



## HIGHLIGHTS

### Portland Peninsula Loop Reboot Task Force

Thursday, November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019 from 10am-noon

METRO Headquarters, 114 Valley Street, Portland

#### 1. Call Meeting to Order

Ed Suslovic called the meeting to order. He filled in to chair the meeting since Belinda Ray (METRO Board President and Task Force Chair) was sick.

#### 2. Welcome and Introductions

Ed welcomed Task Force members and the public and facilitated a round of introductions.

##### Task Force Members in Attendance:

- Nicole Anderson, Opportunity Alliance
- Denise Beck, METRO
- Hank Berg, Casco Bay Lines
- Amy Geren, Portland Downtown
- Bruce Hyman, City of Portland
- Kerrie Keller, United Way of Greater Portland
- Rick Harbison, GPCOG – project consultant
- Greg Jordan, METRO
- Zoe Miller, GPCOG – project consultant
- Jaime Parker, Portland Trails
- Tyler Plante, Portland Housing Authority
- Patricia Quinn, Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NNEPRA)
- Ed Suslovic, METRO Board
- Robert Witkowski, Visit Portland

##### Members of the Public in Attendance:

- Eric Freeman, Planning graduate student
- Cashel Stewart, Intern with Portland Downtown

#### 3. General Project Updates from METRO

Greg Jordan, METRO General Manager, gave two updates relevant to this project:

- The transition to electronic fare payment is on track to launch in March/April. The goal is to create greater equity and convenience. The new fare payment system will include payment by smartcard and mobile app. Testing begins in January/February. If you or someone you know is interested in being a tester, please contact Denise Beck (dbeck@gpmetro.org) at METRO.

The electric bus project has been delayed to allow time for proper procurement and vendor testing of their charging structure. This is not expected to change the launch date of the new circulator route.



#### 4. Review Phase I Public and Stakeholder Engagement

Zoe Miller of GPCOG, the consultant for engagement, gave a quick overview of the Phase I outreach – including goals and guiding questions. She described the different elements that were included: two surveys – rider and general public, events, focus groups, stakeholder groups, and conversations with METRO staff. See attached PowerPoint.

#### 5. Overview and Discussion of Results from Engagement

Rick Harbison of GPCOG provided a summary and analysis of the input collected and summarized the themes in survey responses. Zoe gave an overview of the qualitative input received through focus groups, stakeholder conversations, and from METRO staff. See attached PowerPoint.

#### METRO Perspective

Greg shared METRO's initial reactions to the input received:

- No big surprises in the data.
- The core issue since the beginning of the project is to maintain the connectivity for the current riders while broadening the market.
- Frequency and hours – everyone can agree on.
- At the next meeting, we will have a proposed route change.

#### Discussion with the Task Force

Members expressed kudos on the engagement methodology and analysis. People generally agreed that there is a strong argument in terms of the changes. The routes are really important. Getting people out of their cars will improve health and people's bottom lines. Getting people affordable transportation is key.

- *Additional analysis requested:*
  - Show how the survey demographics compare to the overall City demographics and to rider demographics (using *Moving Southern Maine Forward*).
- *Suggested considerations going forward:*
  - It will be important for METRO to keep reminding people about the thoroughness of the outreach that happened. Casco Bay Lines has recently gone through a process to adopt schedule changes. After two years of outreach, when it came down to the wire, people had a really hard time to accept it. Even with added service, the change was voted down.
  - Related to the Commercial Street project, Bruce would love to see some thought on connections to the Eastern Waterfront. The actual transit service doesn't have to be on Commercial Street. Could it get people close?
  - The focus should be on the future the peninsula rather than where it is now. Look through the windshield, not the rear view mirror.



- There are a lot of untapped demographics who could be riding METRO. Reaching large employers and the commuter base through marketing will be really important.
  - Improving bus service will take coordination with City Policy. Less accommodation for parking and more incentives for transit. More teeth in Transportation Demand Management plans is needed.
  - The City of Portland ReCode process (revamping the City's zoning code) seems really important right now.
  - For Portland Housing Authority, it is really important to maintain service for their elderly and disabled residents.
  - It will be important to incorporate information and planning from the other projects that are going on right now to factor into the decisions for this project.
  - Evening hours are key to getting more people to ride.
  - Talking to visitors and getting them to ride is very important
  - We need to think about the relocation of the Veterans Administration office.
  - Ideally, amenities will be part of a greater rollout. Could we get simple benches at every bus stop?
- *Additional comments from METRO staff, board, and consultants:*
    - Zoe added that METRO and GPCOG are also looking at the possibility of other types of services like a shopper shuttle. Research on best practices from around the country will be considered for this project.
    - Greg mentioned that METRO is also thinking about visibility for the service. They will develop branding that is consistent with METRO overall but also stands out.
    - Ed pointed out that the electronic fare collection program will enable METRO to partner with employers of all sizes. This is new capacity.
    - Ed also mentioned that commercial Real Estate developers have expressed that they see transit as the key to solving congestion and parking challenges.
    - Ed commented that when it comes to benches and shelters, the challenge really is real estate, historic preservation, and getting easements. METRO cannot put a shelter in front of City Hall because of historic preservation. A bench and a light at every bus stop would increase the visibility.
    - Greg said that the underlying goal for this project is that once someone is on the peninsula – whether it's by rail, boat, bus – they have an easy way to get around.
    - Greg commented that he can say with some certainty that this service will have connectivity to the Eastern Waterfront – to Ocean Gateway. When



METRO comes forward with routing options, there will have proposed changes to other routes as well.

