

STAFF REPORT (REVISED 4/12/17)

IN CONSIDERATION OF RESOLUTION NO. 17-4776, FOR THE PURPOSE OF ADOPTING THE POWELL-DIVISION TRANSIT AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECT'S DIVISION TRANSIT PROJECT LOCALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Date: November 9, 2016

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LPA DESCRIPTION

On November 7, 2016, the Powell-Division Transit and Development Project Steering Committee made a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) recommendation for the Powell-Division Transit and Development Project. The recommended LPA for high capacity transit in the Powell-Division corridor is bus rapid transit with stations at the locations indicated on the attached map, operating between downtown Portland and the Gresham Transit Center. The route will operate on the transit mall (5th and 6th avenues) in downtown Portland, cross the Willamette River, and run on Division Street from SE 8th Avenue in Portland to the Gresham Transit Center.

The LPA is the region's preferred project alternative to implement the Powell-Division High Capacity Transit Project that was identified in the 2014 Regional Transportation Plan financially-constrained project list. It was arrived at after the project steering committee defined the project's purpose and need. A range of alternatives were developed for the Powell-Division Corridor to meet the identified purpose and need and screened against criteria that reflected the project goals and desired outcomes as well as technical evaluation. Alternatives were defined and refined based on technical work and extensive community input.

The LPA is an important component of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis, as it describes the alternative to be constructed. While the 2014 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) describes the project as "HCT on Powell/Division from Portland Central Business District to the Gresham Transit Center", the LPA defines the transit mode, route, and general station locations. This more-refined project definition allows the federal environmental review to ascertain and avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate potential project impacts. A detailed explanation of the LPA is included in Attachment 1: Powell-Division Transit and Development Project's Division Transit Project Locally Preferred Alternative Report. Each of the project partners has expressed support for the LPA; these local actions are included as Attachment 2 (2.a through 2.e).

CONTEXT

The Division Transit Project is proposed as a faster and more reliable transportation choice for residents and employees traveling in southeast Portland and Gresham. This project proposes a new bus rapid transit (BRT) project stretching 14.8 miles if using the Tilikum Crossing alignment (or 14.2 miles if using the Hawthorne Bridge alignment), and with 35 stations between SE 8th Avenue / SE Division Street and the Gresham Transit Center. The project will provide longer buses with 60 percent more carrying capacity, multiple doors for easy and faster boarding, improved transit stops, improved pedestrian access and safer roadway crossings, transit signal priority, and queue jumps to improve bus travel times at very congested intersections. These improvements are tailored to fit the constrained urban environment of the corridor.

This project will link to the region's current 60-mile light rail system, which provides service every 15 minutes or better, seven days a week. The current light rail system serves the region east and west to such locations as downtown Portland, Beaverton, Gresham, Milwaukie, and Hillsboro, north to the Portland International Airport and to Expo Center, and south to Milwaukie. The Powell-Division Corridor is also identified in the High Capacity Transit Plan as a near-term regional priority corridor.

The project addresses the inability for the current transit system to adequately serve riders in the corridor. Even with very frequent service, current transit demand on the Line 4-Division exceeds capacity. Many buses in the PM peak period are at or over-capacity, riders experience pass-ups with overfull buses. Congestion in the corridor leads to delays estimated at 16 to 17 minutes in the evening peak for the Line 4-Division. In addition, reliability is an issue with buses getting stuck in congested traffic.

This project provides a more reliable connection for residential, employment, and educational centers. It serves many important destinations in the corridor and would provide bus rapid transit service to PSU, OHSU, PCC-Southeast, Warner Pacific College, and the South Waterfront; to the City of Portland's Hosford-Abernathy, Richmond, Mt. Tabor, South Tabor, Montavilla, Powellhurst Gilbert, Hazelwood, Mill Park, and Centennial neighborhoods; and to the City of Gresham's Northwest and Central City neighborhoods.

