

Multnomah County LIT Meeting 5 (Burnside Corridor)

Meeting: Metro Local Investment Team, Multnomah County

Date/time: August 1st, 2019, 5 p.m.- 7:30 p.m.

Place: Burnside Corridor

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

Attendance

LIT Members

Reza Farhoodi
Duncan Hwang
Arlene Kimura
Thomas Ngo
Ashton Simpson
Brian Wong

Staff

Margi Bradway, *Metro*
Anne Buzzini, *Metro*
Camilla Dartnell, *Kittelson & Associates, Inc.*
Brandy Steffen, *JLA Public Involvement*
Jaye Cromwell, *JLA Public Involvement*

General Public

Shirley Craddick, *Metro Council*
Orlando Lopez Bautista, *OPAL*
Jessica Berry, *Multnomah County*
April Bertelsen, *PBOT*
Karla Kingsley, *PBOT*
Mike Pullen, *Multnomah County*
Bob Stacey, *Metro Council*
Joanna Valencia, *Multnomah County*

Summary of Discussion

Enhancing pedestrian and cyclist safety and increasing access to reliable transportation for people of color and people with low incomes, especially those in East Portland, were the major themes discussed. LIT members pointed to non-contiguous sidewalk infrastructure, bike lane connectivity, and transit accessibility as barriers for multi-modal users attempting to travel between East Portland and the downtown core via Burnside. The desire for a resilient transportation infrastructure was also discussed. Members wished for more transportation investments that would create more walkable areas with access to business and cultivation of a sense of place.

Meeting

The meeting began with a round of introductions, followed by a presentation of the corridor and projects by Kittelson and Associates, a tour of the corridor, and a group discussion.

Presentation

The following summarized elements were presented regarding the Burnside Corridor:

- The Burnside Corridor connects Washington County and East Multnomah County through downtown Portland.
- It is referred by some entities as the “emergency lifeline” route, as it has been identified as a primary route to aid emergency vehicles during disaster recovery efforts.
- The Burnside Corridor already serves as a critical Willamette River crossing; it currently supports TriMet line 20 and many others through downtown Portland and has been identified by TriMet as a key corridor to increase transit ridership for the future.
- It serves critical connections. The Barnes Road portion serves the Sunset Transit Center as well as connections to MAX and Gresham transit facilities.
- Burnside Corridor also serves as a main street for numerous formal and informal commercial centers.
- Proposed Burnside Corridor projects led by the City of Portland include:
 - Safety investments and pedestrian crossings (about \$10-20 million) as well as enhanced transit and streetscape investments (\$10-20 million).
 - In addition, there have been proposed road enhancements along West Burnside between 2nd Ave and Park Ave and improvement to the road surface along east Burnside to 12th Ave.
 - Multnomah County is leading the Earthquake Ready Burnside Bridge project, currently in the *Environmental Review Phase*. This project is slated to create a seismically resilient multimodal bridge along a critical east-west regional lifeline route. At this time, *Design Phase* and a portion of *Construction Phase* funding have been identified.
 - The City of Gresham has proposed a \$10 million investment toward safety and access improvements.

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. The discussion revolved around themes of safety, reliability/accessibility of regional transit, resilient infrastructure, and equity. Below is a bulleted summary of comments and questions raised by LIT members, followed by responses of the technical team. Responses from Metro or Kittelson are shown as a sub-bullet.

Safety Issues

LIT members discussed the need for safety considerations primarily related to lighting and pedestrian and bike safety. The key points were:

- The need for a divided highway from 102nd -181st
 - *We are addressing this through Burnside and Stark.*
- Many LIT members agreed that lighting should be at the pedestrian scale. One LIT member voiced a specific concern regarding the difficulty seeing pedestrian crossings near MAX stops and that better lighting was needed.
- One member inquired about whether there will be more detailed plans for Burnside St.
 - *Burnside is one of the least planned corridors. If approved, we will need to explore more planning options. One thing LIT members can do is to express that they want to explore this more. Camilla (Kittelson)*
- The frequency of MAX and automobile collisions and the frequency of related disruptions is a major issue in our regional transportation system.
- Many LIT members noted areas where pedestrian safety and crossings needed to be drastically improved, including:
 - Burnside and 96th intersection, where pedestrians cross the MAX lines;
 - 122nd and Stark intersection, where pedestrians might need additional time to cross;
 - I-205 crossing, where there is a sidewalk gap and sidewalks are only on one side.
- One LIT member also noted that sidewalks were narrowed after the west side of Burnside was cut and widened for cars.
- Many LIT members brought up the fact that bike lanes on Burnside are currently non-contiguous and very difficult to navigate on a bike, especially at the 60th and Davis crossing. One LIT member asked if there are any plans to make it a single continuous bike lane or for parallel greenway improvements.
 - *At this time, we don't have a concept for how we would do that, but it is something we definitely need to address. Karla (PBOT)*

