

CITY OF PORTLAND, MAINE
Committee on Sustainability and Transportation
Councilor Regina Phillips (D3), Chair
Councilor Victoria Pelletier (D2)
Councilor Anna Bullett (D4)

Approved Minutes September 11, 2024

Members Present: Councilor Phillips, Councilor Bullett

Staff Present: Troy Moon, Erin Ferrell, Amy McNally, Greg Jordan, Mike Murray, Zachary Lenhert, Kevin Kraft, Jeremiah Bartlett, Bruce Hyman

Meeting was called to order.

July 10 Minutes

The July 10, 2024 meeting minutes were approved unanimously.

Sustainability Update

Presented by Troy Moon

The Sustainability Office hosted their third and fourth Landcare Lunchbreak webinars of the season, “Healthy Lawn Care Made Easy” with Cumberland County Soil & Water Conservation District and “Preparing Your Lawn for Winter” with landcare professional Jesse O’Brien.

The Sustainable Neighborhoods Program has been in full swing, which offers support to neighbors looking to build social connections and work together to build community resilience. The office has been able to support 3 block parties so far, a neighborhood seed swap, 4 neighborhood clean-up events, and several other community events.

In collaboration with Cultivating Community, the City hosted three workshops where community members worked collaboratively to rebuild the East End Community School learning garden, the Boyd Street Youth Garden, and new raised garden beds in a section of the Payson Park Community Garden. These workshops brought together community volunteers, both gardeners and nearby residents, and helped them develop stronger relationships by working together on a project. Participants left with new knowledge, experience, and instructions on how to build raised beds and were encouraged to share their knowledge with neighbors and build additional raised beds in their neighborhood. This project helps ensure that City community gardens are safe and accessible spaces and expands access to garden plots for community members with low or no incomes, people of color, and New Mainers. Special thanks to the PRF Horticulture team for help clearing the sites and spreading landscape fabric.

The Office’s Community Composting Program continues to help Portland divert organic waste from the municipal waste stream. Over the past five months, the 10 public compost drop-off sites have collected 97.92 tons of organic waste.

Total Portland Bike Share system rides are down by about 15% this 2024 season compared to 2023, 4 full months into the season. As of 9/3/2024, there were 7,402 rides for the 2024 season. The full e-bike fleet was replaced over a month ago to deal with some mechanical issues with the prior e-bikes. Since the fleet replacement, e-bike rides increased 40% for August 2024 versus August 2023. This bodes well for a strong 2024 season finish. This is the 3rd of 3 years of the City's contract with Tandem Mobility.

Use of the City's fleet of level 2 chargers continues to rise on a year over year basis. In 2023 during the period of January - August, the chargers were used for 4,063 sessions. July and August saw the most usage with 660 sessions and 734 sessions respectively. This year, we hosted 5,748 charging sessions in the same time period. July and August were once again the heaviest charging months with 912 sessions and 928 sessions. The DC fast chargers installed by EVgo in the Spring St. parking lot continue to have heavy use as well and we continue to work on opportunities to expand EV charging infrastructure in the City.

Councilor Comment on Sustainability Update

Councilor Phillips thanks Sustainability Staff for their recent efforts.

Amendments to Chapter 30

Presented by Amy McNally

Currently, Chapter 30 does not include all of the types of bicycle cabs operating in the City. The proposed edits in section 30-75 would amend the definition of bicycle cab to larger bicycles, not just two or three wheel bicycles, and also electric bicycles. The result would entail companies operating those types of bicycle in the City would be subject to licensure, which requires an application and a small fee per driver. It also regulates insurance for businesses, and other rules to ensure safety of operations. These amendments have been distributed to City staff for feedback: including, DPW, Parking Office, Police Department, etc. All City staff are on board with the amendments.

Public Comment on Amendments to Chapter 30

No public comment

Motion to move forward with Amendments to Chapter 30

Approved unanimously.

Councilor Comments on Amendments to Chapter 30

Councilor Bullett requests that the amendments are distributed to the downtown community to receive feedback from impacted parties before the item goes to the full council.

Vote on Amendments to Chapter 30

Unanimously approved.

Marginal Way Chargers

Presented by Troy Moon

The proposed chargers would be located near Miss Portland Diner, close to the 295 corridor. According to the Housing and Development Committee, these chargers wouldn't impact potential housing development projects. Many private companies submitted applications. Grid Wealth LLC will be installing the chargers. Efficiency Maine has approved the location and installation. The anticipated lifetime of the equipment is about 10 years.

