity transit alignments, terminus, and mode to be studied in the federal environmental impact statement.

*Editor's Note: In addition to an underground tunnel to PCC Sylvania, a number of options are being considered. Among them are driverless cars, shuttle buses from the light rail station and an ariel tram, much like the OHSU Tram. More information can always be found at <http://www.swcorridorplan.org>.*



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