

Franklin Street Redevelopment Study Phase II
Public Advisory Committee Meeting
June 26, 2013
Portland City Hall

Committee Members: Markos Miller, Hank Berg, Scott Markowski, Christian MilNeil, Bob Stevens, Doug Foss, Jamie Parker, Jon Graback, Yugo Yobo, Chris O’Neil, Ethan Boxer-Macomber, Elizabeth Hoglund, Sally Oldham, Chris Wells, Alex Landry, Hugh Nazor, Mark Adelson

Staff: Mike Bobinsky, Jeremiah Bartlett, and Bruce Hyman, Bill Needelman, City of Portland; Carl Eppich, PACTS; Darryl Belz, MaineDOT; Tegin Teich and Ritesh Warade, IBI Group; Molly Casto, Gorrill-Palmer; Carol Morris and Scott Hastings, Morris Communications

Meeting Summary: This first PAC meeting of the Phase 2 study focused on providing an overview of the study principles, tasks and timeline and how it will differ from the Phase 1 study. The role and responsibilities of PAC members was outlined, with an emphasis on their key role in public outreach. The major work was to get the new PAC’s feedback on the Phase 1 Vision Statement.

An important message is that the goal of the study is not to pick one of the three alternatives created in Phase 1, but to look at the elements in all alternatives and find the combination that best supports the Vision Statement.

The meeting provided answers to specific PAC questions on MaineDOT requirements on two and four-lane roads, Levels of Service, and emphasis on new housing.

Members were asked to review the Phase 1 Vision Statement to determine if any changes were needed.

They also heard about the difference between a Goal (general and easy to support) and an Objective (more specific, sometimes conflicting and can be a source of disagreement) and the Measures of Effectiveness the study would use to quantify these. Members gave feedback on proposed Objectives and Measures of Effectiveness to be incorporated into the first deliverable for this project.

Meeting Decisions: Members made suggestions for minor tweaks to the Vision Statement around housing, affordability and walkability.

Meeting Report

Meeting started at 6:01 pm

Markos Miller, chairman of the Public Advisory Committee (PAC), opened the meeting and asked everyone in attendance to introduce themselves.

Mike Bobinsky, Director of Portland's Department of Public Services, thanked the committee members who had been involved with the Phase 1 project for their patience and commitment in the time between phases. He also announced the partnering agreement that the city has entered into with MaineDOT and PACTS that should help the project move forward quickly and with clearly defined roles.

Tegin Teich, from IBI Group, and lead of the consulting team, introduced herself and the rest of the consulting team. She then turned the floor over to Carol Morris of Morris Communications.

Carol reviewed the agenda for the meeting. She then discussed the role of the PAC and the schedule for the project. The PAC will meet five times of the course of the 16-month project. She noted that meetings will need to be focused and productive.

Carol then went over the differences between the current Phase 2 study and the previous Phase 1 study. Phase 1 was a long and intensive public process with a large number of PAC and public meetings. It created a solid Vision Statement and three alternatives that covered all of the potential ideas and elements seen as good ideas for the corridor. Phase 2 will work on taking the elements identified in the three alternatives and putting together one feasible and implementable recommendation.

The PAC meetings will be collaborative, hands on affairs. The goal is for them to have more of a workshop feel than a traditional meeting format. Ultimately the group will be seeking to achieve general support for the end solution so that it can be moved forward to implementation.

Carol reminded the group that they were not just there as individuals but as representatives of their respective neighborhoods, communities and advocacy groups. The committee members were asked to seek feedback on the project from these constituencies so as to better inform the process. The study team will be working hard to be transparent and will be posting materials and minutes to a webpage within the city website. A Facebook page will also be maintained to make information easily available to the general public. There will be two public meetings in the course of the study, so getting the word out will be an important job that the committee members will take a lead role.

At this point Tegin took the floor. She reviewed the study area, noting that it is a fairly narrow corridor but that data collection and mapping will cover a larger area. She then presented the project tasks. First the project would revisit the Phase 1 work to make sure that nothing has

changed in the intervening time. Additional, in-depth data analysis will be done of the existing conditions. From this and PAC input, three refined alternatives will be developed. Those will be assessed in measurable ways from which one final recommendation will be made. Throughout this process there will be regular PAC involvement. The project is scheduled to be completed in December of 2014.

Tegin said that the alternatives developed will be based on the vision statement and identified goals. The meeting would review those and adjust them as necessary. The alternatives and final recommendation would also be heavily influenced by the existing conditions analysis and the input from the PAC and public meetings.

Carol added that email will be used by the study team to distribute information and materials to the PAC between meetings, so an ongoing stream of information will be available.

