

MINUTES

Eugene City Council
McNutt Room—Eugene City Hall
777 Pearl Street—Eugene, Oregon

October 27, 2010
Noon

COUNCILORS PRESENT: Mike Clark, Betty Taylor, Jennifer Solomon, George Poling, Chris Pryor, Andrea Ortiz, Alan Zelenka, George Brown.

Her Honor Mayor Kitty Piercy called the October 27, 2010, work session of the Eugene City Council to order.

A. WORK SESSION: Update on Transportation System Plan and Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan

The council was joined by Transportation Planners Kurt Yeiter and David Roth. Public Works Kurt Corey, City Engineer Mark Schoening, and Transportation Division Manager Rob Inerfeld were also present for the item. Mr. Yeiter provided the council with an update on the Transportation System Plan (TSP), the City's long-range comprehensive transportation planning effort, highlighting that the plan would be a Eugene-only plan with co-adoption by Lane County; the plan would have local policies and project lists; and the plan would address automotive mobility and safety, pedestrian and bicycle needs, public transit, freight movement, passenger and freight rail, and air transportation.

Mr. Yeiter suggested that TransPlan could be considered a basis for the City's TSP and many of its policies had placed the City on good footing for the future, but there were emerging issues the plan did not address. Those issues included greenhouse gases and climate change, the availability and pricing of fuels, higher densities along transit corridors, and community acceptance of increased congestion along those corridors.

Mr. Yeiter noted that several related plans and projects were in the process of being updated or created and anticipated that those planning efforts would also inform the TSP. He reviewed the timeline for the two planned phases of the TSP.

Mr. Roth reported on the status of the update to the City's Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, first noting the formation of a project advisory committee and a technical advisory committee. He reviewed the goal of the planning process, which was to increase mode share for walking and bicycling. That required expansion of the pedestrian bicycle network, increased mode safety, increased mode accessibility, and fostering a community culture that supported those modes.

Mr. Roth reviewed the five phases of the project. He described the scope of planned public outreach efforts. He invited questions.

Mayor Piercy said the planning period was a huge challenge as well as an opportunity to bring many community planning efforts together. She emphasized the need for an iterative conversation with the public so it understood what was happening and had the ability to participate. She expressed appreciation to the community members who had been involved with the planning processes to date.

Mayor Piercy reported that some members of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee were concerned both about their ability to provide advice to the City and their ability to bring other ideas to the table. She hoped Mr. Roth worked with that group to get both its advice and its ideas out.

Mr. Clark noted the draft alternatives and evaluation memorandum was released just as the council completed making the major decisions related to the Envision Eugene process. He said it seemed like the process was a sequential one rather than a parallel one and asked if that was intentional. Mr. Yeiter said the process was intended to be iterative. He said Transportation staff had been providing information to the Envision Eugene process and the Planning staff was learning that those areas with the most commercial activity and residential development were also those areas with the most congestion. The question would be whether to put more residents in those areas and what tradeoffs might be necessary for that to occur.

Mr. Clark was concerned that the City would use transportation planning to limit itself in accomplishing what was put forward in the Envision Eugene process. He did not expect a look at where congestion would be, but rather a plan for the capacity needed to accomplish the objectives of the Envision Eugene process. He confirmed with Mr. Yeiter that the process of developing evaluation criteria had just begun.

Mr. Clark noted that the City frequently used vehicle miles traveled (VMT) as a measure, but Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) staff had recently suggested that VMT was at best a crude instrument in regard to answering environmental questions. He said ODOT had indicated it would develop a new tool to accomplish that goal, and asked if the City would produce its own tool or wait for ODOT to give it one. Mr. Yeiter recalled that Eugene was the first jurisdiction in Oregon to propose an alternative mobility standard to the VMT standard and staff had learned a lot from that. He did not know if Eugene would meet the VMT standard under the old plan, saying it was possible it might under the new plan, or Eugene could propose a new or modified set of alternative mobility standards. The VMT standard continued to be a requirement mandated by the State Transportation Planning Rule (TPR). Mr. Yeiter did not think ODOT's new standard would be in place when the City adopted its TSP.