Demographics: Projected population and employment growth will exacerbate the issues felt by people today. In the Powell-Division corridor in 2015, there were an estimated 32,500 households and 35,500 jobs within a half mile of the proposed stations east of SE 8th Avenue. These residents and job locations have limited access to high capacity transit (adjacent to a portion of the MAX SE Division Green Line station area and MAX Blue Line Civic Drive, Gresham City Hall, Gresham Central Transit Center, and Cleveland station areas). Growth in this corridor is expected to increase to 45,500 households and 48,500 jobs by the year 2040.

Furthermore, the corridor includes a highly diverse population and a number of very high poverty areas that are vulnerable to involuntary displacement. The area east of 82nd Avenue is the most racially and ethnically diverse part of Oregon with high concentrations of communities of color and groups with limited English proficiency, including Chinese, Latino, Russian, Vietnamese, Tongan, African, Arabic, and other minority groups.

East Portland is an area of changing demographics. The *East Portland Review* (Portland, 2007) found that many of the area's schools are experiencing a significant rise in the number of students that are English Language Learners, and that all of the elementary schools in the area have over 50% of their students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch – with some as high as 90%. The *Regional Equity Atlas* (Coalition for a Livable Future, 2007) found that poverty is rising in East Portland neighborhoods, most schools are poorly served by sidewalks, and access to grocery stores is limited in some areas.¹ Over 60 languages are spoken by students at David Douglas high school.² Gresham is facing similar changes with an increasing number of Hispanic and foreign-born residents, and many youth and families. According to the 2010 census, over 35% of Rockwood residents are Hispanic, and 25% of the Gresham Central City residents are Hispanic.

At the same time, this area has historically been underinvested in and is lacking pedestrian infrastructure, enough affordable housing, and community development. A desire to ensure the project will benefit people that already lived and did business in the corridor is reflected in the project goals.

Project goals: Defined by the Powell-Division Steering Committee:

- **Transportation:** People have safe and convenient transportation options – including efficient and frequent high capacity transit service that enhances current local transit service – that get them where they want to go and improves the existing system.
- **Well-being:** Future development and transit improvements create safe, healthy neighborhoods and improve access to social, educational, environmental and economic opportunities.
- **Equity:** Future development and transit improvements reduce existing disparities, benefit current residents and businesses and enhance our diverse neighborhoods. There is a commitment to prevent market-driven involuntary displacement of residents and businesses and to equitably distribute the benefits and burdens of change.
- **Efficiency:** A high capacity transit project is efficiently implemented and operated.

Partners: Metro and TriMet are the general project lead agencies and the local sponsors for the environmental analysis and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Small Starts grant application. Metro was the overall project lead for the project until the local jurisdictions adopted the LPA. Then, TriMet became the local lead managing the design, outreach, and federal funding process. Metro remains the project lead for the environmental process.

FTA is the federal lead agency for the project. A federal lead agency is defined as the federal agency that is proposing to take an action. This agency supervises the preparation of the environmental documentation and has the responsibility for managing the day-to-day conduct of the environmental review. The cities of Portland and Gresham as well as Multnomah County and the Oregon Department of Transportation are local partners in the project.

¹ <http://www.portlandonline.com/auditor/index.cfm?a=272980&c=35201>

² <http://www.ddouglas.k12.or.us/en/about>

The project decision-making body created to guide decisions was the Powell-Division Transit and Development Steering Committee. The steering committee was charged with making decisions on project milestones and recommending the Locally Preferred Alternative to the adopting bodies. The Powell-Division Steering Committee was comprised of elected and appointed officials of the participating jurisdictions, Mount Hood Community College, Portland Community College, the Johnson Creek Watershed Council, business and student representatives, and local community representatives from Gresham Coalition of Neighborhood Associations, Division-Midway Alliance, Catholic Charities, Southeast Uplift Neighborhood Coalition, Upstream Public Health, OPAL Environmental Justice Oregon, East Portland Action Plan, and the Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon. The steering committee met for three years with the role of defining the LPA and shaping related actions on development and community stabilization. The steering committee was unique in that over half of its members were representing community groups.

