

URBAN RENEWAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES OF JULY 15, 2010

MEMBERS PRESENT:	David Benedict	STAFF:	Doug Rux
	Hube Nukes		Carol Rutherford
	Althea Pratt Broome		Eric Underwood
	Cathy Croghan Alzner (7:06 P.M.)		Mike McKillip

5. REGULAR BUSINESS**5.1 High Speed Rail (HSR) Presentation:**

Mike McKillip, City Engineer, reviewed a Power Point Presentation (see attached copy). One proposal from ODOT shows these trains running through Tualatin. This presentation was initially given to City Council members at a work session in April. Mr. McKillip was then directed to do similar presentations to all City committees to make them aware of this proposal and obtain feedback.

For the past 6-8 months City staff has been involved in discussions with ODOT, Lake Oswego, Oregon City, Wilsonville, and Clackamas and Washington counties. Open houses have been held throughout the areas that could be impacted. ODOT drafted goals for the program which stress the importance of on-time performance and the cost/benefit ratio. Funding is limited so we need to insure that we target areas where we receive the best benefits. It is important that we determine the impacts to the downtown area and station location with respect to the work we've done in the Town Center as well as regional planning.

The current travel time between Portland and Eugene is 2 hours, 35 minutes. HSR would cut a half hour off that time. High Speed Rail is viewed as trains traveling in the 79-110 mph range. This is extremely faster than the freight trains that travel around 35 mph and top out at 45 mph. Commuter rail (WES) reaches speeds of 55-60 mph. The Federal Government has designated areas throughout the United States for the proposed high-speed corridors (see slide). The corridor that could impact Tualatin would run from Eugene to Vancouver, British Columbia where Amtrak now operates.

Mr. McKillip reviewed the draft goals as depicted on slide #7. Options for the location of high speed rail include:

1. Using the Union Pacific tracks on the eastside going through Woodburn, Oregon City, Milwaukie etc. which is the route currently used by most freight trains.

2. Oregon Electric Line which travels on the west side through Wilsonville, Tualatin, and Tigard. This option would require a connection in Tualatin to route the train to Milwaukie prior to going downtown. It could require the construction of a viaduct to connect to the east/west tracks in the Community Park. Another option could be to route trains via SW 118th Avenue or in another area further west from downtown Tualatin. This line could also impact Lake Oswego if the trains were to travel along State Street.
3. The third option was created by Brad Perkins and Rudy Niederer and is the "Cascadia High Speed Railvolution." This would involve the construction of a new rail line along I-5 and include a new rail station in the area of SW Nyberg and SW 75th Avenue. It would then cross over the freeway to other tracks around SW Pilkington and northeast to a tunnel into Sellwood across the river. A new station would be constructed in the area of the Rose Quarter and Interstate Avenue rather than the trains going into Union Station. Electric high-speed trains are proposed in this scenario. Kelly Taylor from Cascadia conducted a summit in Eugene. Their proposal includes six stops between Eugene and Seattle. Too many stops would cause the trains to lose speed and increase the travel time.

Union Pacific has been supportive of Option #1 as depicted on four slides. They want the passenger service and already depend on freight. An appropriate balance between these two services must be achieved with a focus on safety while not compromising the freight service.

One question is what would happen to WES and what route the HSR trains would take if the route through Tualatin is selected. One option could include a loop through Safeway and Dick's Sporting Goods and then reconnecting in Tigard.

Mr. McKillip reviewed the five steps involved in the entire process. Currently ODOT is completing the second step. The Federal Government has allocated a significant amount of stimulus money for these projects. However, they are not interested in funding research or the environmental impact studies required prior to beginning construction. He also reviewed the "Next Steps" and the State money required to qualify for funding.

The next two slides outline the benefits and impacts of this service.

Benefits:

- Quicker access Portland to Eugene, Seattle, and Vancouver BC
- Attract businesses that do world-wide work
- Remove some vehicles from I-5
- Provides options for Portland-Eugene travel
- Viaduct eliminates three at-grade rail crossings in downtown Tualatin, eliminates wayside horns and improves safety

- Rerouting eliminates three at-grade intersections and wayside horns and improves safety

Additional benefits include the proximity to the airport in Vancouver, British Columbia which is a gateway to many international destinations. In this area, future growth in the Portland Metropolitan area and the Willamette Valley is projected to increase dramatically within the next 20-25 years. One suggestion is to have the station located in Wilsonville since more parking is available in that area.

Impacts:

- Noise (more trains)
- Traffic (if current alignment is maintained)
- Parking (if a station is located in Tualatin Town Center)
- Community Park (loss of space, visual, and noise)

Mr. McKillip reviewed two slides which highlight twelve (12) opportunities that could occur as a result of this project.

City Council has said that if a decision is made that we want to consider a route through Tualatin then staff must prepare a case on why we want it. If we elect not to have it go through Tualatin and want to support the route through Oregon City, then we should convey our support for this option.

Mr. Benedict inquired if there is any advantage for HSR coming through Tualatin. Mr. McKillip responded that he is not sure. Grade separation and safety improvements could evolve from this proposal. Trains would operate on diesel in slower areas and then switch to electric in the country. Sequencing would occur to allow trains to operate safely around one another. The worst time would be when WES is running. Mr. Benedict voiced concern about the impact of a large elevated structure in the downtown area similar to what is in Chicago and New York City. It would create heavy rumbling and likely would need to be a whole concrete box rather than an open trestle. Mr. McKillip stated that there would be advantages to the Portland and Western Railroad (the line that currently runs through Tualatin) as it could result in significant upgrades or replacement of their tracks, signals etc. Ms. Croghan Alzner stated that this is an exciting proposal that would provide a unique opportunity. The State of Washington was awarded 590 million dollars in early 2010 which will be used for improvements to their rail tracks and make Amtrak more reliable.

Mrs. Pratt Broome inquired if the residents of the Pacific Northwest would actually use mass transit since we are accustomed to using personal vehicles. This is very different than in Europe and other areas of the world where train travel is used extensively.

In conclusion, Mr. McKillip stated that we have no idea on a timeline or where the money would come from. His primary objective tonight is to use these committee

meetings as a means to obtain feedback and share information. He encouraged URAC members to contact him with any other questions or suggestions.