

Metro prepares for environmental review on proposed light rail project

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR PLAN

By Erik Vidstrand
The Southwest Portland Post

Metro held an open house at Wilson High School on Sept. 22 to solicit input and share next steps for the proposed light rail between Portland State University in downtown Portland and Bridgeport Village in Tigard. Metro, TriMet, and Portland city staff facilitated various project components of the extensive project.

Maps and charts lined the cafeteria for designs from PSU to Tigard and points in between. Transfer options to Marquam Hill and Portland Community College Sylvania Campus were examined by this reporter.

Routes to PCC Sylvania caught the eyes of Marcia Leslie, the former chair of the Far Southwest Neighborhood Association where the college resides.

This neighborhood will be affected by some sort of transit to the college. Metro voted down a light rail tunnel earlier this year so other options have been introduced. These include an aerial tram, gondola, additional buses, and an electric bike share program.

"Our association won't meet until January after many issues will be decided," Leslie said. "Neighbors can continue to provide input at Metro meetings, forums, and submit comments."

PCC Sylvania student Otakar Andrysek was also at the college booth and sees it differently.

"Think 2027," he commented. "That's when the project will realistically be fully running. Why aren't automated vehicles a part of the discussion?"

Andrysek said he was referring to the

rise of self-driving vehicles now being tested around the world.

"These cars could be a viable option ten years from now," he said. "Metro has proposed more buses but that is not really what students would use."

Andrysek said he hoped light rail would connect to the campus. "According to a recent college forum," Andrysek said, "faculty and staff preferred a light rail but the needs of the community surpassed any college needs."

"The [Capitol Highway] 44 bus will run extra lines," said Dave Unsworth of TriMet. "Bus service could run on dedicated rail tracks on Barbur Boulevard before heading up the hill to PCC."

According to maps, the bus line would continue to Bridgeport Village.

At the Marquam Hill easel, options propose robust Americans with Disabilities Act accessible connections up to Oregon Health & Science University, the Veterans Administration Hospital, and Doernbecher Children's Hospital.

Pedestrian and bicycle connections would link with a light rail station in the Lair Hill neighborhood. Other proposed options are a pedestrian tunnel with elevators, an embedded escalator, sky bridges, and inclined elevators.

Improvements to Southwest 53rd Avenue and the Crossroads (Barbur Boulevard, Taylors Ferry Road, Interstate 5 and Capitol Highway) are being crafted. Plans call for the Barbur Transit Center to be remodeled and enlarged.

Marianne Fitzgerald of Ashcreek, a Southwest Neighborhoods, Inc. volunteer, wants a transit center built closer to Tigard.

"This would alleviate traffic on an already overtaxed highway," she said.

Comments posted on the easels



A MAX light rail train with Type 4 cars crossing 185th Avenue from Beaverton into Hillsboro. (Photo by Steve Morgan, Wikimedia creative commons license)

described uncertainties of traffic lanes disappearing on Barbur Boulevard. A Metro memo of Sept. 21 said that the project will not remove any "through lanes" that are continuous on Barbur Boulevard.

The memo reassures neighbors there will be at least two travel lanes in each direction south of Naito Parkway, but Barbur Boulevard could lose some dedicated turn lanes.

From Southwest 13th to 60th avenues, a route adjacent to Interstate 5 remains an option.

According to Craig Beebe, a Metro public affairs specialist, "Fifty-one percent of Barbur Boulevard doesn't have a sidewalk on either side of the street."

"In addition," Beebe said, "bike lanes just disappear in many places. This is being addressed."

What happens next? An amendment on the upcoming Tigard ballot requires a public vote before the city can formally support the light rail. A separate vote before the city could raise money for it through taxes or fees.

According to TriMet general manager Neil MacFarlane, Tigard voters could kill the proposed MAX line if they vote

against it during the upcoming general election.

"If voters don't want the line," MacFarlane said, "it would be difficult to secure federal dollars for the line."

Metro is counting on the federal government to pick up half of the costs of the project which is approximately \$2 billion.

"I can't speak much about the election in Tigard because I am a public employee," Eryn Kehe, a Metro senior communications specialist wrote to The Post. "It would certainly be something for our steering committee to address."

The next steering committee meeting is on Monday, Nov. 14, from 9 – 11 a.m. at the Metro Regional Center, 600 NE Grand Ave. in Portland.

The committee will review scoping comments from the community and hear staff recommendations. A federally required draft environmental impact study will begin in January and last through the coming year.

The project will identify a range of strategies to help improve safety and quality of life for citizens near and around the corridor vicinity.