Public involvement: Extensive public involvement opportunities have been provided throughout the duration of the project, based on four major goals:

- Communicate complete, accurate, understandable and timely information
- Gather input by providing meaningful opportunities to participate
- Provide timely public notice of opportunities to participate
- Facilitate the involvement of low income populations, communities of color and people with limited English proficiency

Multiple agency and community partners helped to shape and implement a variety of outreach activities:

- Produced multiple fact sheets, email newsletters and regularly updated information on the project web site
- Held more than 270 community briefings
- Conducted eight online surveys reaching more than 10,000 people
- Produced an interactive map comment tool that generated more than 1,500 comments
- Held culturally specific community events in multiple languages that reached members of the Latino, Russian-speaking, Chinese, Vietnamese, African American, African immigrant, Chuuk, Tongan, Bhutanese, and Native American communities
- Held eleven focus groups on proposed station locations
- Conducted multiple other outreach activities including business canvassing, student and youth engagement, bus stop surveys and tabling at community events.

The public outreach for this project was awarded the USA Project of the Year award from the International Association of Public Participation in 2015.

Related actions: In August 2013, the Metro Council approved a Community Planning and Development Grant (CPDG) for the cities of Portland and Gresham. This CPDG project provided resources to engage the community to create a concept plan for the Inner Powell – Outer Division corridor that identifies a preferred transit mode and concept alignment, and potential transit station areas with the greatest development and placemaking opportunities. In September 2015, Metro Council approved a second CPDG for the Cities of Portland and

Gresham, for the “Building Healthy Connected Communities Along the Powell-Division Corridor” project. This CPDG project seeks to maximize the impact of the Powell-Division bus rapid transit by realizing local community visions, promoting district design, activating business districts, and jumpstarting catalytic developments that can take advantage of the transit investment.

In addition, in November 2015 the City of Gresham adopted a Local Action Plan. The Gresham Local Action Plan provides near-term actions that would support transit and promote positive changes desired by the community near stations along a new Powell-Division bus rapid transit line. Actions in the plan would help achieve community goals; some would apply to all stations along the corridor, while others are specific to certain station areas.

In July 2016, the City of Portland adopted a Local Action Plan. The Portland Local Action Plan is a companion plan to support the broader goals and outcomes of the Powell-Division Transit and Development Project. The Local Action Plan focuses on the land-use concepts and community development actions for the Powell-Division transit corridor within the City of Portland. It identifies how the City of Portland will work with the communities to support equitable development and prevent involuntary displacement in the corridor. It identifies key steps for the Portland Housing Bureau and the Portland Development Commission to create between 300 and 600 new affordable housing units in the corridor with \$30 million identified for new investment, and provide technical assistance for business retention and development and workforce navigation for businesses and residents as the transit project moves forward.

ANALYSIS/INFORMATION

1. KNOWN OPPOSITION

The Powell-Division Project’s Steering Committee used a consensus-based decision making process where green cards indicate support for the consensus statement, yellow cards indicate support for some elements of the consensus statement but with reservations or strong concerns, and red cards indicate that the steering committee member could not support the consensus statement unless certain conditions were met. Steering committee members voting red cards were required to provide recommendations or conditions that would need to change in order for them to consider changing their vote to a yellow card or green card.

This voting process took place as the project definition progressed to assess the level of support or opposition to the project through a series of votes taken throughout the LPA development process. Community groups made up over half of the steering committee. Concerns expressed throughout the process included items specific to the LPA such as station spacing and alignment as well as concerns outside of the LPA such as affordable housing.

Issues that garnered opposition were addressed when possible as the LPA development advanced. Two major examples are when the project terminus was shifted to the Gresham Transit Center (rather than Mount Hood Community College) and when the project moved from Powell Boulevard to Division Street from the Tilikum Crossing to 82nd Avenue.

To address the shift in terminus location, the project team and interested steering committee members met and developed a strategy to improve access to Mount Hood Community College through more frequent transit service on the Line 20-Burnside/Stark and other future proposed improvements. These commitments were memorialized in the MHCC Memorandum of Understanding, which was an attachment to the Gresham and Multnomah County LPA Ordinances. Some steering committee members expressed that their support for the LPA was contingent upon the adoption of the Memorandum of Understanding.

