

Multnomah County LIT Meeting 3 (Powell Blvd.)

Multnomah County LIT Meeting 3: Powell Boulevard

Meeting: Metro Local Investment Team, Multnomah County

Date/time: July 25th, 2019, 5pm-7:30pm

Place: Glendoveer Golf & Tennis Center

Purpose: Tour corridor, review possible projects and gather LIT feedback

Attendance

LIT Members

Tim Brunner
Reza Farhoodi
Ashton Simpson
Brian Wong

Staff

Margi Bradway, *Metro*
Hermanus Steyn, *Kittelson & Associates, Inc*
Jaye Cromwell, *JLA Public Involvement*
Brandy Steffen, *JLA Public Involvement*

General Public

April Bertelsen, *PBOT*
Matt Bihn, *Metro*
Shirley Craddick, *Metro*
Joe Hovey, *Inner Powel Alliance*
Katherine Kelly, *City of Gresham*
Ady Leverette, *Metro*
Mauricio LeClerc, *PBOT*
Jessie Maran, *350PDX*
Sydney McCotter Bicknell, *Portland African American Leadership Foundation*
Kim [Last name not listed], *Getting There Together Coalition*
Walter Robinson II, *Getting There Together Coalition*
Shelli Romero, *ODOT*
Christian Rusby, *The Street Trust*
Bob Stacey, *Metro*
Nathan Stokes, *Local 701*

Summary of Discussion

One of the key points to come out of this discussion is the differences in investment from the City between inner, middle, and outer Powell. The need for safety improvements in this corridor was also raised as a concern. LIT members discussed the idea that this corridor, especially outer Powell,

Multnomah County LIT Meeting 3 (Powell Blvd.)

has been consistently disinvested from the City. This area needs to receive investments that support affordable housing and transit. LIT members discussed how transit improvements and prioritizing pedestrian, cyclist, and transit use of the roads, over car use, could help people get around more easily. The desire to support resiliency was also raised.

Meeting

The meeting began with a round of introductions, followed by a brief presentation from Hermanus Steyn (Kittelson and Associates) on proposed projects along Powell Blvd. The group then went on a tour of the corridor led by Margi Bradway (Metro). The LIT members returned for a discussion of potential projects and their priorities, facilitated by Brandy Steffen (JLA Public Involvement).

Presentation

The following elements were presented regarding Powell Blvd:

- Regionally, this corridor is a key East-West connector for all modes, including freight
- Connects historically underserved communities
- TriMet identifies Powell as a key corridor to increase ridership including eventual High Capacity Transit (HCT)
- Acts as a Main Street for numerous formal and informal commercial centers
- Provides access to and between numerous community areas, including transit access
- Provides local access and circulation to residential and commercial areas
- Proposed projects
 - Inner Powell: signal and crossing improvements for pedestrians and bikes, median island with trees, redesign select intersections for pedestrian/bike safety and stormwater treatments
 - Outer Powell: widen to 3-4 lanes with sidewalks, buffered bike lanes, improve safety and access to transit
 - Gresham: improve intersections with 182nd and Eastman, adding turn lanes and supporting transit. Eliminate left turns at intersection with Burnside
 - RTP Transit Strategy, High Capacity Transit (HCT) Plan

Tour

The group then attended a 60-minute tour of the corridor. LIT members, as well as elected officials and the general public were able to ask questions about the corridor and associated projects planned for the area. No notes were taken during this part of the meeting and discussion was encouraged for the following group discussion.

Group discussion

The group reassembled after the tour to discuss what they had seen, as well as review additional information from the technical team. Below is a bulleted summary of comments and questions raised by LIT members. Responses from Metro or Kittelson are shown as a sub-bullet.

Multnomah County LIT Meeting 3 (Powell Blvd.)

Safety

One key theme the LIT members discussed was the need for safety improvements in this corridor.

Key comments were:

- One LIT member commented that they often see people get stuck in middle of road because they can't make the crosswalk in time [referring to the area around Cleveland High School].
- Another member noted the inconsistencies in sidewalks along the corridor.
- Many LIT members discussed the likely increase in traffic between Gresham and Happy Valley. They noted the large number of young people (most students at the high school) between 182nd and 181st. This is a high traffic area and improvements need to be made to increase pedestrian safety and traffic flow.
- LIT members also discussed the needs for upgraded safety signals and lights in the corridor.
 - Hermanus (Kittelson) noted that upgrading signals often means upgrading ADA improvements, which is necessary but expensive.
- LIT members also discussed that making changes to the road and signaling might help slow cars down and improve safety in this area.

Prioritizing investments that support low-income and communities of color

LIT members discussed the idea that this corridor, especially outer Powell, has been consistently disinvested from the City. This area needs to receive investments that support affordable housing and transit. The key comments are below:

- One LIT member noted that there is lots of affordable housing in this neighborhood, but the area needs economic growth and transit oriented to development. The goal should be to help people live and work in the same space.
- LIT members also discussed the need for both long- and short-term investments in the area. The corridor needs upgrades to help people get around and to invest in transit-oriented development. LIT members felt sidewalk projects are needed now and are a good short-term investment. However, they also felt that this corridor needs a long-term vision that creates a sense of community and regional mobility.

Making it easier to get around

LIT members discussed how transit improvements and prioritizing uses for people walking, cycling and taking transit (over improvements for people driving) could help people get around more easily. Some of the key comments were:

- One LIT member noted that there are several parking strips that have been unused for 30 years; he suggested that one way to make it easier to get around in the area might be to re-appropriate those strips for transit use.
- A member was unclear as to why the City of Gresham is prioritizing vehicular movement over pedestrian movement.
- Many LIT members discussed the need for greater transit reliability. Transit along the Powell Corridor is not always reliable because of the high traffic volume. There was a desire to include reliability and increased transit speeds into plans.
- One member noted that the connection of the Ross Island Bridge to the downtown corridor's Bridge Head project could help create connect pedestrian infrastructure and build a sense of place.

Multnomah County LIT Meeting 3 (Powell Blvd.)

- One LIT member also mentioned that in this corridor there are still some sections with steep grade that especially affect cyclists.
- One LIT member mentioned that he would like to see more nature incorporated and to make it easier for communities living in this corridor to have access to Powell Butte.

Supporting Resiliency

One LIT member identified himself as a Neighborhood Emergency Team member which spurred a discussion about disaster resilience in the transportation infrastructure. Key comments were:

- Many LIT members discussed that the transportation system could be majorly disrupted in the event of an earthquake. They also discussed the need for key routes in and out of the City and for hazard identification in neighborhoods.
- One LIT member mentioned that neighborhoods will probably also need to have more medical supplies located in the area.

Additional Feedback

Members were encouraged to submit comments via email or by phone:

- The biggest concern I have about Powell, particularly outer Powell, is bike and pedestrian safety, the lack of sidewalks, and lighting.
- I also agree with creating a sense of place. I think that is an important component to any project.