

Meeting Minutes

Project: Outer Powell Transportation Safety Project (OPTSP)

Subject: Decision Committee Meeting #1

Date: Thursday, December 11, 2014

Location: Human Solutions Community Room, 12350 SE Powell Blvd., Portland, OR

Meeting started at 10:00 a.m.

1. The meeting began with introductions.

- Joan Brown-Kline, the meeting facilitator, asked Decision Committee members to state their name, title and affiliation, and one thing they would like to see changed along Outer Powell Blvd.
 - Rian Windsheimer, ODOT Region 1 Manager – Safety for all modes of transportation, and to serve both transportation safety functions and the needs of the community.
 - Neil McFarlane, TriMet General Manager – TriMet riders to have safe rides.
 - Phil Ditzler, FHWA Division Administrator – See community needs being served, and safety for pedestrians.
 - Representative Jessica Vega Pederson, Oregon Legislature – Would like to see cyclists in bike lanes and pedestrians on sidewalks.
 - Commissioner Steve Novick, City of Portland – Improved safety for all modes of transportation.
 - Representative Shemia Fagan, Oregon Legislature – First priority was to get funding to begin planning for a safer Powell Blvd. She would like to now change how the community that lives along Powell Blvd. feels about Powell Blvd.
 - Councilor Shirley Craddick, Metro – Safer place for people to move about.
- Public and additional attendees introduced themselves:
 - Ana Valderrama, Policy Advisor for Representative Vega Pederson – Bus improvements.
 - Andrea Valderrama – Outreach and Policy Advisor for Commissioner Novick's office – Safety improvements, specifically at SE 122nd Ave.
 - Jeff Owen, TriMet – Placemaking along the corridor.
 - Jean DeMaster, Human Solutions – No more deaths on Powell Blvd., and sidewalks.
 - April Bertelsen, PBOT – Community's vision for Outer Powell realized; better safety and more sidewalks.
 - Matt Freitag, ODOT Project Manager – Improvements for the community.
- Project Team introduced themselves:
 - Mike Mason, ODOT Project Manager
 - Shelli Romero, ODOT Strategic Advisor on this project
 - Andy Johnson, HDR Inc. Consultant Project Manager
 - Cassie Davis, HDR Consultant Project Assistant

2. Project Purpose and History (ODOT Project Manager Mike Mason led this agenda item).

- This project follows the 2013 Outer Powell Boulevard Conceptual Design Plan, a City of Portland-led project that ODOT participated in. The current project will refine the Outer Powell Conceptual Design Plan in order to arrive at a preferred design alternative for implementation. The project will then move into an Environmental Assessment under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).
- The focus of this planning effort is to improve safety along Powell Blvd. from SE 99th Ave. to the Portland/Gresham limits, approximately SE 174th Ave.
- There has been a significant number of pedestrian crashes, including fatalities and bike crashes along the corridor; this project seeks to reduce the number and severity of these collisions.
- There were 6.34 crashes per million vehicle miles on Powell vs 2.37 crashes per million elsewhere in the state during recent three-year period.
- ODOT's Safety Priority Index System (SPIS, which ranks locations by the number and severity of crashes) rated Powell Boulevard at 122nd Avenue as the number one worst intersection in the state of Oregon for severity and number of crashes in 2012.
- There have been two pedestrian fatalities since 2013.
- Most of the corridor does not have sidewalks.
- Poor illumination and insufficient number of crossings along the corridor.
- The corridor currently maintains one lane in each direction causing a lot of rear end collisions due to lack of turning lanes.
- In general, the Outer Powell concept design calls for one lane in each direction, a center turn lane for most of the corridor, sidewalks along both sides of the street, and a bike lane going both directions.
 - Representative Shemia Fagan asked for clarification on the capacity of the concept design.
 - Mike Mason clarified that while there will be increased capacity for turn lanes, bike lanes and sidewalks; the project intends to maintain one vehicle lane in each direction.
- Councilor Shirley Craddick asked about emission analysis and having access to information about green house gases.
 - Project team confirmed there will be environmental impacts studied with regard to emissions.
 - Councilor Craddick noted she would like to see attention given to green house emissions in the analysis and report.
- Environmental Assessment (EA) will be an important step performed before the final design.
- This project has a lot of impacts especially related to widening. The Environmental Assessment will include gathering existing conditions for a baseline (i.e., noise, stormwater, trees, etc.). This project will assess and document the impacts to the existing conditions. Following the Environmental Assessment the package will be presented to FHWA for them to assess if there are any 'significant impacts'.