The other major point of opposition was when the project alignment moved from inner Powell Boulevard to inner Division Street from the Tilikum Crossing to 82nd Avenue to avoid major property impacts, allow a project to move forward in the near term, and achieve desired reliability and transit travel times. Metro, TriMet, the City of Portland, the City of Gresham, and Multnomah County project team members created a “Powell-Division Corridor Transportation and Development Strategy,” which was shared with the Steering Committee. The strategy outlined near-term transit investments that TriMet would explore and a commitment from Metro to advance Powell Boulevard for regional consideration within the High Capacity Transit planning and prioritization process, and amend the Regional Transportation Plan to assert continued need for Powell Boulevard transit improvements (as well as the MHCC transit commitments). This document was shared and reviewed by the steering committee. It also was adopted as an attachment to the City of Portland’s LPA Resolution. (See Attachment 2: Powell-Division Corridor Transportation and Development Strategy).

Powell Boulevard improvements require further study to determine the appropriate solutions for unmet needs. A future corridor refinement plan project shall include an in-depth review of past analysis and community input of the East Metro Connections Plan, Outer Powell Boulevard Conceptual Design Plan, the Outer Powell Safety Project, the Powell-Division Transit and Development Project, and other past studies to identify unmet needs and potential solutions. A future corridor refinement effort would also be informed by the 2018 RTP and Regional Transit Strategy policy direction.

The Powell-Division Transit and Development Project’s Steering Committee voted on final elements of the LPA on October 24th and November 7th, 2016 using the consensus-based decision making process described above. On the October 24th vote there were 11 green cards, two yellow cards and four red cards. Based on the subsequent outreach and discussions with concerned steering committee members, on November 7th three of the red card votes were amended to yellow cards. The final steering committee vote on the LPA statement was 11 green cards, five yellow cards and one red card. At the October 24, 2016 and November 7, 2016 Steering Committee meetings, committee members indicated a concern that identified commitments were not sufficient without being memorialized in writing as part of the City of Portland adoption of the LPA. A number of steering committee members qualified their votes of support for the Locally Preferred Alternative as contingent upon a commitment to further study Powell Boulevard to address any unmet safety and mobility needs moving forward among other concerns described below. Steering committee meeting minutes were documented as part of the public record for the Powell-Division Transit and Development Project.

The remaining red card vote in November was from the East Portland Action Plan (EPAP) steering committee member, whose organization was concerned that the project would not carry through on commitments, planned to replace the current bus service with the bus rapid transit project rather than keeping both services, that there should be new north-south transit routes implemented as soon as possible in east Portland, and that the project did not provide enough benefits for east Portland.

Commitments from partner agencies to address the remaining red card concerns were developed in collaboration with the community members on the steering committee and Metro, TriMet and the City of Portland. Comments and concerns fell primarily into seven categories: project benefits (including safety, mobility, speed, and reliability), station locations, affordable housing commitments in the corridor, small business support and local hiring as the project moves forward, future decision-making structure, reallocation of Line 4-Division service hours to the corridor, and continued commitment to Powell Boulevard. The actions to address these concerns are memorialized in Exhibit C of the City of Portland's Locally Preferred Alternative Resolution in Attachment 2.

With the commitments made and memorialized in attachments to the LPA ordinances the project partner agencies (the City of Portland, the City of Gresham, and Multnomah County) all adopted the LPA unanimously.

2. Legal Antecedents

Federal

- National Environmental Policy Act
- Clean Air Act, as amended [42 U.S. C. 7401 and 23 U.S.C. 109(j)], as amended]
- U.S. EPA transportation conformity rules (40 CFR, parts 51 and 93)
- Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act)
- FTA Small Starts Process

State

- Statewide Planning Goals
- State Transportation Planning Rule
- Oregon Transportation Plan
- Oregon Highway Plan
- Oregon Public Transportation Plan
- Oregon Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan
- Oregon Administrative Rules for Transportation Conformity, (OAR Chapter 340, Division 252)
- 2013 Oregon Clean Air Act State Implementation Plan (SIP), amended in December 2013
- 2014 Portland Area Carbon Monoxide Maintenance Plan with substitute transportation control measures
- 2007 Portland Area Ozone Maintenance Plan

