

Summary of Public Meetings

Portland and Vancouver Open Houses February 6th & 7th, 2001



The first round of public outreach for the I-5 Transportation and Trade Partnership project was held February 6th –8th, 2001. The purpose of these meetings was to give the public a chance to learn about the I-5 Partnership process and the I-5 corridor, and to discuss their ideas and concerns about the corridor.

A series of four meetings was held. Two meetings were an open house format and two meetings were a presentation/discussion style. This document summarizes the feedback from the open houses. The feedback from the presentation/discussion meetings is presented in another document. This summary is organized as follows:

Open House, February 6, 2001, Water Resources Education Center, Vancouver

- Summary of Responses:
 - How important is the corridor?
 - How big is the problem?
- Other comments on the nature of the problem
- Potential solutions or actions you want to make sure we consider
- Concerns about potential impacts?
- Funding options we should consider
- What additional information do you need?
- Open house evaluation

Open House, February 7, 2001, Kaiser Town Hall, Portland Same as above

Open House Meetings: February 6 and 7, 2001

- **Comments on the Draft Problem Statement and Draft Vision and Values Statement**

Open House – February 6, 2001 Water Resources Education Center, Vancouver

Number of response forms returned: 13

How important is the corridor?

Response	# of Responses
Extremely important	11
Very important	1
Important	1
Not very important	
Not at all important	
No opinion	

How big is the problem?

Response	# of Responses
The most, or one of the most, critical transportation problems in the region.	8
Very important, needs prompt action.	2
Important, needs action.	1
Perhaps worthy of some attention, but not a priority.	1
It's fine, doesn't need attention.	1 – I don't use it.
No opinion	

Any further comments on the nature of the problem?

- Since the congestion in Oregon is caused mainly from commuters from Vancouver, it is a problem that needs to be addressed by Washingtonians. Light rail was offered and turned down. Oregon will have it to the Expo. Let Washington pay for it to go across the river.
- It will only get worse with no action.
- Light rail has never held congestion constant. Only building lane miles has proven to hold congestion constant – see Texas Transport Report.
- How many dollars are wasted due to traffic congestion e.g., fuel wasted due to traffic jams? How could this amount be used to “fund” improvements?
- Don't make river or airplane, pedestrian or bike transportation worse when you try to improve car and truck transportation.
- There is no choice. Solve the problem and watch the area grow, or don't fix it and watch the area lose its competitive position economically, and its value as a place to live and work.
- Who pays – by toll or tax? If we do nothing there will be a break down of commerce and cost jobs and will increase all taxes.
- Problems obvious. Future somewhat harder to predict – people in other regions (Seattle, LA) seem to live and expand. Don't want to see quality of life go down.
- Problem (congestion) is solvable.

What potential solutions or actions do you want to make sure we consider?

- Additional bridge.
- Neutralizing tax incentive for folks shopping in Oregon. Perhaps allow Clark County to not charge sales tax and find way to subsidize.
- High speed rail, commuter rail, light rail, new multi-modal bridge accommodating the above.
- Build lane miles for the 90% of us that must use private cars.

- Can better use be made of the rivers in finding solutions, e.g. ferries. Need to change culture regarding the need to commute to work at fixed times.
- Consideration given to business and homeowners during the process.
- Elevated automated guideway transportation systems. See www.artwerkz.com
- A new bridge for trains (including MAX). A bridge for traffic.
- A new bypass freeway from N. of Vancouver (Ridgefield) to the west across the Columbia River to Washington County locations (Beaverton, Hillsboro, Tigard) and re-connecting south of Portland.
- Combination of increased capacity on highway with light rail.

Concerns about potential impacts of these or any other options you heard mentioned tonight?

- Light rail usually wastes a lot of money and increases congestion rather than reducing it.
- The people that will be displaced due to any construction.
- Need to act rapidly.

Any thoughts about funding options we should consider?

- Telethon, bake sale.
- Federal High Speed Rail Investment Act of 2001.
- 100% of gas tax/road use tax to highway lane miles and maintenance, not bike lanes, etc.
- Toll not popular with those commuting daily from Washington to Oregon.
- User fees.
- Levies and taxes. If we expect to use and benefit from any solutions, we should participate in the cost.
- Tolls.

