

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, June 4, 2024

5:00 p.m.

City Hall

Aspen Room

415 W. 6th Street

Vancouver, WA

Commissioners Present:

Jeananne Edwards, Devon Fender, Zack Gatton, Cory Grandstaff, Thinkh Phan, Mario Raia, Eduardo Ramos, Derya Ruggles, Sara Schmit, Ken Williams

Commissioners Absent:

None

Staff Present: Rebecca Kennedy, staff liaison; Julie Nischik, staff liaison; Becky Rude, staff attorney

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 pm by Chair Ramos.

Commissioner Williams requested additional context to add to the May meeting minutes regarding mobility lanes during the discussion of the 112th Ave. Safety and Mobility Project workshop.

Motion by Commissioner Grandstaff, second by Commissioner Phan, and carried unanimously to approve the May minutes as amended. Commissioners Gatton and Ramos abstained from the vote.

Review Letter of Support: NE 18th Street/East Powerline Regional Trail Project Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program
Emily Benoit, Senior Transportation Planner, Community Development

Staff presented the draft letter.

Commission discussion and staff responses:

- How much funding is the City applying for and is that amount sufficient for the work? Staff responded the maximum request is

Members

Eduardo Ramos
Chair

Jeananne Edwards
Vice Chair

Devon Fender
Zack Gatton
Cory Grandstaff
Thinkh Phan
Mario Raia
Derya Ruggles
Sara Schmit
Ken Williams

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\$2 million, and the application will be for the maximum amount. This application is only for planning work on this project, and the grant amount should be sufficient for the scope of this work. There will be opportunities later to apply for construction grants.

Motion by Commissioner Williams, second by Commissioner Raia, and carried unanimously to adopt the letter of support as drafted.

St. John/St. James Safety and Mobility Project

Emily Benoit, Senior Transportation Planner, Brett Setterfield, Associate Transportation Planner, Community Development; Derek Abe, Alta Planning and Design, Consultant Project Manager

Staff presented an overview of the project timeline, existing conditions on the corridor including collision history, sidewalk conditions, mobility lanes and bicycle level of traffic stress, transit service and ridership, roadway conditions, traffic volume and speeds, and current and future level of service. The presentation continued with opportunities and constraints on the corridor.

Commission discussion and staff responses:

- Consideration of future development on the corridor. Staff responded they use the traffic demand model from the Regional Transportation Council that considers future land uses based on zoning.
- Crash rate on the corridor compared to the citywide crash rate. Staff did not have that data available but would provide that information at a future workshop. This corridor and project was identified and prioritized by Council.
- Which segment of the corridor will have the highest density of development? Staff responded this area is identified as a focus area for accommodating growth in the Comprehensive Plan and there will likely be new development along the entire corridor over the next twenty years.
- Has this area been identified as an area for affordable housing? Staff responded that affordable housing is not determined on a geographic basis. The City specifies the types of development allowed on a parcel, such as multifamily, and the affordability of housing is determined by the developer.
- Planning for trees on the corridor. Staff responded trees are a traffic calming measure that will be considered for this corridor.
- Is there a map of services, including treatment centers, gyms, and their proximity to transit? Staff responded there is an essential places map that shows transit, parks, grocery stores, faith communities, and other services as mentioned. It likely needs to be updated but can be provided.
- How do the existing conditions and the presence of pedestrians and bicycles on corridors impact decisions about planning? Staff responded that the existing conditions analysis looks at all types of users of the corridor - what is happening today given the existing facilities, and what could happen in the future if changes were made. Knowing the user concentration is helpful in analyzing the corridor, as the type of facility directly impacts who is using it and when, and improving the facility can change user habits. Critically, staff look at the modal network designation and the role the facility is intended to play in the overall system, and design the facility based on intended future network.
- Parking utilization, specifically on sections three and four. Staff responded that a parking utilization study was done as part of the existing conditions analysis. There is a lot of parking on the corridor that is primarily serving commercial uses and is generally underutilized throughout the day. The appendix of the existing conditions report has details on parking utilization. The highest volume is in segments three and four, specifically between 45th and 49th on St. John's Road. There is also higher volume of parking on St. James near the Ellen Davis Trailhead. There is also freight parking on the corridor due to lack of overnight facilities for long haul freight drivers.

- Coordination with C-TRAN on long term goals for community routes and school bus routes. Staff will continue to coordinate with C-TRAN on this corridor. Currently they are working with C-TRAN to provide better connections to existing stops and any potential changes to stops along the corridor.

The presentation concluded with an overview of community engagement activities and next steps for the project.

Community Forum

Alyssa Wheeler was present to provide comments on the St. Johns/St. James project. She recently biked the corridor and felt unsafe and uncomfortable with the lack of separation from vehicles. She supported protected bike lanes on the corridor to further the City's goals related to equity and climate.

Jonathan Wheeler was present to provide comments on the St. Johns / St. James project. He takes his bike on the bus along this commute route due to the lack of safe biking facilities on the corridor. He supported prioritizing safety in the design for the project. He also commented on the use of level of service as a metric for assessing projects, noting that it does not consider safety for all users, specifically pedestrians and bicyclists. He supported metrics such as safety and reduction of vehicle miles traveled to align with the goals of safety, sustainability, and inclusivity.

Jason Cromer was present to comment on cities that have increased mode shift to bicyclists by prioritizing protected small mobility lanes and connected networks. He supported separated bike lanes on St. Johns and St. James as well as on Upper Main Street.

Ryan Ward was present to support protected bike lanes on St. Johns and St. James, specifically as a connection point to the Burnt Bridge Creek trail. On Upper Main Street, he supported removal of parking on 39th to have safe sidewalks for pedestrians.