Metro

- Ordinance No. 10-1241B (For the Purpose of Amending the 2004 Regional Transportation Plan to Comply with State Law; To Add the Regional Transportation Systems Management and Operations Action Plan, the Regional Freight Plan and the High Capacity Transit System Plan; To Amend the Regional Transportation Functional Plan and Add it to the Metro Code; To Amend the Regional Framework Plan; And to Amend the Urban Growth Management Functional Plan), adopted on June 10, 2010
- Resolution No. 10-4119, For the Purpose of Updating the Work Program for Corridor Refinement Planning through 2020 and Proceeding with the Next Two Corridor Refinement Plans in the 2010-2013 Regional Transportation Plan Cycle
- Resolution No. 12-4345, For the Purpose of Updating the Work Program for Corridor Refinement Planning and Designating the Powell-Division High Capacity Transit Corridor as the Next Regional Priority for Completion of Corridor Refinement and Commencement of Alternatives Analysis
- Resolution No. 12-4362, For the Purpose of Endorsing the East Metro Corridor Refinement Plan, adopted on August 9, 2012
- Resolution No. 13-4450, For the Purpose of Approving FY 2012-2013 Funding for Community Planning and Development Grants Funded with Construction Excise Tax
- Resolution No. 14-4496, For the Purpose of Creating and Appointing Members of a Steering Committee for the Powell-Division Transit and Development Project
- Resolution No. 15-4634, For the Purpose of Endorsing the Powell-Division Transit and Development Project Transit Action Plan
- Resolution No. 15-4640, For the Purpose of Approving Fiscal Year 2015-2016 Funding for Community Planning and Development Grants Funded with Construction Excise Tax
- Resolution No. 15-4664, For the Purpose of Amending the Fiscal Year 2015-2016 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) to Include 2016 STP Funds for use on the Powell/Division Corridor Plan

Local Jurisdictions

- The Gresham City Council unanimously adopted Resolution No. 3267, to accept the Powell-Division Transit & Development Project Locally Preferred Alternative, with an attached memorandum of understanding denoting that TriMet will seek to identify enhancements to the Gresham Transit Center and improve transit service to Mt. Hood Community College;
- The Portland City Council unanimously adopted Resolution No. 37254, to adopt the Locally Preferred Alternative for the Powell-Division Transit and Development Project and Conditions for Approval, including a request that Metro advance Powell Boulevard

for regional consideration within the High Capacity Transit planning and prioritizing process, and amend the Regional Transportation Plan to assert continued need for Powell Boulevard transit improvements;

- The TriMet Board of Directors unanimously adopted Resolution 16-12-70, to recommend confirmation of the Locally Preferred Alternative for the Powell-Division Transit and Development Project.
- The Multnomah County Board of Commissioners unanimously adopted Resolution No. 2016-131, to adopt the Steering Committee's Powell-Division Transit and Development Project Locally Preferred Alternative with an attached memorandum of understanding denoting that TriMet will seek to identify enhancements to the Gresham Transit Center and improve transit service to Mt. Hood Community College.

3. Anticipated Effects

Approval of this resolution would allow the Division Transit Project to move forward towards implementation and for the project partners to begin: 1) the environmental review process under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which may include preparation of an environmental impact statement, an environmental assessment or the most likely review, a Documented Categorical Exclusion (DCE); 2) completion of the details of the finance plan and final design; and 3) other actions to advance towards construction of the project.

With the timely completion of environmental review, the Concurrence (for a DCE) or Record of Decision (for an environmental assessment or environmental impact statements) and a Small Starts Grant Agreement with the Federal Transit Administration, construction could begin in late 2018 and operation could begin as early as 2021, initiating approximately 14 miles of new bus rapid transit service.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Adopt Resolution No. 17-4776 For the Purpose of Adopting the Powell-Division Transit and Development Project's Division Transit Project Locally Preferred Alternative.

LPA Staff Report Attachments

- Attachment 1: Powell-Division Transit and Development Project's Division Transit Project Locally Preferred Alternative
- Attachment 2: Local Actions of Support (2.a through 2.e)
- Attachment 3: Powell-Division Corridor Transportation and Development Strategy