What additional information do you need?

- Ongoing rail studies.
- Can the photos of areas, bridges etc. (used in this open house) be posted on web site or made available in some other way.
- Costs of alternatives – especially consider costs of people’s time in transit, whether driving, stuck in traffic or waiting for a train or bus.
- When at the stage of planning, keep people informed about how this will affect their lives and homes.

**Open House Evaluation – Feb. 6th, Vancouver
Water Resources Education Center**

The most important things I got out of today’s event:

- Washingtonians want Oregon to pay – get light rail to Vancouver.
- Appreciation of the complexity of the problem.
- The fact that you’re doing something about the I-5 congestion problem
- Good general overview.
- The problem was presented very well.
- The scope of the problem and how many types of commerce are affected.
- A view of the overall picture of the corridor.

Category	1 – Very Worthwhile	2	3	4	5 - Not Worthwhile
Overall Mtg.	4	6	2		
Station Presentations	3	4	4		

Group Discussions	5	2	4		
Displays	5	5	1		
Materials	4	6	1		
Location	3	5	2	1	

Category	1 – Very Worthwhile	2	3	4	5 - Not Worthwhile
My ideas were asked for and listened to	6	4		1	
I know more than I did when I came	5	3	2	2	

For future sessions I would suggest:

- Let Washington pay for light rail.
- More discussion, less presentation.
- More numbers as they become available.
- Try to find times when more can attend, or have it on video.

Open House – February 7, 2001 Kaiser Town Hall, Portland

Number of response forms returned: 26

How important is the corridor?

Response	# of Responses
Extremely important	18
Very important	7
Important	1
Not very important	
Not at all important	
No opinion	

How big is the problem?

Response	# of Responses
The most, or one of the most, critical transportation problems in the region.	16
Very important, needs prompt action.	7
Important, needs action.	2
Perhaps worthy of some attention, but not a priority.	1
It's fine, doesn't need attention.	
No opinion	

Any further comments on the nature of the problem?

- In my opinion, funding will never be adequate to address even the most simple fix for the smallest problem. In other words an exercise in futility.
- There is little future for the region if this is not addressed.
- Cannot build your way out of the problem. Focus needs to be on demand management – public transit, land use, etc..
- Problems should be tackled in order of cost effectiveness. Ultimately must realize that the transportation system will be finite – will never catch up with demand. Demand will be self-limiting because of congestion.
- Gas, oil, energy prices already skyrocketing – what does the future hold for transportation costs for the states and the consumers.
- Pollution increases as vehicles are idled or blocked.
- The problem is not congestion per se. It is lack of viable travel options within the corridor. Given real alternatives to driving alone or trucking, congestion will actually encourage people to use those alternatives.
- Road rage if we do not control congestion. Pollution on auto/trucks is stalled in traffic. Safety on heavily traveled roads.
- Less spill over traffic.
- The City of Portland has been only providing negative impacts and solutions for motorists making congestion worse.
- Historically, not all modes have benefited from public investment. As a result, some options have not been supported or given an opportunity to shine. There is nothing wrong with using public funds to support rail improvements!
- We need action and a long-term plan.
- We have made the bed – time to make some changes.
- It's a mess that needs fixing. Deteriorating quickly.
- The economy will have major problems. Jobs and companies will leave. Livability of neighborhoods – spillover traffic into neighborhoods.

- Not sure private businesses, as a whole, are engaged in solutions to transit.

What potential solutions or actions do you want to make sure we consider?

