

## SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR LIGHT RAIL UPDATE

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Department: Planning & Development  
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Presenters: Malu Wilkinson, Chris Ford  
Length: 20 minutes

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### **ISSUE STATEMENT**

TriMet's Steering Committee for the SW Corridor Light Rail project has been considering options to close a funding gap by reducing the cost of the project through design and scope adjustments, identifying new sources of funding, or both. On November 18, the steering committee will make a recommendation to the TriMet General Manager on these options. The focus of this work session is to review the options and seek Council direction.

### **ACTION REQUESTED**

Councilor Dirksen, Metro's representative on the steering committee, has requested Council guidance on the project partner staff recommendation to affirm the Southwest Corridor Light Rail Project as defined in the Preferred Alternative, closing the funding gap through a combination of scope reductions and increasing local funding as well as the proposed federal request.

### **POLICY QUESTION(S)**

Does Council support the position of maintaining four through travel auto lanes on SW Barbur Boulevard and terminating at Bridgeport Village, as identified in the Preferred Alternative? If so, does Council support the approach of finding additional local and federal funding for the SW Corridor project to fill the funding gap?

### **POLICY OPTIONS FOR COUNCIL TO CONSIDER**

1. Support the Preferred Alternative as adopted by Metro Council, with minor adjustments to mitigate adverse impacts and reduce costs. This is the status quo and is the option recommended by project partner staff, appears to have the most support from project partners, and would result in the most project benefits and likely the most competitive federal rating. This option would require additional funds to be committed to the project, potentially from the proposed transportation funding measure, the State of Oregon and perhaps other sources.
2. Retain four through auto lanes on Barbur Boulevard, but terminate short of Bridgeport Village. This option would reduce project benefits related to removing drivers from I-5, likely reduce the project's federal rating in the competitive funding process, and may result in lower levels of funding from Washington County perhaps necessitating identification of additional non-federal funds.
3. Reduce through auto lanes on a portion of Barbur Boulevard but retain the terminus at Bridgeport Village. This option would still improve person through-put compared to no project, but at a lower level than the Preferred Alternative, and would divert traffic to I-

5 and arterial roadways. This option has not been endorsed by the City of Portland, who will likely receive the roadway after a post-project jurisdictional transfer, and does not have official support from ODOT, who are required to ensure the safety of cars queued at interstate ramp terminals. Mayor Snider of Tigard has clearly stated his opposition to this option. This option may require supplemental environmental review, which could delay the project and thereby increase construction costs.

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS**

Staff recommends Option 1 above. Southwest Corridor project partner staff will be recommending that option to the steering committee. The viability of Option 1 has been enhanced by TriMet's ability to reduce project costs with design and engineering changes, thereby decreasing the funding gap.

### **STRATEGIC CONTEXT & FRAMING COUNCIL DISCUSSION**

In November 2018, after a seven year planning process, Metro Council approved a Preferred Alternative for the SW Corridor Light Rail project. The Preferred Alternative was recommended by Metro's project steering committee and endorsed by multiple local jurisdictions and agencies. These actions were based on the findings of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), public comment and staff input.

The Preferred Alternative was not a discrete alternative designed for and evaluated by the DEIS, but rather was selected from various options reviewed. A rough estimated cost for the Preferred Alternative was included in the DEIS and an initial funding plan evolved based on that rough estimate. Once the Preferred Alternative was approved, TriMet began advanced designs from roughly 3% completion toward 15% completion with detailed engineering and surveying work that identified different property and utility impacts. These efforts also contemplated adjustments to avoid, minimize and mitigate adverse effects identified in the DEIS and public comment as well as federal stormwater treatment requirements.

In July, the SW Corridor team received an updated project cost estimate that accounted for better understanding of project design and risks as well as a change to the annual project inflation rate, and increased project contingency based on updated federal requirements. As is typical for large infrastructure projects in early design, the assumed cost to deliver the project increased. The delta between the updated project cost and the assumed Preferred Alternative budget was approximately \$462 million dollars compared to the initial funding plan. With this new information, the project team developed a work plan to identify an inclusive menu of options to both reduce project cost and increase project funding. The work plan assumed that the Project Steering Committee would make a recommendation on the overall scope and funding of the project in order to inform both a possible 2020 funding measure and the content of the Final Environmental Impact Statement.

The project elements identified as possible scope refinements were analyzed based on technical feasibility and associated cost savings. Concurrently, project leadership engaged in conversations with potential project funders regarding the feasibility and appetite for

closing a portion of the gap by delivering additional funds from existing and/or new sources.

Given the scale of the funding gap, the scope refinements identified had to be large in scale. Options considered included reducing through auto lanes on Barbur Boulevard, realigning light rail to run adjacent to I-5 instead of in Barbur Boulevard, design alterations in the Tigard Triangle, running light rail on a single track in key locations, different train equipment and reducing the length of the project. Ultimately further analysis narrowed the options with the most cost savings to reducing auto lanes on a portion of Barbur Boulevard and terminating the project north of Bridgeport Village at Upper Boones Ferry or Hall Boulevard.

In the meantime, TriMet has been able to identify \$55 million in property impact reductions and \$74 million in design refinements and the City of Portland has verbally committed to allowing the Project access to the \$65 million in funding from ODOT which was identified in the Jurisdictional Transfer agreement for Barbur Boulevard. TriMet has also updated its initial funding plan to pursue an additional \$50 million from the federal New Starts program, and the Metro staff preliminary recommendation includes \$975 million from the regional funding measure toward the project. Taken together, these adjustments have reduced the funding gap to approximately \$83 million compared to the initial funding plan.

The question remains for the project steering committee whether to undertake one of the major scope reductions (narrowing Barbur or terminating short of Bridgeport Village) or to continue to work to identify additional sources of funding.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

- Is legislation required for Council action? ☐ Yes ☒ No
- If yes, is draft legislation attached? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- What other materials are you presenting today?