

**Northeast Coalition of Neighborhoods
Land Use and Transportation Committee
Wednesday, March 27th, 2013, 7:00pm
Northeast Coalition of Neighborhoods Office, 4815 NE 7th Ave., Portland, OR**

MINUTES

Present

George Bruender, Concordia/Co-chair
David Sweet, Sabin/Co-chair
Ed Abrahamson, Irvington, At-Large member
Debbie Bischoff, Bureau of Planning and Sustainability
Diane Goodwin, Trimet
Anjala Ehelebe, Woodlawn
Carol Gossett, Sullivan's Gulch
Jim Brown, Alameda
Garlynn Woodsong, Concordia
Benjamin Adrian, NECN staff

Introductions

Additions to agenda

Garlynn would like to add a question of highway funding to the agenda.

Motion to approve the February Minutes as printed. Approved unanimously.

Trimet Budget, Diane Goodwin, Trimet

Diane introduces herself and explains what she is here to talk about. Trimet's budget has been in the media the last few years as service reductions and fare increases have caused significant impacts. Diane recognizes these as a bus rider herself.

Trimet is largely funded by a payroll tax, which during the recession took a significant impact. The expenses outpaced the revenue. Trimet has addresses the budget in various ways, but service is the biggest sector of Trimet, so service levels were impacted.

Union employees comprise nearly 80 percent of Trimet's workforce. Healthcare costs are higher for Trimet than for other public sector employees. For context, current healthcare benefits were agreed upon in 1994. Benefit increases were negotiated in lieu of pay raises. The benefits last for the beneficiary's lifetime. The healthcare premiums continue to rise and Trimet continues to feel the crunch in the budget. The current trends suggest major service cuts by 2015 if costs are not addressed.

This financial picture helps Trimet point out the need for additional revenue. For instance, by 2020, 30% of Trimet's service could be cut based on current high health care costs.

Would service cuts impact Trimet's ability to qualify for Federal funding for projects? Possibly, but no projects are proposed right now.

Are you looking at changing the healthcare plan for new Trimet employees? A proposal of this nature has been on the table for several months.

Clarification- Trimet pays healthcare for employees who retire, for the rest of their life? Yes, the cost reduces once a person turns 65 and enrolls in Medicare. Even then, Trimet maintains the same level of benefits and so consequently, still incurs a cost in these cases.

Who are the nonunion employees? 420 nonunion employees now, in fields such as IT, insurance, managers, answering phones and administration. Union employees are drivers, repairmen, with roughly 2,000 employees in total.

Trimet is central to our region's urban planning, especially in regards to climate change, so is Trimet considering other alternatives to healthcare cost reduction to build a robust transit system? Yes, Trimet is advocating the Legislature in Salem.

In 2007, transit employees joined emergency responders in a process known as 'binding arbitration,' which prohibits the union from striking. Trimet has asked the Legislature to place transit workers back in the traditional collective bargaining framework.

Public employees moving to one system, Governor has suggested future healthcare reform to do this. One other idea is that the legislature could ask that Trimet and union to come to a resolution, however not clear how this would happen.

Is that sufficient? Is there a better strategy to move transit forward? Diane responds that the Legislature is hesitant to include Trimet in funding proposals because of the higher than normal healthcare costs.

Does Trimet have a long-term plan to move away from fossil fuels? Working on it, exploring natural gas for buses.

Is there an east side master planning effort for transit? Trimet finished up a west side planning and the east side will be coming.

Are you looking at station areas for increased density? That's something the City is looking at with the Comprehensive Plan. Debbie speaks up that yes; BPS is looking at this and has some challenges around this issue.

Capitalizing on the land you have, Carol suggests. Debbie mentions the Hollywood Transit Center as a possibility to look at private development to leverage.

Infill Development discussion, George

George introduces this by asking the committee to think about infill development happening in your neighborhood. What obstacles are you experiencing? Do you see any areas for opportunities?

George mentions skinny houses- a few years back, Concordia had many skinny houses being built. In many cases, the lot has a historic lot of record, which means it doesn't require a rezone.

Spot zoning to address problem sites? This is generally not what the Comprehensive Plan Update is supposed to be looking at.

Comprehensive Plan designation versus zoning designation – these can be split. Any property owner can ask for a rezoning in these instances. If BPS find this meets the requirements, it is relatively easy to do.

An issue in Alameda- a lot of was split, zoned R5 but on a corner. Not quite 50 feet wide, but since it was a corner, zoning code allows for duplex to be built. Illustrates questions of neighborhood character and development patterns.

Solar access? Solar panels and/or light for vegetable growing.

Sabin, we've been seeing infill houses bigger than what is on the street. Renaissance Homes, the developer who came to LUTC a few months ago, is typical of this trend. Building homes to the maximum allowable size, with minimal setbacks. These homes sell for relatively high amounts. Modest or homes in poor shape can easily be purchased for less than \$250,000, torn down and rebuilt, possibly with two homes. Another scenario is developers will add an extra story on an existing house.