Mr. Brown determined from Mr. Yeiter that the final existing conditions memorandum did not yet exist. Mr. Yeiter indicated that staff had drafted a memorandum that lacked a traffic analysis; that traffic analysis was now in draft form and being reviewed by the City's engineers. It would be available soon and would be online. Mr. Brown requested a copy of the ODOT traffic count of 50 intersections. Mr. Yeiter said that would be part of the existing conditions memorandum. He would have it posted on the Web site eugenetsp.org and would let the council know when it was available.

Responding to a question from Mr. Zelenka, Mr. Yeiter said the City was not projected to meet the VMT reduction goals set by the State. Mr. Zelenka asked how that would change under the new plan. Mr. Yeiter said that generally, VMT had been dropping nationally. He acknowledged there had not yet been a measurement of that done in Eugene. A survey of Eugene-Springfield driving habits had recently occurred but he had not seen the results.

Mr. Zelenka asked if staff expected the State to retain the VMT standard since no jurisdiction had met it. Mr. Yeiter said City staff had suggested to State staff that Oregon drop the VMT measurement given the State was developing greenhouse gas targets and the relationship between the two was unclear. He believed the VMT standard would stay and there would be two different goals. State staff now seemed to believe that VMT was a rough but fair measurement of greenhouse gas reductions.

Mr. Zelenka asked for examples of the “tool box” mentioned by staff. Mr. Roth offered shared lane marking as an example of a tool communities used to complete system gaps in a bicycle network or to demonstrate more clearly to bicyclists where they should position themselves in a shared lane system. Another example was hawk signals for pedestrians, which remained dark unless activated by the pedestrian to alert motorists to stop. Springfield was exploring their use on Harlow and Gateway roads. Mr. Zelenka concluded that the tools in the tool box would be employed to help the City meet the standard it set. Mr. Roth concurred.

Mr. Zelenka asked if the City had a numeric metric for increases in bicycle and pedestrian use. Mr. Roth said the advisory committee had discussed assigning specific modal targets but concluded it made more sense to do so in conjunction with the TSP. The metric currently used was commute-to-work trips, and Eugene was the highest in the nation for bicycle use for a community of its size and consistently exceeded Portland levels as 10.8 percent of the population used a bicycle for their primary means of transportation.

Mr. Zelenka asked how numeric mode splits would be established in the TSP. Mr. Yeiter suggested that the council consider the purpose of having such targets. He said it was one thing to set such targets and tie achieving a percentage of the target to system improvements, but the approach ran into problems if the additional alternative mode increases came at the expense of another mode. If the goal was to increase bicycle, pedestrian, and transit use, the next question then became “will we do something to discourage auto use,” which was a huge policy question that he anticipated would require extensive community discussion.

Mayor Piercy suggested the story of the State gas tax was reflective of lower VMT, and reduced gas tax revenues were making it increasingly hard to fund the transportation system. She recalled that speaker Gordon Price had recommended to RailVolution attendees that they not position one mode against the other, but instead provide real choice for everyone, which would lead them to make more of the choices the City wanted to see. Mr. Yeiter said if the community provided great choice and a variety of choices, he questioned if it needed targets.

Ms. Ortiz determined from Mr. Roth that the technical advisory committee included representation from Lane County, but there were no Lane County residents on the advisory committee. Ms. Ortiz regretted the lack of such representation and hoped staff did not forget to involve the residents of River Road and Santa Clara.

Ms. Ortiz commended the crossings on Gateway and Harlow roads and encouraged the council to view them. She thought they could be used on Highway 99, where crossing was a challenge.

Ms. Solomon recalled that she had testified before the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee about the need for improved passage for residents living west of the railroad tracks to better access downtown on foot and by bicycle. She asked the status of her suggestion. Mr. Yeiter said gaps in the system were being addressed through the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. He acknowledged that the railroad tracks and river worked against the establishment of a grid network. The TSP included a technical advisory committee with a representative from Union Pacific and ODOT Rail staff. He believed Ms. Solomon’s concerns would be addressed but had no idea of the solution or ultimate cost. Mr. Roth added that the BPAC heard Ms. Solomon’s input and the issue had also come up several times in outreach. Staff had taken some field trips to view the area and see what options were available. He recommended that Ms. Solomon stay plugged into the process through the Web site and interested parties list. He believed that there would eventually be a recommendation for such a crossing.