Tegin continued with a quick review of how the alternatives would be evaluated. They would be measured against a list of Measures of Effectiveness that the team will develop based on their expertise and input from the PAC at this meeting. They would also be run through a micro simulation Syncro model and be evaluated using a Complete Streets Level of Service rubric for all modes.

A committee member asked what the baseline data for the bike and pedestrian evaluation was like.

Tegin responded that they did have some counts, but that primarily the model would determine the bike/ped evaluation. It will take into account road/sidewalk geometries, curbs, crash data, and viewsheds, among other data. The Multimodal LOS is a tool that is increasingly used for this type of work.

A committee member commented that MDOT's 2011 traffic counts appear to show a continued lack of volume growth.

Tegin agreed and noted that some data showed an increase, specifically in the vicinity of the marginal way intersection due to new commercial development in the area.

A committee member noted that due to the currently unfriendly conditions over much of the corridor, the proposed changes could have a significant effect on bike and pedestrian usage. Tegin agreed. She then presented the answers to some questions the PAC had asked at an earlier date. First, the PAC has asked what MaineDOT's cut off was between a 2-lane and a 4-lane road. There is no standard traffic count for this distinction. Two-lane roads rarely carry more than 20,000 cars a day on average and 4-lane roads rarely carry less than 10,000 cars a day on average. This leaves some middle ground. Depending on where in the corridor, Franklin carries an average of between ~5,000 and ~26,000 cars a day. Other factors that influence the capacity of a road include number of curb cuts, turning and crossing traffic, on-street parking, transit and pedestrian crossings. Part of the partnering agreement between the City,

MaineDOT, and PACTS is that level of service on the corridor cannot be made worse at any point. This provides a baseline that the consulting team will be working from.

A committee member noted that they had asked that question and the reasoning behind it was if the road was dropped to two lanes south of Congress St., how much developable land would be gained and would the loss of capacity be regretted as the eastern waterfront continues to be developed.

Tegin responded that she could not answer that at the moment but that currently that section of road carries very little traffic in comparison to the rest of the corridor. There is a very large right of way along the corridor and all three of the previous alternatives show a reduction to two lanes for that portion of the road.

A committee member noted some concern about the partnership agreement to retain level of service on the corridor.

Tegin noted that the statement allowed for some flexibility but that she would ask PACTS, the MaineDOT and the City for their official thoughts.

Darryl Belz from the MaineDOT noted that it was written that way so that the road's capacity was not diminished but that it was felt to have a lot of room for flexibility in the forms the final alternative could take.

Ritesh Warade, from IBI Group, noted that the overall goal for the project was to improve the level of service for all modes along the corridor.

A committee member asked how levels of service were determined.

Tegin responded that that was a more technical topic and while there was not time to answer the question now the study team would follow up via email to the PAC afterwards.

A committee member said that there was a lot of land to be freed up just from moving the sides of the road together and asked if the land being freed up could possibly be developed for housing.

Tegin responded that housing was definitely on the table and the opportunity to prioritize it would be part of the vision session. The first phase did discuss what development could happen with a narrowing of the road and this phase will continue with that discussion.

The second question that the PAC had given to the study team ahead of time was in regards to MaineDOT's policies on lane width. Again, MaineDOT had no strict cut and dried answer. Federal recommendations for a minor arterial call for 11 to 12-foot lanes. This is a recommendation for travel lanes and transit does generally call for 11-foot lanes. The recommended minimum width for parallel parking is eight feet. Sidewalks are recommended

to be a minimum of five feet and Tegin noted that this was really a bare minimum and where possible they should be wider.

The third point the PAC brought up ahead of time was that lane width should be minimized and Tegin said that that was noted and the team would make sure to keep that in mind. The fourth point was a question on when the road was up to be repaved. The section from I-295 to Middle Street was scheduled to be repaved in the summer of 2014 and the section from Middle Street to Commercial St. would be done in 2015. This would allow for trying out some striping changes on the second portion.

The fifth question asked by the PAC was related to the mapping that would be done for this project. Tegin emphasized that a large set of maps were being developed and that a list could be shown if desired. This information will be forthcoming in an email.

Finally the PAC had asked what parts of the Phase 1 plan could the city be working on now. Tegin answered that the study team would be coming out with some short-term recommendations in early 2014.

At this point Tegin presented the four overarching principles of the project. She hoped that they would inform the PAC's work in the review of the visioning statement. The four principles are as follows:

- **Smart Cities:** The idea of smart cities is that of maximizing efficiency and sustainability through careful planning and application of technology where appropriate.
- **Transit Oriented Development:** Transit oriented development is concerned with making sure that development encourages a robust transit system. This means appropriate land use and design combined with policy that encourages transit.
- **Complete Streets:** Complete Streets is the idea that streets must serve all modes of transportation. There must be consideration given to how and where people change modes of transportation and the transportation system should be flexible to meet the needs of everyday life. Different streets serve different needs and they should reflect this in how they serve different modes of transportation.
- **Context Sensitive Solutions:** The context sensitive solutions approach to problems acknowledges that every place is different and so every place needs its own solution to its own problems. It is a collaborative interdisciplinary way of looking at and solving problems.