## **6. Round Robin: Developments that Might Impact this Project**

Task Force participants shared information and updates about local or regional developments in transportation, housing, human services, and business that should be factored into the planning of the new circulator:

- Portland Housing Authority has additional development planned on State Street – at the Corner of Danforth and potentially the Mercy Hospital site.
- Discussion: There are possibilities around parking fees as a funding stream for transit and incentives. USM is now charging for parking (students get the METRO pass and the parking pass). How will we make adjustments in the City to allow buses to move more smoothly – through tools like bus-only lanes and signals?
- Amtrak Downeaster will hold public meeting in Falmouth on Dec 3<sup>rd</sup> to discuss a rail station at Exit 53. They have submitted an application for funding for the Wells Siding Project. The outcome would be a morning commuter run from Wells into Portland arriving before 8am and a return run from Portland leaving around 5pm.
- Casco Bay Lines is beginning the second phase of its facility expansion. The site plan will address congestion including a bus stop.
- Question about Commercial Street: what is the latest plan? Study will end by the end of 2019. It won't make it through the Council this year, but the recommendations will be completed in December. There are several dilemmas that are making it challenging. Seasonality, for instance, is making people question whether you do different approaches for different times of the year.
- Question regarding the plan for a Commercial/Franklin Street roundabout: Bruce shared that there is no date for this at the moment.
- Adaptive traffic control system is being rolled out in Portland. This can help with the reliability of bus transit. It has been installed on Forest Ave from Morrills Corner into the City. They have not yet layered in transit signal priority.
- There is a redevelopment project at Union Station Plaza (Save-A-Lot). Looking at 300 units Save-A-Lot.
- A master planning process for the Top of the Old Port parking lot.
- Drive Less Do More campaign is running and has space on its website to post information and updates.

## **7. Major Decision Points**

Greg reviewed the remaining project timeline and major decision points. The route and service levels will be discussed at the next meeting, which is in February

- Final Route
- Service Levels
- Branding
- Bus Stop Locations



**8. Public Comment**

Ed welcomed public comment for items listed on this agenda.

A member of the public shared this comment:

It's important to emphasize coverage in more areas. There is great potential for transit oriented development on the Eastern Waterfront. It may make sense to leave the Route 1 as it is and develop a new route that serves other important destinations.

**9. Next Steps**

Ed closed the meeting by noting there will be NO TASK FORCE MEETINGS in Dec and Jan.

**UPCOMING TASK FORCE MEETINGS**

- **February 6<sup>th</sup>** from 10am-noon, at United Way
- **March 5<sup>th</sup>** from 10am-noon, location TBA
- **April 2<sup>nd</sup>** from 10am-noon, location TBA
- **May 7<sup>th</sup>** from 10am-noon, location TBA



**TASK FORCE MEMBERSHIP**

Organization	Representative(s)
METRO Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Belinda Ray, METRO Board President, Portland City Council – Task Force Chair</li> <li>• Ed Suslovic, METRO Board Member, Cutler Institute at USM</li> </ul>
City of Portland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bruce Hyman, Transportation Program Manager</li> <li>• Nell Donaldson, Planner</li> </ul>
Portland Downtown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amy Geren, Program Director</li> </ul>
Visit Portland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Robert Witkowski, Creative Director and Media Relations Manager</li> </ul>
Portland Regional Chamber of Commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quincy Hentzel, CEO</li> </ul>
Portland Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tyler Plante, Development Officer</li> </ul>
United Way of Greater Portland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kerrie Keller, Community Impact Manager in Financial Stability</li> </ul>
The Opportunity Alliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nicole Anderson, Community Builder for Parkside Neighborhood</li> </ul>
Portland Trails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jaime Parker, Trails and Active Transportation Manager</li> </ul>
Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NNEPRA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patricia Quinn, Executive Director</li> </ul>
City of South Portland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Art Handman, South Portland Bus Service Director</li> </ul>
Casco Bay Lines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hank Berg, General Manager</li> </ul>
ShuttleBus-ZOOM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tony Scavuzzo, Executive Director</li> </ul>
METRO Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greg Jordan, General Manager</li> <li>• Denise Beck, Director of Marketing and Outreach</li> <li>• Glenn Fenton, Chief Transportation Officer</li> </ul>
Greater Portland Council of Governments (Project Consultants)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Zoe Miller, Director of Community Engagement</li> <li>• Rick Harbison, Senior Planner</li> </ul>