The item will come back to the committee for a final vote in October, public comment will be included.

Councilor Comment on Marginal Way Chargers

Councilor Bullett asks about if flooding will affect the chargers and if the vendor is aware of the risk of flooding in this location. *Yes, the vendor is aware of flooding and Efficiency Maine also assessed the location to approve its viability for charging. The proposed location is not located in a flood plain, and the City will not be held responsible for the maintenance of those chargers.*

Update on the Transportation Priorities

Presented by Keith Gray, Bruce Hyman, Kevin Kraft, and Jeremiah Bertlett

Over the past several years, the City of Portland has been working with regional and state partners, including PACTS and MaineDOT, on a number of significant projects. One of the City's fundamental goals includes multi-modal transportation.

The Libbytown Safety and Accessibility Project includes the reconstruction of Congress St./Park Ave. between I-295 and St. John St. Establishes two-way traffic on one-way streets; includes a roundabout near former Denny's location, separated bike lanes, signal improvements, and streetscape enhancements (lighting, furniture, plantings).

Project estimated cost was \$28 million (\$25M construction; \$3M engineering). MaineDOT and City received \$22.4M in federal funding (Reconnecting Communities-Neighborhoods Grant Program). MaineDOT and the City are sharing equally the 20% local match of \$4.48M (\$2.24M each). Project estimates are still preliminary and additional funding may be needed.

Next public meeting tentatively scheduled for 10/17/24, Preliminary Design Review (PDR) to be completed by late 2024; final design in 2026. Grant funding requires construction by 2027.

The Morrill's Corner project includes a redesign of Forest Avenue and the three intersections from Warren Avenue to Stevens Avenue to improve safety and enhance predictability of operations. Redesign will focus on enhanced streetscape, active transportation facilities, and access management/turning movement restrictions at key locations, including Bishop Street.

No current estimate, but costs are expected to exceed \$10M. MaineDOT has identified either a RAISE or CDS grant as funding options. Local/state match percentage will be determined.

The plan to convert State and High Street will be addressed in the following agenda item.

The Redesign of Franklin Street to reconstruct the street as a more urban, downtown street that better supports the context for urban development, re-establishes missing neighborhood connectivity and creates state of the art active transportation facilities.

A RFP for consultant services was issued by the City in August 2024 with responses due mid-September. This phase is expected to be completed by January 2026. In addition, the DOT and City are currently working on a Reconnecting Communities-Neighborhoods Planning Grant application that would advance the project through design

Redesign of Forest Avenue between Woodford's Corner and USM/Exit 6 with evaluation of improving safety for all users, active transportation options and reducing congestion. The focus is on a short-term redesign concept to align with an expected paving project within the next five years, potentially to include a 'road diet' that would reduce lanes from 4 to 3 and allow in-street bike lanes. Currently funded for feasibility only.

Intersection improvements at the five-way Rosemont Corner intersection. Intersection will either be a revised traffic signal intersection or a roundabout design. MaineDOT is leading this analysis. There will be public engagement throughout this process, and consensus with MaineDOT will be needed. The City is looking to integrate this with a larger paving project in the future.

Funding is currently available for the feasibility study and for 50% design (PDR). Construction cost is to be determined as part of the alternatives selection process and preliminary design.

These pathways will fill gaps in the existing pathway network from Forest Avenue to the Fore River Parkway Trail pathway when completed. The Union Branch Pathway will convert the rail line from Forest Avenue to Park Avenue to a shared use pathway (0.7 miles). It will include a 12' paved pathway, pathway lighting, landscaping, connections to Deering Oaks Park, Fitzpatrick Stadium and Hadlock Field and a stone dust jogging path by infilling between the remaining rails. The Union Branch Connector will cross Park Avenue to Valley Street, Congress Street and connect to the Fore River Parkway Trail.

The Union Branch Pathway design is funded with 80% federal/20% local funding. The pathway's construction is funded 100% by state funding up to \$2.8M as well as a CIP allocation for costs the MaineDOT construction funding won't cover (e.g., landscaping). The Union Branch Connector is funded through design with 80% federal/20% local funding. There is no construction funding currently.

Final design of the Union Branch Path will be completed in December 2024 and expected to be bid in January 2025 to begin construction in the Spring 2025. The Union Branch Connector design is anticipated to be completed by Spring 2026.

The West Commercial Street Pathway will, when completed, extend from the terminus of the Fore River Parkway Trail path at Cassidy Point Drive to High Street/Hobson's Landing. The remaining segment (Phase III, 0.5 miles) is from Beach Street to High Street/Hobson's Landing.