Tegin then presented the Vision Statement from Phase 1. She noted that it was a very comprehensive statement and portions of it could be directly mapped to the four principles she had just introduced. The vision statement was then broken down into pieces and the PAC was asked to vote on which pieces were most important to them. The opportunity to add points that were felt to be missing was also available.

Carol took the floor to quickly review the purpose of this exercise. She noted that she understood that the people on PAC that were involved in Phase one were likely already happy with the Vision Statement as is. However she noted that it was now years later and with new people present, it was important to come back to it and make sure that it still reflected the group's values and desires. The purpose of the exercise was to get an idea of what parts of it were most important to the group and to make sure that nothing important was left out. Nothing would be removed from the Vision Statement, even if that section received no votes.

A committee member asked if they should approach the exercise as to create a vision statement that covers the existing three alternatives or one that will guide the final alternative.

Carol said the latter, and Tegin agreed, saying that this was not to create a new vision statement but to give the team some idea of the relative importance of the various parts of the statement as it exists. Carol added that it would also give the team an idea of where agreement and disagreement might be, and what areas might need more discussion.

There was a question about what the term "optimum architecture" meant in this context. Members of the Phase 1 PAC explained that they had considered it to mean, "the best we could get".

At this point the PAC was invited to stand up and go to prepared boards where they could vote via stickers and write any comments they had.

After the exercise was completed Carol quickly reviewed the boards and noted that the two items with the most votes were: Vibrant urban corridor and enhance the urban fabric. Four new items had been added: Maximize residential development, conserve capacity of working waterfront, preserve equalitarian nature of development, and accommodate tourist uses.

Carol asked for comments on the "maximize residential development" point:

A committee member noted that at first glance they appreciate the point and agree with it. One of the Phase 1 alternatives tried to maximize residential development and they felt putting it so expressly in the vision statement would make it favor that one alternative over the others.

Carol asked the group if this point was something they would like to add to the vision statement.

A committee member noted that they felt it was already covered by the mixed-use development reference in the existing vision statement.

Another committee member agreed, but felt an emphasis on the residential part of mixed use could be added. They noted that residential development is an important part of making a lot of other things work.

A committee member said that they were reluctant to add anything to the vision statement because it was already quite long but felt that it was worth emphasizing this point. He also wanted to add that if this effort was to update the vision statement for 2013, the PAC might want to consider the realities that have changed in the last few years. Federal funding sources have diminished and MaineDOT is seeing a slow but steady decrease in fuel tax funds. This means the project needs to be more conscious of the maintenance and construction costs of the road as well as maximizing the city's economic benefits. They felt that it was already covered but important to keep in mind.

Another committee member agreed and noted that those costs might influence the placement of the road as the project progresses.

A committee member said that it is important to keep in mind development off of the immediate corridor. Improving the road will improve the developmental prospects of parcels that do not front on it and those developments will create traffic that will affect the corridor.

Jeremiah Bartlett from the City said that he gets leery about talk about the expected amounts of development. He felt that the group should be considering complementary development and think more about the type of street that they want rather than being held hostage by traffic counts.

A committee member mentioned that providing egalitarian housing opportunities is an important issue to the East Bayside neighborhood. They want to keep things in the area affordable. It was acknowledged that this might involve building a lot more housing in the area. The area was seen as having some of the only available land in Maine where housing could be built to serve less affluent populations who may not have or want a car. They pointed out that new development creating traffic does not have to be the case if that development is oriented to people who do not have cars. They pointed to the lower end of Franklin Street that has seen significant new development including multiple large hotels in the last few years and there has not been an associated increase in traffic.

Carol asked if anyone disagreed about added language about equality to the vision statement, another suggestion.

A committee member said that they felt it had been discussed extensively during the creation of the vision statement and so should already be a part of it.

A question was asked what would happen to the points that received less or no votes.

Carol repeated that nothing was going to be removed from the Visions Statement. She then asked how people defined a "vibrant urban corridor".

This led to some discussion but the overwhelming agreement was that it required more people, at more times of day. Buildings should front on the street and actively interact with it. Activity was the desired result.

A committee member added that diversity was also a key point. Not just racial diversity but income diversity and diversity in housing. They also felt that transit to serve the increased people and activity was important.

