

Memorandum

Date: January 13, 2011

To: Chris Jordan, City Manager

From: Zach Pelz, Special Projects Planner

Subject: Summary of January 4, 2011, presentation from Metro regarding the Lake Oswego to Portland Transit Project

Purpose

This memo summarizes the January 4, 2011, presentation from Metro regarding the status of the Lake Oswego to Portland Transit Project.

Discussion

Metro recently completed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for submittal to the United State Department of Transportation (DOT) and presented the project alternatives and key findings to an audience in West Linn for comment. Included below is a summary of that discussion and the potential implications for residents in West Linn.

Metro travel demand forecasts predict insufficient capacity along the segment of State Highway 43 between Lake Oswego and Portland's south waterfront, to meet regional travel demand in 2035. Because existing development and environmental constraints limit the expansion of vehicular capacity in this corridor, Metro is proposing three alternatives that are aimed at meeting 2035 travel demand: No-build, Enhanced bus, and Streetcar.

No-build: The no-build alternative assumes the continuation of existing transit service and roadway capacity through 2035. Under the no-build scenario, West Linn residents can expect a bus trip between West Linn and Portland State University to take approximately 81 minutes (including walking, waiting, and in-transit time) in 2035. The equivalent trip using a private automobile in 2035, would take approximately 47 minutes. Metro predicts that by 2035, Route 35 will not meet the anticipated transit demand in this corridor (Route is expected to accommodate 1,650 fewer trips per weekday than are demanded).

Enhanced bus: Enhanced bus would increase the frequency of trips (15-minute headways) for Route 35, between Oregon City and Portland via Highway 43, and would reduce the number of stops. Enhanced bus would operate in mixed traffic on existing streets and would continue to experience delay from vehicular congestion during weekday peak hours. Metro predicts that by 2035, a trip between West Linn and Portland State University will take approximately 76 minutes using an enhanced bus service. Metro further predicts that by 2035, an enhanced route 35 would serve approximately 2,890 additional transit patrons per weekday compared to the no-build bus service.

Streetcar: The proposed streetcar alternative extends the existing streetcar service from Portland State University to the Foothills District of Lake Oswego. A streetcar would operate almost

exclusively in dedicated (existing) rail right-of-way with fewer stops and more frequent service (7.5-minute headways) than enhanced bus. As proposed, the streetcar alternative would add a transfer in Lake Oswego for patrons moving between West Linn and Portland. Under this scenario, Route 35 would be reconfigured to provide continuous service between West Linn and Beaverton. A direct bus service between West Linn and Portland would no longer exist. Transit patrons in West Linn, destined for Portland, would either board a Route 35 bus in West Linn and then transfer to the streetcar near the Foothills District in Lake Oswego or, drive to a new park and ride lot in the Foothills District and board the streetcar to Portland. The anticipated total duration of each of these trips, in 2035, would be approximately 66 and 51 minutes, respectively.

Metro also suggested that the streetcar alternative provides the most significant economic development potential for the region, particularly in the Foothills District of Lake Oswego and in Portland’s South Waterfront and John’s Landing neighborhoods. Metro further asserts that streetcar would help to improve transit reliability, reduce travel times and would also increase the number of desirable destinations in the region. In the Foothills District, master planning for a 107-acre, mixed-use development with connections to the waterfront, is currently underway.

Audience comments: A number of audience members expressed concern regarding the apparent lack of benefit to West Linn from the proposed transit enhancements. Some individuals were unsupportive of the streetcar proposal due to the added inconvenience of a transfer in Lake Oswego. Others expressing reservations highlighted a need to examine ways for improving transit service to West Linn and chided Metro for failing to consider the desires of West Linn residents during the planning of this project.

The public comment period for the DEIS is open through January 31, 2011. Interested persons can find instructions for reviewing and commenting on this document at www.oregonmetro.gov/lakeoswego. The project timeline is included in Figure 1, below.

Figure 1 Anticipated Project Timeline



Source: Metro, 2010