- *Metro has left the definition of corridors vague on purpose, which would allow these suggestions of parallel greenways to be considered.* Margi (Metro)
- Several LIT members discussed the absence of bike facilities in several areas, including a lack of bike facilities beyond 124th and an orphan bike lane on Stark near Mall 205 with no connectivity.
 - *[Referring to the bike lane on Stark near Mall 205] This is something that we are looking at throughout the outer Stark bike facilities. PBOT submitted a grant for this to Metro.* Karla (PBOT)

Reliability/Accessibility

- One LIT member stated that it is difficult to find the Gresham Transit Center and recommended more signage as a solution.
- One LIT member asked if Metro and the Technical Team were considering pedestrian improvements east of 257th?
 - *Yes, this is still a high crash corridor, so we are considering improvements in this corridor.* Camilla (Kittelson)
- One LIT member asked about what will happen if *pro-time lanes* are taken away on Burnside [*pro-time lanes* refers to lanes that change their use from parking to driving depending on the time of day].
 - *One option is to leave parking in off-peak hours but prioritize transit during peak hours. Another option is to permanently remove parking and re-configure the streets.* April (PBOT)

Resiliency

- Many LIT members raised questions about disaster resiliency strategies along the corridor and felt that it should be a regional priority.
- Several LIT members discussed the Burnside Bridge seismic retrofitting project and asked about the possible designs for the bridge.
 - *There are three options for the bridge design. One option is the same cross section as now which would just fix what is wrong with the bridge. In the other two options, the bridge would be 20 feet wider in the center but would not add traffic lanes. We are proposing to have a physical barrier between bicycles and traffic lanes, all of which would be wider than they are now.* Mike (Multnomah County)
- LIT members discussed the tradeoffs and priorities between the Earthquake Ready Burnside Bridge and the MAX Tunnel Study projects. Points were made about increasing capacity vs. resiliency with the shared understanding that both are high priorities.

Equity Concerns

- One LIT member asked about affordable housing availability along the corridor.
- One LIT member suggested that the area around Ventura Elementary School, an area with higher proportions of people of color and people with low incomes, needed more robust improvements (such as landscaping and street trees) than a simple crosswalk to create a sense of place.
- One LIT member noted that 60-70% of small businesses are owned by people of color (POC) along outer Burnside and Division and expressed the desire to use existing town centers and employ a “town center-centric lens” as a way to help POC businesses survive the change from an auto centric neighborhood to a multi-modal neighborhood.
 - *Is that change from a construction impacts standpoint or from an access management standpoint? Margi (Metro)*
 - *LIT member response: Both, especially if we pull out parking.*
- One LIT member suggested including Gresham-based projects as a priority and not just the Gresham Transit Center or East Portland.
 - *The projects needed in Gresham are similar to the corridor you saw today. There are not enough crossings, curb tight sidewalks, or bike lanes. We are interested in more investments for the Gresham Transit Center and there is a significant amount of affordable housing going in with the Rockwood Rising project. Jay (City of Gresham)*
- Another LIT member agreed that investments in East Portland needed to be prioritized, stating that there are some nice pockets, but it does not feel very friendly to walk around.
- Several LIT members expressed their concern over the cost of the Burnside Bridge and wondered about the feasibility of raising the money. They also discussed the allocation of resources and how money raised would be used in East Portland.

Other Comments

- One LIT member reflected that the proximity of buildings/businesses is generally what makes neighborhoods walkable. The availability of parking impacts walkability and if Metro wants these areas to be multi-modal, then the distance between buildings needs to be close together and parking may need to be shared.
- One LIT member noted that there seems to be less traffic on the Burnside Bridge heading into downtown in the morning than returning east in the evening. He also noted that traffic is generally too fast on the bridge and suggested keeping one of the westbound lanes permanently closed to use as a protected bike lane.