A committee member agreed with that and said that they could sum up their earlier comments on equalitarianism as economic diversity.

Another committee member mentioned a diversity of small businesses

A committee member said that they would like to see more emphasis on bikes and pedestrians over cars and cited a Canadian city that has officially committed to serving those modes over car modes.

Carol noted that this would be a big discussion.

A few city officials responded with the general consensus that the city was committed to serving all modes of transportation equally.

A committee member agreed with the City, saying that while some streets could be prioritized Franklin will always need to be able to handle fairly significant car traffic.

A committee member countered that a more developed street grid would take some of the traffic off of Franklin and slow traffic.

Another committee member said that “walkable” should be added to the definition of a vibrant urban corridor.

Seeing no further comment Carol closed the vision exercise, noting that she did not see the need for any major changes to the vision statement, though there would be some minor tweaking. A revised Vision Statement would be sent out to the PAC for comment via email in the next few weeks.

Tegin took the floor to begin the discussion of goals and objectives for the study. She first made the distinction between goals and objectives clear. Goals are high-level concepts that are supported by the whole group. They are broad, can be a bit vague, and are open to some interpretation. They come out of the Vision Statement and provide framework for the objectives. Objectives are more detailed and may be disputed. They can even be in conflict with one another. For example, calming traffic and avoiding traffic diversion could both be objectives but to some extent traffic calming measures can increase diversion. Objectives must be measurable and will be weighted so as to help resolve conflicts.

The study team had identified five broad categories of goals and objectives that they pulled from the Phase I report as well as in review of similar projects throughout Portland. They are:

- Accessibility: The accessibility of people and movement of goods into and out of the area.
- Urbanism and Land Use: Creating development that is respectful of context, efficient and sustainable; enhancing the urban fabric.
- Environment and Energy: Using resources efficiently and improving quality of life while having a small environmental impact.
- Health and Safety: Create a safe and healthy place to live and work.
- Community and Economic Development: Foster community involvement and increase the social prosperity of the local economy.

Tegin asked if these were good goals to have and if there was anything major missing.

Carl Eppich, from PACTS, said that he felt equity should be expressly included.

This sparked some discussion about the meaning of equity and where it would fit. Many felt it was a part of all of the goals, particularly accessibility with that possibly including accessibility to housing and jobs. It was clear from discussion that the intent for this project is that all people should benefit from it.

A committee member asked where aesthetics and design would fit and if it was part of Urbanism and Land Use.

Tegin said that it did fit under that category and that it came out more explicitly in the specific objectives.

Another committee member said that they would like to see a more dynamic word than “enhance” and suggestions were, “enliven”, “vitalize”, and “enrich”.

Tegin described the next exercise. The group would break up in to five smaller groups and each would be given one of the categories of broad goals. Each group would then examine the proposed objectives and their proposed measures of effectiveness for that category

At this point, the group split into five smaller groups to undertake the exercise.

After the exercise was completed, Tegin noted that she felt some good discussion had taken place in the groups and reviewed the next steps, in which the study team would create a list of objectives and their proposed measures of effectiveness for the PAC to review.

At this point Carol took the floor to review next steps. She said that minutes of PAC meetings would be completed with two weeks and that each would have a summary and list of decisions made. The next PAC meeting was to be in early October but the study team would keep the

PAC up-to-date through email. The PAC was asked to look for the revised Vision Statement and the list of objectives in the near future. She asked that PAC members endeavor to get comments back within a week on material emailed to them. She also asked that PAC members “reply all” so that the rest of the committee can see everything that happens. A question was asked if conversation and discussion could be done in a medium other than email. There was some discussion about this and the study team agreed to look into it.

Markos Miller reminded the committee that any questions could be sent to either Carol or himself and that they would send them on to the consulting team.

Carol asked if materials and updates should be saved up for a monthly blast of information or if they should be sent out piecemeal as they are available.

There was some discussion but no real answer to this question as opinions were different as to which was best.

A committee member asked if they could give Carol the times in which their respective groups (such as neighborhood organizations and advocacy groups) meet so that the release of material could be timed so that it is available for these meetings.

Carol felt that this was a good idea and asked that anyone in that situation email her the meeting times of his or her groups.

Mike Bobinsky wanted to remind the PAC that the city has a Transportation and Energy Sustainability Committee that will be discussing the study and will officially receive and review the final document. He also felt that the PAC members should remain in close contact with the city council where possible and reminded them that the council had appointed them to the PAC.

Jeremiah thanked the consultant team for their work in presenting the large amount of information in the meeting quickly and coherently.

Markos thanked the new PAC members for coming and agreeing to be involved and then thanked the PAC members that had been previously involved for sticking with the project.

The meeting ended at 8:01