Ms. Taylor recalled the conference on “walkability” at Tsunami Bookstore and asked what happened to the recommendations from that event. Mr. Roth said the report from the event was used as background for the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. Mr. Yeiter said the City had unsuccessfully applied for a grant to implement some of the concepts in the report. The corridor discussed by participants at the event was being studied as a pilot project for opportunity siting, and there was a possibility of another grant application to take another look at the area in question.

Ms. Taylor thought it was important to give people choices, which made them more likely to do positive things. She thought more efforts should be made to combat bicycle theft. It was hard to feel good about riding one’s bicycle if one was worried it would disappear when one left it. She asked if staff had discussed widening the bicycle lanes on streets such as 11th and 18th avenues to avoid conflicts with large vehicles such as buses. Mr. Roth said staff was discussing different bicycle lane treatments to provide extra buffer space.

Ms. Taylor asked if anyone was contemplating expansion of the pedestrian flag system started by Ken Saxton. Mr. Roth said the pedestrian flag system was an example of a low-cost tool that was currently in use. He believed its use in Eugene could be expanded.

Ms. Taylor suggested if dogs were allowed on buses people would use the bus to take their dog to the vet. Mr. Yeiter said he would forward the suggestion to LTD staff.

Mr. Clark agreed with the mayor that the best outcome of the TSP was to provide people with multiple choices and allow them freedom to choose. His concern was that was not what was happening. He said his problem with using VMT as a metric was that it resulted in planning for less capacity in those choices and did not help in emissions reductions. While no one was forced into a different mode, the result was increased congestion. People drove the same number of miles, only more slowly, which increased emissions. He believed VMT was a terrible metric if the desired outcome was decreased greenhouse gas emissions.

Continuing, Mr. Clark said he was challenged by discussion of increased infill in areas such as those near the Beltline and Delta Highway because while he thought such infill was a good thing, he pointed out that Beltline was a failed facility in multiple places. To date, there was only one proposed plan for improving Beltline that came close to addressing the standards, and when he asked ODOT staff members how the State could chose any option but that, they suggested that they guessed the State would have to change the standard.

Mayor Piercy acknowledged differing points of view held by different councilors and said each councilor would have a different perspective on Mr. Clark’s points.

**B. WORK SESSION:
City Council Process Session**

The council held a work session on its processes for addressing Contingency Funds, for conducting work session polls as part of regular council business, and for providing time for more detailed council committee reports. Council and Intergovernmental Affairs Manager Keli Osborn and Council Coordinator Beth Forrest reviewed the staff recommendations related to each process.

Councilors accepted the staff recommendation related to contingency funds.

Speaking to the issue of council polls for work sessions, Mr. Clark asked that staff ensure that polls were sent to the council via e-mail. Councilors then discussed whether to include a neutral option on council polls.

Ms. Taylor, seconded by Mr. Brown, moved to have a yes, no, and neutral option for council work session polls. The motion failed, 6:2; Ms. Taylor and Ms. Ortiz voting yes.

Mr. Zelenka, seconded by Ms. Ortiz, moved to adopt the second bullet under item 3, "Time for more detailed committee reports" ("Schedule one 30-minute session for general rounds and one 60-minute round for specific updates, and set a rotation so all committees are covered each quarter.")

Mr. Zelenka accepted a friendly amendment from Ms. Ortiz that councilors would either give an oral presentation or complete the report form and submit it as part of the record.

Ms. Ortiz asked that neighborhood groups be placed on a separate page.

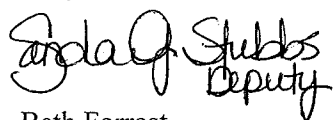
The motion passed, 7:1; Mr. Poling voting no.

Mr. Clark raised an issue for future discussion, asking the council to consider beginning every formal meeting in the Council Chamber with the Pledge of Allegiance. Mr. Poling endorsed the idea.

Mr. Zelenka, seconded by Ms. Taylor, moved that when councilors requested an item be deferred due to an anticipated absence, that request be automatically granted unless action on the issue was time-sensitive. The motion failed, 5:3; Mr. Zelenka, Ms. Taylor, and Mr. Brown voting yes.

Mayor Piercy adjourned the work session at 1:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Beth Forrest", with the word "Deputy" written below it.

Beth Forrest
City Recorder

(Recorded by Kimberly Young)