- Rian Windsheimer stated he sees the impacts more/less as trade-offs, because there will indeed be impacts to peoples' properties, parking, etc., but to keep in mind what the impacts will be a trade-off for: improved safety.
 - Councilor Craddick asked what the difference is between an 'impact' and a 'significant impact'.
 - Andy Johnson, Consultant Project Manager, gave the example of significant public opposition to the project being considered a 'significant impact'. The project team will make efforts to mitigate what might be considered significant impacts during the NEPA work.
 - Part of the Environmental Assessment includes making sure team has done everything they can to mitigate the impacts.
 - Representative Jessica Vega Pederson asked about the extent of right-of-way and dedication being taken.
 - Mike Mason clarified that team is looking to limit the project footprint to 76 feet.
 - April Bertelsen with PBOT, also part the project team that derived the 2013 Outer Powell Conceptual Design Plan, noted that the previous phase of the project gathered a conceptual level of information and looked to minimize impacts to the existing properties within the Conceptual Design Plan.
3. Project Committees and Decision Making (Mike Mason led this agenda item).
- Decision Committee will be ultimately making the decisions on the project, i.e. design issues, prioritizing a section with regard to funding, etc.
 - The Community Advisory Group (CAG) is made up various community group representatives including two school districts, four neighborhood associations, business and property owners, the elderly community, people with disabilities, and faith-based community, among others. This group will be providing recommendations to the Decision Committee on behalf of the Outer Powell community.
 - Agency Working Group (AWG) is made up individuals representing various local agencies including Portland Bureau of Transportation, Bureau of Environmental Services, Water Bureau, Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, FHWA, City of Gresham, TriMet and Metro. This group will be reviewing the design refinement work and making sure it is accommodating the different agency standards. This group will also be helping provide information and suggestions regarding design and implementation to their Decision Committee counterparts and the Community Advisory Group.
4. Project Public Outreach Update (HDR Project Manager Andy Johnson led this agenda item).
- Public Outreach is an important component of this project and the Project Team has already been engaging the community to keep them informed and get them involved. Some of the community outreach efforts conducted so far include the following:
 - Community Walks – The project team has already conducted several community site walks and plans to conduct two more. Various harder-to-reach audiences are being engaged for these walks including Spanish-speaking, Vietnamese-speaking, Chinese-speaking, Russian-speaking, elders and low income. For the Community Site Walks a translator and a community liaison help the Project Team connect with the diverse community of Powell Blvd. to understand and document their needs.

- First project Open House was held at Centennial High School on Dec. 9th, 2014. The Open House included activities such as interactive roll maps, online comment submission station, aerial video of the corridor along with information boards, video testimonial station, handouts and comment forms.
- Focus Groups – Joan Brown-Kline has conducted several focus groups at various locations including Church of Korean Martyrs, St. Timothy Lutheran Church, Powell Plaza Retirement Community, Assembly of God Worship Center and the Africa House, among others.

5. Project Schedule (Andy Johnson led this agenda item).

- The 18-month schedule includes planning, design refinement and Environmental Assessment phases.
- Next Decision Committee meeting will be to discuss and decide upon a preferred design option for refinement.
- The near term schedule includes public involvement and transportation planning.
- In the beginning of 2015 a Design Charrette will be conducted. This will include members of the community and the Project Team coming together to discuss elements of the urban design.
- Project Team was asked to what extent they are helping the community understand the impacts.
 - Conversations regarding the impacts have not been highlighted at this time. However, discussions with the individuals directly impacted by this project will be engaged moving forward.
- Commissioner Steve Novick noted the concern for making improvements that may intrinsically cause gentrification, and suggested doing our best to avoid this.

