

Saltzman joins steering committee; light rail project still needs \$2 billion

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR PLAN

By Erik Vidstrand
The Southwest Portland Post

The last time the Southwest Corridor Plan steering committee met, Barack Obama was still president, Steve Novick was the city representative, and the rainy season had just begun.

Now, six months later, President Donald Trump is threatening to cut off federal funds to projects in sanctuary cities, of which Portland is one, City Commissioner Dan Saltzman replaced Novick, and the summer sun is soon to come.

Metro Councilor Craig Dirksen, co-chair, was going to introduce the two new members but they were not in attendance. Ken Gibson, the new mayor of King City, had a conflict and Saltzman was absent.

Matt Grumm, Saltzman's senior policy advisor, said Saltzman, who is the new head of the Portland Bureau of Transportation, is very excited to be on the steering committee and had been busy with the city budget negotiations.

"Commissioner Saltzman," Grumm said, "is supportive of additional state funds to help cover cost of the light rail project."

Metro project manager Chris Ford gave a brief update on the project and said steering committee meetings would be every other month, then every month in the fall as the project ramps up.

"Last December the draft environmental impact study began," Ford said. "There are still decisions to

be made such as whether the light rail would begin on Barbur Boulevard or Naito Parkway."

According to Ford, the study is still on schedule to wrap up by the end of the year.

Ford discussed the Ross Island bridgehead project which would allow for better connections to the bridge.

Still under review are options to Marquam Hill, whether the light rail would continue along Barbur Boulevard or run adjacent to Interstate 5, and connections to Portland Community College Sylvania.

"More traffic studies are needed on Barbur," Ford said. "This information will come later than other issues."

Ford went on to explain that the National Environmental Policy Act requires federal agencies to assess the environmental effects of their proposed actions prior to making decisions.

"NEPA objectives help officials understand environmental consequences, inform the public, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Federal Transportation Administration and historical groups with various components of the project," Ford said.

Metro has had to compare alternatives to a future without a light rail scenario in the year 2035. The forecast foresees major traffic congestion, crumbling infrastructure, and inadequate active transportation alternatives.

"Active transportation focuses on getting people out of their vehicles," Grumm said. "The commissioner



A crosswalk has recently been added at Southwest Alice Street and Barbur Boulevard for public safety and in anticipation of a future light rail line. (Photo courtesy of Metro)

supports this whole heartedly."

"Everything is running smoothly," Ford said, "but we're only at five percent of design."

Ford warned that potential issues might arise like a wetland in the right-of-way or other issues that may stall the progress.

In July, the steering committee will discuss the connection options to PCC Sylvania. In September, the topic will be whether to align light rail along Barbur

Boulevard or Interstate 5. October's discussion will focus on the route beginning on Barbur Boulevard or

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