



**MINUTES** (Approved on 4-15-15)

**TIME:** Wednesday, April 1, 2015, 4:00 p.m.  
**PLACE:** Room 16, Tacoma Municipal Building North  
733 Market Street, Tacoma, WA 98402  
**PRESENT:** Chris Beale (Chair), Donald Erickson, Benjamin Fields, Meredith Neal, Anna Petersen,  
Erle Thompson, Stephen Wamback  
**ABSENT:** Scott Winship (Vice-Chair)

**A. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Beale called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m.

**B. QUORUM CALL**

A quorum was declared.

**C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the regular meeting on March 4, 2015 were reviewed. Commissioner Wamback provided corrections to pages 2 and 3 and Commissioner Erickson provided clarifications to two items on page 5. The minutes were approved as amended.

**D. DISCUSSION ITEMS**

**1. Tacoma Link Light Rail Expansion Update**

Sue Comis, Sound Transit's Project Manager for the Tacoma Link Light Rail Expansion, provided an update on the project. The previous stage of the process had been the alternatives development portion which had examined corridors and determined which areas should be served. The current stage of the process involved identifying funding partners, applying for federal grants, environmental review, and preliminary design. The subsequent stages would be final design, construction, then testing and pre-operations.

Ms. Comis provided a project overview of the 2.4 mile expansion from downtown to Hilltop that would include six new proposed stations. The project benefits would include decreased headways, serving diverse neighborhoods, and doubling the system in anticipation of 47,000 new residents by 2035. The funding sources included \$50 million from Sound Transit, \$74.99 million from the Federal Small Starts grant, and \$40 million from the City of Tacoma. The environmental decision process would next go to an open house in May, followed by a Council study session May 15<sup>th</sup>, then the Sound Transit board discussion in June or July.

Elements of the environmental review were discussed. The transportation findings noted that currently up to 9% of the mode share was transit, which was estimated to increase to up to 34% in 2035. The project ridership projected 10,800 total daily riders in 2035. The traffic projections found minimal traffic impacts, with the intersections projected to operate at or above the city's level of service standard. Approximately 50 on-street parking spaces would need to be removed and Sound Transit would coordinate with the City to determine if replacement parking could be identified. Ms. Comis noted that parking impacts would be greater during construction and that the details of how many spaces would be impacted would be

determined in the Traffic Control Plan during the construction process. Noise and vibration findings indicated that the Tacoma Link was noisier than a car, but not as noisy as a bus. The construction noise and noise from the operations and maintenance facility would comply with city code and FTA criteria. There would be no substantial impacts to views, but there would be some alteration to views to some residences on Stadium Way due to poles and wires, but it would be consistent with the scale and the character of the streets. Some visual simulations were shown of some of the new stations and of the projected visual impact along Stadium Way. Property acquisitions would not be substantial, the project being mostly within the right of way. A map was shown indicating properties that would possibly be acquired for traction power substation sites. The historic resources effects were briefly discussed, with no physical impacts anticipated. Cultural resources effects were determined to be low probability for finding cultural resources along the stations and corridor, but high probability around the expanded operations and maintenance facility. The typical construction process was reviewed with each stage of construction briefly discussed.

Allison Gregg, community outreach lead, discussed planned community outreach efforts and reviewed the upcoming events with a stakeholder roundtable meeting scheduled for April and an open house to be held in May.

Commissioners had the following comments and questions:

- Commissioners requested additional details on the planned expansion including projected completion date and budget. Ms. Comis responded the project would hopefully be finished around 2021 and that there would be more confidence in the \$125 million cost estimate when 60% of the design was done.
- Commissioners expressed concern regarding the gap between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> street stations along MLK Way and discussed whether the Stadium and 4<sup>th</sup> station was justified considering the steepness of the slope and the low projected ridership. There was concurrence for adding a station at 15<sup>th</sup> and MLK with discussion ensuing about whether it could be done using the money planned for the 4<sup>th</sup> and Stadium Way station. Ms. Comis responded that removing a station would be possible, but adding an additional station would be more difficult at the current stage in the process and would impact the schedule.
- Commissioner Fields expressed concern about the curbside stations negating the possibility for future bike lanes. Ms. Comis responded that they were looking into the possibility of designing a station with a bike lane between it and the sidewalk.

## **2. 2015 Comprehensive Plan Update**

Stephen Atkinson, Planning Services Division, facilitated the Commission's review of multiple elements and subjects associated with the 2015 Comprehensive Plan Update. He discussed the outreach strategy with Community Workshops in Council Districts scheduled to occur in March-April and briefly reviewed the first Community Outreach meeting that had been held on March 30<sup>th</sup> in District 4. He also noted that the packet provided to the Commission had included an early draft of the residential study being conducted by a graduate team from Portland State University. The structure of the Comprehensive Plan Update, discussed at a previous meeting, was reviewed.

Kendra Breiland, Fehr and Peers, provided an update on the draft Transportation Master Plan (TMP). Projected growth allocations, public outreach efforts, and the vision statement were briefly discussed. The vision statement and goals were being implemented through frameworks like the Green Transportation Hierarchy and the Layered Network Approach. The Layered Network Approach would recognize that not all streets can accommodate all modes. Ms. Breiland discussed the pedestrian network using 20 minute neighborhoods concept as an organizing principle and showed the areas that had been identified where pedestrian amenities should be prioritized. Chair Beale noted that there were large areas that were not included in the Pedestrian Network, particularly in the south end. Ms. Breiland commented that they were still gathering input on recommended locations. Chair Beale recommended looking at 56<sup>th</sup> and M.