Israel Lopez commented on the lack of drainage on St. Johns and St. James and utilizing the space to increase safety for pedestrians and bicyclists. He also commented on the need for safe pedestrian crossing on Fort Vancouver between McLoughlin and Mill Plain.

Upper Main Street Safety and Mobility Project

Maggie Derk, Senior Transportation Planner, Community Development; Derek Abe, Alta Planning and Design, Consultant Project Manager

Staff presented an overview of engagement activities and feedback received. The presentation covered design concepts for new marked crossings and median islands along the corridor. Staff described the design concepts for segment 1 from Fourth Plain Boulevard to 29th Street.

Commission discussion and staff responses:

- With median islands, does the pedestrian cross the entire street or one segment at a time? Staff responded typically these crossings are designed to be able to cross the entire street and the median provides a refuge for pedestrians if vehicles do not stop.
- Width of the sidewalk in the median to accommodate bikes with trailers or wide cargo and strollers. Staff responded the proposed medians are about 10 feet wide on this corridor and would have a similar depth of 10 feet to fit people crossing in both directions at the same time.
- Why are medians being considered for this project specifically? Staff responded the project corridor is identified in the Transportation System Plan as part of the primary pedestrian network. With that designation, the project prioritizes enhanced safety at crossings and slow traffic speeds.

Median islands are a common safety feature and exist throughout Vancouver today. In this case, the median islands are located where a second travel lane was, helping to narrow crossing distance and slow vehicles.

- Will there be lights or some other indication to vehicles at the median island crossings to watch for pedestrians? Staff responded there is a rapid flashing beacon on the north side of the intersection at 29th street. Staff can research if it's possible to add a push button on the south side of that intersection as well.
- Sidewalk connection on the east side of Main Street where Broadway meets it. Staff responded there was discussion of adding a sidewalk in that area, but the engineering team identified some potential issues with this. There is a proposed crossing at 28th Street to improve the pedestrian connections around that area. C-TRAN is also looking at some improvements to the area and staff are working with them to coordinate those plans.

The presentation continued with the design concepts for segments 2 and 3 from 29th to 33rd and 33rd to 39th.

Commission discussion and staff responses:

- The reduction in a travel lane in this section makes it worse for people who choose to continue biking on Main Street, because they will share a single vehicle lane, whereas today they can take the outer of two travel lanes. Staff understood that perspective and also noted that one of the goals of the project is to slow overall vehicle speeds on the corridor to make safer conditions for all roadway users. However, this portion of Main Street is on the City's pedestrian priority modal network and pedestrian improvements are prioritized. The parallel bike and small mobility network streets are F and Columbia, where staff hope that most cyclists would use for north-south travel. Staff agreed that signage directing cyclists to the safer and preferred small mobility network on those streets will be important.
- Reasoning for only two marked crossings at the intersections with 31st and 32nd Streets. Staff responded they are filling some gaps by adding new marked crossing where currently spacing doesn't meet the City's Pedestrian Crossing Policy, but also noted that marked crossings on all legs of intersections can sometimes reduce compliance by vehicle drivers, Adding marked crossings at every intersection leg isn't the ideal solution to increase safety for pedestrians so the City's approach is to add them strategically and in alignment with the Pedestrian Crossing Policy.
- Why are there left turn lanes at 31st and 32nd? Staff responded that with a single northbound lane, left turn lanes are used to reduce pressure on the driver to take a risky turn and "shoot the gap" as they don't have a lot of cars backing up behind them in a travel lane. The use of the left turn lanes at some of these intersections aren't necessarily due to the amount of vehicles turning, but to keep the single travel lane moving for others to continue through the intersection without having to wait for a vehicle to turn left. This is especially important to keep The Vine moving in a reliable travel time.
- Timeline for the sidewalk widening project. Staff responded there is not a timeline for that project, but it won't be part of the pavement work. Due to the high costs of building sidewalks and moving curbs, the City will likely seek grant funding for the project. Sidewalks are also often rebuilt when a lot is redeveloped, so it's beneficial to identify them in a Plan for future implementation.

The presentation continued with the design concepts for segment 4 from 39th to 45th Street.

Commission discussion and staff responses:

- Rationale for options A and B. Staff responded there are cost implications between the two options. Option B has more signal upgrades but extends the southbound mobility lane to 39th, eliminating

the need for people traveling southbound to westbound on bikes or small mobility devices to travel out of direction. The southbound left turn lane is narrower than usual, at 9 feet instead of 10 feet.

- Support for option B on this segment.
- Extending the two-way multi-use path onto 40th Street. Staff responded they considered that option, but there were less conflicts with buffered bike lanes in both directions due to a driveway on 40th Street.
- Adding green 'through bike' striping to indicate where bikes will be in the intersection. Staff responded they would need to review where and when green striping is added but will consider that for this segment.
- Flashing lights at 39th Street? Staff responded the plan is to add a rapid flashing beacon at the F Street crossing of the intersection.

The presentation continued with the design concepts for segment 5 from 45th Street to the City limits.

Commission discussion and staff responses:

- Concern for speed of bikes going southbound on the multi-use path. Staff agreed and suggested adding signage for awareness.
- Request for an aerial rendering of this segment.

The presentation concluded with next steps in the project and planned public hearing at the July meeting of the TMC.

Staff Communication

Rebecca Kennedy notified the Commission that Soroush Mohandessi has left the Commission due to personal schedule conflicts. The position will be posted to fill soon.

Commission Communication

Commissioner Schmit commented on allowances for traffic signal preemption by all emergency vehicles. In Vancouver, emergency vehicles can preempt the light cycle even when not in an emergency and requested more data on this and its impacts to the network.

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 pm.

Eduardo Ramos, Chair