6. Key Project Issues (Andy Johnson led this agenda item).

- Assessing Ed Benedict Park will have some issues as it relates to Section 4f and accommodating the right trade-offs with respect to business owners and travelers.
- Significant lack of bike lanes and sidewalks causing people to walk and ride bikes in undesirable and unsafe areas.
- Utility impacts – non-compensable in the existing right-of-way, however, that does not mean it is not possible.
- Shelli Romero with ODOT noted some utility coordination with PG&E and ODOT already being established.
- There are examples of illegal parking at SE 136th Ave. and Powell Blvd. This kind of parking is intended to go away, thus finding ways to address eliminated parking areas with respect to business and property owners will be a concern.
- Weighing the trade-offs amongst access to businesses and properties, parking, turning lanes, bus stops, cross walks, etc.
- Water treatment will be considered.

- Neil McFarlane noted the idea of there being some kind of climate and transportation strategy. A doctor from Kaiser Permanente recently spoke to TriMet about designing transportation facilities that support healthier communities. How do we design our transportation facilities to make it easy to make the healthier choice – are we challenging ourselves beyond that, considering the community and optimizing the various modes of transportation? Neil McFarlane encouraged the Decision Committee to consider how this street could be an example for other roads with regards to health and successful modes of transportation.
 - Councilor Shirley Craddick asked Commissioner Steve Novick if the City has started looking into the potential impacts to gentrification with this project and study area.
 - Commissioner Novick responded that he is unaware of any specific efforts or research being conducted for this project at this point in time. However, there is a Comprehensive Land Use Plan being put together that is indeed asking the questions about Powell.
 - April Bertelsen with PBOT also stated she is unaware of a conversation regarding gentrification around Outer Powell, although she knows there is for the Powell-Division BRT project.
 - Andy Johnson noted public comment suggesting sidewalks being a potential link to improving areas with minimal gentrification.
 - Commissioner Novick questioned whether it was defensible to improve transportation, including sidewalks, without pushing people away.
7. Joan Brown-Kline opened the meeting to public comment.
- No public comments were made.
 - Commissioner Steve Novick stated it may be good to have at least one evening meeting in order to allow for more public participation and comment.
8. Project Collaboration – Committee Members (Andy Johnson led this agenda item).
- Decision Committee is encouraged to engage their Agency Working Group representative on design elements of the project.
 - Neil McFarlane noted there is a lot going on in East Portland right now that needs more coordination. East Portland Action Plan focusing on the future of the transit system, and identifying the important locations for transit connections and amenities for people to move or wait throughout the area. Would like to make sure a lot goes into aligning these objectives.
 - Shelli Romero thanked TriMet and City of Portland for the passes that were provided to the community involvement groups.
9. Joan Brown-Kline asked the Decision Committee and the Project Team to read through the Decision Committee Charter together. The Charter addresses the following: committee purpose, committee outcomes, membership selection, facilitation, duration and number/frequency of meetings, committee decision making, ground rules, roles and responsibilities, process, and communication protocol.
- Under the Committee Purpose section of the charter Councilor Shirley Craddick suggested keeping the Gresham community engaged and represented within the project.



- Mike Mason emphasized there will be a Community Advisory Group chair member serving on the Decision Committee. Selection of the Community Advisory Group chair is currently in review.
- Decision Committee had no changes to the charter at this time.

10. Next Meeting and Closing Remarks.

- Project Team asked what they could do better in terms of materials moving forward.
 - Committee was pleased with the materials.
 - Receiving materials electronically ahead of time is ideal.
- Next meeting will be in March 2015
 - Note: Avoid second Thursdays of the month.
 - Representative Shemia Fagan asked about the opportunity to Skype or Video Conference in for future meetings on this project.
 - Action: Project Team to look into possibility of doing video conferencing for this meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.