A funding application to the MaineDOT for Phase III for design and construction, approximately \$1M, was submitted this summer which would be 80% federal/20% local funding.

Phase II, from the Fore River Parkway Trail to the Star Match Building, was completed Summer 2024. Much of it was constructed as part of the site development process of the VA Clinic. Phase I was completed by MaineDOT in 2018 as part of an International Marine Terminal expansion project.

The City is currently on several transportation infrastructure initiatives to make our City safer, more walkable and bikeable. With multiple projects happening simultaneously at several stages by different agencies creates a challenge for staff to prioritize projects and for others to understand the overall goal, so that is why the Planning and Development Department feels it is important to ensure they are effectively communicating and coordinating our Transportation plans and thinking more strategically. The City would like to begin embarking on an updated Transportation Plan. The City's Transportation Plan has not been comprehensively looked at since the 1990's. The transportation master plan would engage the public, identify and prioritize transportation goals, and identify the capital projects, programs, and policy initiatives necessary to achieve them. This project is still in its early stages.

Councilor Comment on Transportation Priorities

Councilors thank the employees for their work and presentation.

Plan to convert State and High Streets to two-way traffic

Presented by Jeremiah Bartlett

The State and High Two-Way Feasibility Study, ostensibly an update of a previous study in 2015, has reached the conclusion that, as it was in 2015, a two-way conversion is feasible. Some initial findings were presented to the S&T Committee on May 8, 2024. Since then, concept plans have been created and a public meeting held on September 5, 2024, which had generally positive feedback, although there were questions on potential for vehicle congestion, tree impacts and the long-term direction and type of bicycle facilities to be included in the ongoing design work.

94% of parking is occupied at a given time on State St.

The operation analysis indicates feasibility of a two-way State and High St.

In addition, MaineDOT provided feedback to the City that they concur with the finding of feasibility for a two-way conversion. Reduced volumes reduce needs for some turn lanes. Shorter turn lanes reduce parking impacts. State Street bridge approach requires two, not three lanes. There is a small delay, however it is relatively little delay for downtown urban conditions.

Loss of 7 parking spaces along State Street, however 12 parking spaces will be gained along High Street. Bicycle facilities are being explored and are very likely to be outside of the curb. A two-way street will also reduce vehicle speeds and eliminate double threats to pedestrians crossing both corridors. The City is not looking to impact the “heritage trees” ; this will impact the design of the bike lanes. Bicycle movements may be moved to the sidewalks in some areas.

This project is still at the conceptual stage, but if the City and MaineDOT can arrive at a two-party agreement for the project as part of the signal replacement project, the cost to the City is currently estimated to be between \$1.3M and \$1.7M for the signal conversion, and would be in place prior to the 2027 construction year (likely FY27). This assumes integration into MaineDOT’s project, and does not include a cost for off-road bicycle facilities, as more design work is required for a cost estimate. At this time, DPW has an initial rough estimate of \$2M to \$3M for that work to be completed.

Staff seek formal support from the Committee members for the conversion in concept, as well as supporting funding for future project delivery, potentially in conjunction in a future MaineDOT signal project. This item will then move to the Council for a formal vote of support.

Councilor Comment on the conversion of State and High Streets to two-way traffic

Councilor Bullett asks that pedestrian safety is a top priority while moving forward and asks that the bike safety plan is enhanced moving forward.

Public Comment on the conversion of State and High Streets to two-way traffic

Paul Drinan, representing the Bicycle Coalition of Maine, applauds staff for thinking of off-street bike lanes. The one-way cycle tracks on both sides would be preferred. Pauls asks for clarity on how the bike lanes would merge with York St. Paul asks if 11ft travel lanes would be considered. Regarding pg 14, the costs of the project, Paul notes that this investment will provide transportation equity. Paul suggests that the committee takes into consideration the comments from the Bike Ped Committee. The Bicycle Coalition of Maine supports this plan.

Zack Barowitz notes that it was difficult to find the meeting and make public comments. Zack prefers the term “restoration” to “conversion” and comments that travel times are outweighed by other time savings. Zack requests climbing lanes for bicycles be considered.

Kevin Parker made comments in support of the plan and requested that the City remain the project manager on this project rather than the Maine Department of Transportation.

Lynne notes concerns about residents being able to park without causing significant traffic congestion. Lynne hopes to do a trial run of the conversion for a month.

Markos Miller notes appreciation for the staff’s work and hopes the committee recommends the plan to the full council.