For more information, visit swcorridorplan.org.

Giant Cedar Trees

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\$273,000 with an assessed value of \$141,300.

Contractor Robert Wood, with Mountainwood Homes, said he hasn't seen the final design yet, but believes the owner, Michael T. Fisk, is planning a duplex.

"We're not pulling the strings on this one," he said. "We're just building it."

The lot is nearly a quarter acre, at 8,003 sq. ft. Could two new homes be built on it without removing the cedars, which stand right on the front edge of the property close to the street? Perhaps.

Woods said that he thinks Fisk believes the demolition of the house and the new construction would irreparably damage the trees, and that they couldn't be saved, but he wasn't sure.

Although the city puts up a notice of tree removal, it states quite plainly it is "courtesy in nature, only." It does not provide "for public comment on the proposal or for appeal of the proposal to the city of Portland." In other words, neighbors have no options.

But neighbors may be happy to hear that city planner Malia Slusarenko is working hard to save the cedars. "We are working with our city arborist," she said. "He has looked at it and we need some more information from the property owner, but we are trying to see if we can save [them]."

If the trees come down, it will not come without a price. According to city code, the builder must preserve one third of the trees on site.

Since the cedars are the only trees on

the property, in order to remove them the developer must pay a hefty fee: \$300 per tree inch. That means the developer, Mountainwood Homes, will shell out \$21,600 dollars to take down the cedars.

As a city clerk explained, if the city forbids a private landowner from cutting trees, it would amount to a "taking," of their property. The best they can do is a policy where a homeowner either "preserves or pays."

So despite a city policy that encourages the retention of healthy trees on private property, all it takes is a permit and a checkbook to cut them down.

Still, Masthem is encouraging her neighbors to write to the city commissioners and express their dismay at the direction of Portland's growth.

"Change is hard," Masthem said. "I know we can't do anything about progress, but to be so disdainful about nature—to scrape everything off the land is just so sad."

Efforts to contact the property owner were unsuccessful.

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STREET AND STORMWATER SUMMIT

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Novick talk all the time."

"We will give you more updates as they are refined by end of year," Uchiyama promised. "For now, there is a structure to go through both internally and externally."

"We've always had coordination," Uchiyama said, "but now we have collaboration."

Another summit will be scheduled next year.

First project in Stephens-Tryon Headwaters area to begin construction

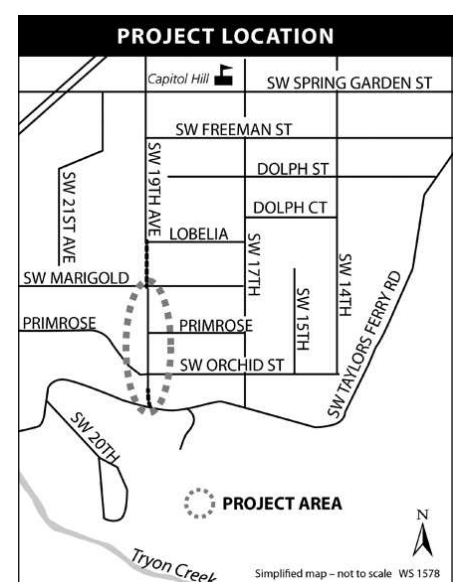
The city of Portland held a series of workshops and community forums last year to help shape stormwater and road improvements in the Stephens-Tryon Headwaters area.

Due to feedback, the city is first designing improvements on Southwest 19th Avenue. The street is currently an unimproved street of dirt, gravel, and pavement. It is designated a Safe Route to School for Capitol Hill Elementary so needs attention.

It's also part of the regional trail from Hillsdale to Lake Oswego.

"The problem is that rain washes sediment and other pollutants off gravel and dirt streets into streams," said Lisa Moscinski from the Bureau of Environmental Services.

"Tryon Creek, where endangered steelhead trout, Chinook and Coho salmon live, is just downhill of Southwest



19th Avenue."

The Portland Bureau of Transportation is designing a paved street on two blocks of the street from Southwest Orchid to Marigold.

According to Kyle Chisek, Portland Bureau of Transportation, they will be using new street standards.

"This means the street will have a smaller footprint, a less impervious surface, and fewer impacts to streams and other natural features," he said.

To improve water quality in Tryon Creek, Environmental Services is designing vegetated stormwater facilities on 19th Avenue including a large facility between Southwest Taylors Ferry Road and Southwest Orchid Street, a site the city closed to through traffic in 2002 because of safety concerns.

The city is designing the project and will begin construction in spring 2017.