Ms. Breiland discussed the bicycle network and provided details on efforts to make the network more accessible to a wider audience. The transit network was discussed with the focus on which streets were the most important to consider for future expansion. There had been several meetings with Pierce Transit to coordinate the development of the transit network. The freight network was shown, highlighting the streets where trucks are major users of the right of way. The auto network map was shown, highlighting streets where auto mobility was most important. It was noted that 6<sup>th</sup> Ave should probably be included on the auto network map.

Ms. Breiland discussed addressing conflicts between modes with illustrations shown. Commissioner Wamback suggested, in addition to looking at freight mobility, looking at service delivery mobility and noted conflicts stemming from delivery vehicles parking in bike lanes. Ms. Breiland responded that the issue had not been explored in detail and she would explore additional policy guidance around parking, loading considerations, and small business interactions in general.

Transportation Demand Management was described as strategies that encourage people to travel in less environmentally impactful ways. Chair Beale asked how the city handled Commute Trip Reduction (CTR). Diane Wiatr, Environmental Services, responded that CTR was being handled in part by Downtown On the Go and that under her oversight they were doing an alternative plan with approval by WSDOT.

Commissioner Petersen commented that urban trails were being omitted. She noted that they currently weren't mapped anywhere and suggested that they could be added to a document like the Transportation Element, Capital Facilities Plan, or the Open Space Habitat and Recreation Element. Ms. Breiland responded that they struggle with where to put trails and that they are often omitted because a lot of the trails are dirt and not accessible.

Ms. Breiland briefly discussed implementation items, like funding and project prioritization, and then reviewed how the TMP informs the Transportation Element. The System Completeness Policy would provide a LOS standard that would be accompanied by performance measures. Ms. Breiland briefly explained a performance measure example from the City of Redmond that included a supply and demand measure of mobility units (trips on the network). Commissioner Wamback asked if the model would show the impact of congestion on supply. Ms. Breiland responded that the example was set up to be simplistic, but could be updated to include such measures.

Reema Shakra, Environmental Science Associates, provided a briefing on the Environmental Policy Element. The topic of discussion concerned three chapters of the Tacoma Comprehensive Plan: the Environmental Policy Element, the Urban Forest Policy Element, and the Open Space Habitat and Recreation Element. The recommended changes were reviewed. Recommended changes to the overall structure of the elements included: consolidating all three elements into one element; moving the recreational component into Public Facilities and Services; removing the implementation section of the Open Space Habitat element and moving the inventory and project list to the Capital Facilities Plan; moving glossary sections to a separate Glossary chapter; and consolidating sections into an outline that follows five general topics. Recommended changes to content included: removing redundant, irrelevant, low priority, and detailed policies to focus on general policies; reviewing policies to ensure consistency with PSRC's Vision 2040 and Countywide planning policies; adjusting policies that address critical areas; reevaluating the intent of the Open Space Habitat and Recreation and Urban Forest elements; adding new policies that address climate change; adding new sustainability policies for access to open space and a healthy environment; and clarifying the difference between conserving and preserving open space and habitat areas.

Commissioners had the following comments and questions:

- Commissioners expressed support for making the document more accessible to the broader population, but emphasized the importance of striking a balance between making the material understandable without removing information important in providing context.
- Commissioner Thompson asked where the minutiae in the document would go if it was to be removed. Mr. Atkinson responded that some of the minutiae would find homes in other documents.
- Commissioner Petersen commented that in the process of moving sections and components it would be important to make sure that information is not lost.
- Chair Beale expressed concern about how splitting the Open Space Habitat and Recreation Element would affect Recreation and Conservation Office certification. He added that breaking the element apart would make outreach more difficult.
- Chair Beale noted that stewardship was not part of the goals and vision statements and commented that the City's Restoration Action Plan, Metro Parks Chip In program, and the Habitat Stewardship program are where stewardship most directly fulfills the goals and engages the public.
- Chair Beale commented that the justification for the "30-by-30" policy was inside of the Urban Forest Policy element and expressed concern on the diminishing role of urban forestry.
- Chair Beale expressed interest in the habitat maps and asked about how they would flesh out the regulatory aspect of it.
- Commissioner Wamback suggested tying whether they would accommodate growth to improvements in the quality of the environment.

#### **E. COMMUNICATION ITEMS & OTHER BUSINESS**

Brian Boudet, Manager of the Planning Services Division, updated the Commission on the following items:

- a) The discussion of affordable housing and infill strategies would potentially be part of the May 6<sup>th</sup> meeting. The residential study from Portland State University might be part of the discussion.
- b) Commissioner Wamback was thanked for his attendance at the community workshop for the 2015 Comprehensive Plan Update that was held on March 30<sup>th</sup> in Council District No. 4. The next community workshop would be on April 2<sup>nd</sup>, in Council District No. 1.
- c) The upcoming Historic Preservation Month would include many events and public outreach efforts in the month of May. Commissioners were encouraged to participate.
- d) The discussion of Billboards would likely be part of the Commission's schedule in early June.

Lihuang Wung, Planning Services Division, reported that the recruitment efforts to fill the vacant position of Architecture, Historic Preservation and/or Urban Design as well the expiring positions of Districts 2, 3 and 5 would begin soon, with the Infrastructure, Planning and Sustainability Committee's interviews tentatively scheduled for June 24<sup>th</sup>. He commented that continuity was critical and urged the term-expiring Commissioners to reapply.

#### **F. ADJOURNMENT:**

At 6:37 p.m., the meeting of the Planning Commission was concluded.