Council and Staff response to public comment

Jeremiah notes that although both streets would go down to only one lane but gaining another street in the same direction and notes that there would be less traffic because people will not be re-circulating.

Councilor Phillips asks if the plan presented today is the permanent plan or if there will be changes after it is brought to the council. *Jeremiah clarified that the committee is being asked to bring this item to the full council so that the plan can latch on to a much larger MDOT project. There will still be plenty of opportunities for public comment and changes to the bike plan.*

Councilor Bullett asks if MDOT would cover the cost of the additional streetlights. *The answer is no, they will not cover that cost. The City will be responsible for the cost of the streetlights.*

Motion to recommend the plan to the full council

Approved.

Vote to recommend the plan to the full council

Unanimously approved.

Franklin St Project Update and Funds Appropriation

Presented by Kevin Kraft

The Franklin Street project has evolved over many years of study and public participation. The Reclaiming Franklin Street study was adopted by the City Council in 2009, establishing a design concept that converts Franklin Street to a more standard urban street and restores lost neighborhood connectivity to the street's east and west. The Franklin Street Master Plan, adopted by the Council in 2015, refined the urban street concepts from the Reclaiming Franklin Street study into a recommended street concept that included a reduced street footprint, improved bikeways and streetscapes, and street connectivity at Oxford, Newbury and Federal Streets.

At a September 2023 City Council workshop, city staff presented an update on Franklin Street, reintroducing the project to the Council and providing a rationale for revisiting and updating the Master Plan concept. The presentation included an overview of the changes that have occurred since 2015, including significant development along and nearby Franklin Street, post-pandemic shifts in traffic conditions, and the opportunity to obtain new significant federal funding for projects like Franklin Street. The strong sentiment of the Council at the workshop was that the time is right to re-engage with the public and advance an update to the Master Plan concept.

In April 2024, the City of Portland and MaineDOT entered into a Village Partnership Initiative (VPI) agreement to update the 2015 Franklin Street Master Plan through the Franklin Street Enhanced Project Scoping project. The total agreed cost of the Planning Study is \$300,000. The City of Portland is contributing \$150,000 and MaineDOT will cover the remaining \$150,000.

At the City Council's 9/16 meeting, City Staff will be requesting that the Council approve the use of existing impact fee funds in the total of \$250,000 in order to provide a 10% local match for the

MaineDOT Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods federal grant application for the Franklin Street Design phase, which will begin following the completion of the Enhanced Project Scoping project. The remaining funding would be \$250,000 (10%) from MaineDOT and \$2,000,000 (80%) in federal funds, contingent upon the successful award of the grant.

Anticipated potential funding sources for future phases include the Reconnecting Communities & Neighborhoods grant, the Safe Streets for All (SS4A) grant, RAISE grant, and Congressionally Designated Spending (CDS) earmarks. Potential local funding sources for future phases may include proceeds from future parcel sales, development revenue, TIF revenue, impact fees, CIP funds, and water resources funds.

Public Comment on Franklin St Project Update and Funds Appropriation

Zack Barowitz thanks staff for their hard work and brings up that Kevin Kraft is a great asset to this project in particular due to his prior experience.

Markos Miller thanks the staff and committee for working on this project and looking forward to the economic development focus. Recommends that the land use plan should be integrated in the transportation plan and believes that the plan is in the right direction. Asks about how many homes can be built on Franklin St and notes that the Franklin St Reclamation group conducted a housing study that estimates significant housing opportunities and revenue from land sales. Markos asks that the committee recommend this to the full council.

Councilor Comments on Franklin St Project Update

Councilor Bullett asks that the housing organizations are aware of the project and where things stand. Councilor asks that the public engagement process be as robust as ReCode.

Motion to Recommend Local 10% Match of \$250,000

Moved unanimously

Vote on Recommendation of Local 10% Match of \$250,000 for the Reconnecting Communities Grant Application

Approved Unanimously.

Downtown Parking Update

Presented by Greg Jordan and John Peverada

Individuals working in the downtown area have expressed concern that there is insufficient affordable and easy long-term parking options that are in close enough proximity to places of employment.

In early August, city staff met with representatives of workers who are advocating for the parking proposal. The meeting was an opportunity to hear directly from workers about their challenges accessing parking in close proximity to workplaces. Representatives expressed the view that garages/lots generally do not have capacity, are not affordable, and do not allow late night exits. They also communicated a concern about personal safety related to

walking from work sites to parking garages. Due to these concerns, workers who choose to use on-street metered parking must move their vehicles every 2 hours (through 6pm) in order to avoid tickets.