David says this is what is happening, and seems to come with the territory of having a desirable neighborhood located here.

Comprehensive map designation to increase density from R5 to R2.5? Is this desired?

Debbie pulls out a large map of NECN with color-coded zoning. Debbie points out the historic lots of record. A few specific areas are pointed out.

Debbie also talks about nonconforming uses, which could be addressed in this process.

Woodlawn – townhouses going in where commercial development could occur. This seems to cut off future potential for commercial growth. Debbie explains how this can significantly impact the corridor or main street area that a neighborhood is trying to improve.

Has the City considered form-based zoning? The idea being to address this type of issue, to allow for residential use, but to have a building form that could accommodate future change of use as the area changed.

Debbie shows us another map, from Multnomah County, showing Land Uses, based on permits so it is not completely accurate. However, she says that BPS doesn't have more accurate data; the City doesn't have an inventory of what exists in terms of use.

Debbie explains the Metro grant BPS is currently seeking, to better plan commercial corridors. Corridors around our coalition area may not be equal and need context specific planning and regulations. The

Residential Compatibility PEG is asking many of these questions right now. The grant, if received, could be used as soon as July 1st, which could be integrated with the Comprehensive Plan Update.

Motion to draft a letter in support of the Metro CET grant for City of Portland mixed use zoning project. Carol seconds.

Carol asks Debbie what public participation would exist to assist with this implementation, like a PEG? Yes, it will be going beyond the PEGs but would incorporate community engagement. For instance, around N Williams, where we have heard residents speak up on this issue, would need public involvement. This planning effort would include code implementation.

George asks about how projects get attention by BPS Planning staff, and how community concerns are taken into account for BPS resources to be applied. Debbie says there are many avenues for this to happen.

Motion on Metro CET grant support approved unanimously. No abstentions.

Benjamin will draft a brief letter for Executive Committee. Mention EXd zoning situation along Williams. And other general corridor concerns.

Comprehensive Plan Update, Debbie

Debbie highlights a few next steps for the Comprehensive Plan Update. Transportation System Plan, Urban Design Framework, district level Urban Design. Currently, BPS is scheduling district-wide work sessions to bring together neighborhood Land Use reps, business district reps, other institutions and other key stakeholders, for early consultation.

First session will be getting people up to speed on the Comp Plan. Exploring concepts such as neighborhood centers and how that applies to our area. Are Mississippi Ave., N Williams and MLK separate corridors or is it all bundled together as one?

Debbie mentions the Our 42nd Ave. project as a particular site where there has been a significant amount of public involvement already done, which could lead to more attention in the Comp plan update.

Tentatively scheduled for June 1st and June 15th, location TBD. These events will be limited in attendance, so we are seeking out representative stakeholders to invite. There will be additional opportunities in the future, this session is an early consultation.

Industrial lands? Is there a constraint upon available lands for industrial land use in our projected growth? Yes, studies have been done. One aspect is constraints on development potential for existing industrially zoned lands.

OLCC exterior area regulations, David

OLCC is proposing rules for exterior areas. Proposal indicates amplified noise until 10pm, alcohol service until 11pm on weekdays, and 1am on weekends. David distributes a letter he drafted on the topic and explains that with the indoor smoking prohibition, there is a demand for patrons to be outdoors while at a bar. This creates problems with neighbors.

Do these rules apply everywhere? Is there an entertainment zone that would allow more late night service? The rules apply to anywhere residential use is allowed, which in Portland is in all zones except heavy industrial. Possible future entertainment zone could impact that.

Garlynn asks about exceptions to the rule? Are there businesses that would be impacted unduly? For instance, the Kennedy School patio? Possibly, but the point remains that this is a good rule for the OLCC to be making.

Motion to endorse the letter. Seconded by Anjala.

In Favor: six. None against. **Motion approved.**

PBOT BAC recommendation to meet year round, David.

This suggestion came up at the NECN Board meeting and has already been approved there. David briefly conveys that discussion and says the letter has been sent.

Neighborhood Updates

Sullivan's Gulch Design Charrette is April 27th. Portland historian, Dr. Carl Abbott will discuss the history of the area. PBOT will talk about infrastructure. The charrette will then go to a mapping exercise. Will be at Grace Church, NE 17th and Weidler. From twelve noon to three. Will also have a panel discussion of the various neighborhoods and Lloyd District, NNEBA will also be there.

Garlynn - HJ 9 public hearing on Monday. HJ 9 is a bill to allow funds from state highway system to be used on multi-modal projects. This would allow for an increase in funds for projects in neighborhoods, rather than highways.

This bill would put it to the voters, as it requires a constitutional amendment. It is currently prohibited by the Oregon constitution.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45pm.