

Citizens pass two Portland to Lake Oswego streetcar options

By Lee Perlman
The Multnomah Village Post

At its final meeting July 31, the ad hoc Lake Oswego to Portland Transit and Trail Project Advisory Committee (LOPAC) suggested further study of two possible transportation options. One called for extension of the Portland Streetcar southward to Willamette Park-- with most of the route south of the current terminus on Lowell Street to be on Southwest Macadam Avenue.

The second called for extending the route southward to the old Albertson's site in Lake Oswego, with most of the route along the Willamette Shore Trolley right-of-way. The dual recommendations were an attempt by LOPAC chair David Jorling of Lake Oswego's First Addition Neighbors to fairly represent the views of the deeply divided, 20-member committee.

LOPAC member David Reinhard said, "I didn't want us to forward a single recommendation from the whole committee that was favored by one vote." He did, however, call for a straw poll between the two preferences.

The first option was favored over the second by a vote of 8-4 among members present, but there were also two e-mailed proxies from absent members favoring the second proposal, and one opposed to both.

Metro, which is conducting the study, will continue to take public comment

on it through September 7. After this, Metro will decide which options to study. Metro staff had been intrigued by the idea of a streetcar route along the Willamette Shore Trolley right-of-way.

Metro planner Richard Brandman noted, "There's a lot of travel demand in this corridor, the demand is growing, the highway is very constricted and not likely to be expanded."

A streetcar line here would be easier and cheaper to build, and could attain higher speed than such conveyances usually achieve because it would not share the road with auto traffic. Staff recommended that Metro at least give such a route further study. They did not recommend further study for an express bus alternative (Bus Rapid Transit, or BRT) because it would have relatively low ridership and development incentive.

LOPAC members, especially those from the exclusive Dunthorpe community between Portland and Lake Oswego, complained that mass transit in this corridor would invade the privacy of and detract from the livability of nearby homes. Committee member Debbie Stellway of Dunthorpe said, "Protecting our homes' economic value is really important."

Another Dunthorpe resident, Bill Gilmer, called the Willamette Shore option "poorly thought out, bad for the communities involved, and economically irresponsible." It would

"bring in people who would not otherwise be in the corridor," and he stated that the east side's Springwater Corridor trail had led to increased crime rates in the areas nearby. He favored the BRT "if a transit choice has to be made."

In contrast, Alice Kelledjian Richmond, who said she has lived in West Linn for "more than half a century," said, "If the project needs to be done, it needs to be done now. It

will cost much more in ten years."

Several committee members called for a bike and pedestrian trail in the Willamette Shore right of way, either in conjunction with a streetcar or independently of one. Brandman said this was uncertain, since the available funding for mass transit improvements couldn't be used to pay for such a facility, but that it could be studied.



LOPAC recently voted in favor of two options to extend the Portland Streetcar from South Waterfront to Lake Oswego.

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