Key Survey Results for Workers:

- 68% of respondents indicated they are Portland residents.
- 68% of respondents indicated they work for a restaurant/bar or retail business.
- 84% stated they either always or often drive to work.
- Most workers are using on-street metered or free parking; few report using garages or lots.
- 74% report that they cover the cost of parking entirely on their own.
- 39% report paying under \$100 per month for parking; 44% pay between \$100-\$300 per month, and 17% pay over \$300. - Nearly 50% of workers walk from their vehicles to work in 5 minutes or less, 0% walk 5-10 minutes, and 11% walk over 10 minutes.
- When asked about using garages and surface lots within a 10 minute walk to work sites, workers were either very or extremely concerned about parking affordability (69%), followed by late night garage access (35%), personal safety (29%), walking distance (27%), and accessibility (20%).
- When asked about options to make mobility/parking easier, workers expressed the most interest in a worker sticker pass (76%) followed by added downtown parking (37%), free transit passes (33%), safety-security improvements (29%), improved bike-pedestrian infrastructure (25%), pre-tax commuter benefits (23%), and late night bus service (18%).
- Only 17% reported awareness of the Portland Downtown District's Park and Work Program.

Key Survey Results for Businesses:

- 70% of respondents indicated they own or manage a restaurant/bar or retail business.
- Business owners indicated that affordable housing and the cost/availability of parking make it harder to recruit and retain employees.
- 41% reported providing some financial assistance to employees to help with parking costs.
- When asked about options to make mobility/parking easier, business owners expressed the most interest in a worker sticker pass (63%) followed by added downtown parking (49%), safety-security improvements (37%), free transit passes (32%), improved bike-pedestrian infrastructure (20%), late night bus service (19%), and pre-tax commuter benefits (16%).
- 67% of business owners expressed that customer parking would be very or somewhat impacted by allowing workers to park for extended periods in 2 hour meters.
- Only 15% of business owners reported knowing about the Portland Downtown District's Park and Work Program.

Among the municipalities that have programs for downtown workers, all restrict permit use to certain garages or lots. These locations are generally located along the peripheries of downtown

districts. None allow permit holders to park for extended periods in the central business district's 2 hour metered parking spaces.

Short-term metered parking in the downtown area is mainly provided to support the general public and local businesses by facilitating convenient customer access. The two-hour time limit fosters high turnover which is conducive to both customer needs and retail business/restaurant owners' desire for high traffic. As the peer review indicates, this approach to on-street parking in downtown business districts is common.

Lowering the supply of available short-term, metered parking should be expected to reduce the general public's ability to conveniently access downtown businesses. An industry accepted benchmark suggests that an on-street parking space generates \$45,000 to \$95,000 in annual retail sales.

While the survey results indicate strong support for the sticker program, the approach would allow workers to park beyond the 2 hour limit in the highest demand areas of the city. Such a program would be expected to reduce the supply of parking for customers and the general public. Where peer municipalities provide programs that aim to support downtown workers, these focus on making outlying parking more affordable while preserving high-turnover parking in core downtown districts.

City staff share the goal of making parking easier and more affordable for workers, and suggest we consider alternatives that balance the needs of workers with customers and local Businesses:

- Improve Affordability and Access to Parking Garages/Surface Lots
- Increase Metered Parking Time Frames at Underutilized Location(s)
- Improve Overall Communications about Parking Options
- Free Transit Pass Program for Downtown Workers
- Expand Metro's Peninsula Circulator

Councilor Comment on Downtown Parking Update

Councilor Bullett is wanting to know what neighborhoods the downtown workers are commuting in from. This could be useful information to inform public transit or future micro transit. Asks what needs to be done to increase the income guidelines for the Portland Downtown District Work and Park program. PDD runs the program and would likely need to be the ones to change the income limits. Councilor asks if moving the Spring St parking to 10hr parking would lead to Cross Arena parkers using those spots. Councilor Bullett asks what the limits would be for the downtown worker free transit pass program and asks that housekeeping staff is also included in the program and asks that the employers may be responsible for the price of the program. Greg hopes that the program run a pilot year with two participating employers.

Public Comment on Downtown Worker Parking

No public comment

Motion to approve the recommendations of downtown parking

Approved unanimously

Motion to Adjournment

The motion was moved by Councilor Bullett, and seconded by Councilor Phillips

The motion was accepted unanimously.

Meeting Adjourned