- Demand management.
- Light rail extension northward. Uniform 3 lanes on I-5. No HOV lanes. Express lanes in the morning and evening.
- Expand park and ride opportunities, expand benefits for carpoolers, expand trains as well as light rail, monitor environmental impacts, be sure to get adequate access to the poor/elderly.
- Light rail should be separated from city streets. Then we can have longer trains that go faster. Interstate line should be a streetcar with more frequent stops.
- Places for carpoolers to gather to meet and form a carpool. These cars pick up passengers to enable a car to qualify for HOV lane. Washington DC has an “organically evolved” version of this that has functioned well for several years.
- 1) Allow privatized mass transit to compete with established bus and light rail services. Such privatization will also augment service between existing services with door-to-door service. Doing this immediately will reduce the need for I-5 bridge travel, as privatized transit will give inexpensive door-to-door service with more than one passenger in the car. 2) No light rail – it’s an abysmal failure and way too expensive. Light rail has not stopped car use – maybe even increase car use. 3) Remove urban growth boundary in Oregon. Allow westward expansion to thin out traffic density and pollution density in central area of the city. 4) Car pool parking lots for people crossing the river. 5) as proposed, add lanes in places where there are only two lanes.
- Commuter rail, in conjunction with light rail and bus options has to be part of the solution. High speed rail investments in the corridor will benefit freight rail and commuter rail. Don’t try to do too much with light rail: just run from downtown Vancouver to Portland. Use buses and commuter rail to serve greater Clark County.
- Complete light rail circle for the four county area.
- For safety, put small turn out lanes along freeway where no shoulders are available for stalled cars.
- Safety issues and better signing.
- Better truck signage.
- 1) no less than 3 full travel lanes from I-84 to Vancouver, 2) Extend IMAX to Vancouver, 3) eliminate curb extensions on arterials to increase capacity.
- Get rid of the bottlenecks before adding additional travel lanes.
- 1) Commuter rail, 2) speed and capacity enhancements on Burlington Northern Santa Fe mainline and spurs to port facilities, 3) rail improvements to benefit BNSF, UP and Amtrak, 4) grade separation.
- 1) new bridge/rail crossing, 2) congestion pricing, 3) light rail/enhanced bus service, 4) commuter/truck lanes, 5) adding lanes at “hot spots” on I-5.
- Increasing lane/rail capacity across the Columbia River.
- 1) interstate speed trains, 2) trans-Columbia light rail, 3) widening/increasing lanes of I-5 to decrease congestion, 4) big-safe-easy to use bicycle/alternative transportation plans.
- Developing Marine Drive and bridge over the Columbia.
- Better long range planning – 50-100 years.
- Alternatives to automobile traffic. Development of work centers as alternatives to commuting-telecommuting.
- Check out study by Texas DOT which is supported by Ore DOT which studies 6 cities. Two installed more traffic lanes, four installed light rail. Congestion did not increase on increased lanes, light rail congestion increased.
- Greater mass transit, and inducements for employees for telecommuting.

Concerns about potential impacts of these or any other options you heard mentioned tonight?

- More and more traffic through the area.
- Concerns about more lanes for trucks, etc.
- Safety – i.e. fast trains through populous areas.

- Downtown light rail will soon be a maximum capacity. We need transit lines that avoid downtown.
- Still some people who feel we can build our way out of this by expanding roads and building more roads.
- No federal funding please. Threats by US government to cut federal funds will take away states' rights. A self-funding toll bridge for those in a hurry.
- "Hot spots" proposal is stupid. Will only move bottleneck to another location resulting in more vehicle hours of delay. Consider strategic highway capacity reductions to change travel behavior (assuming options are provided).
- Concerned that the public is not aware how serious this traffic problem really is.
- Pollution.
- A real concern that the powers that be will try to afix all costs to the auto and only provide other modes as solutions.
- Get rid of the bottlenecks before adding additional travel lanes.
- The danger that lots of money will be spent and not relieve congestion or encourage conservation.
- Neighborhood disruption.
- Distruction of Kenton and its history.
- Committee composition – needs more trucking representation on committee.

Any thoughts about funding options we should consider?

- Toll roads similar to what is used in LA.
- Gas tax and toll lanes.
- Tolls and as many federal matching funds as we can grab.
- Less military spending would give more money for real needs.
- Someone in the group talked about privatizing.
- Needs to be a mix of federal and state funding.
- Tolls would get more people into public transportation.
- We need to have those who use - pay, i.e. bike riders need to help pay for their lanes, truckers and cars pay fees to use highways.
- Federal funding for federal highways.
- Tax all modes: bike tax, transit fare surcharge, truckers tax
- Tolling and congestion pricing.
- Private funding – tolls.
- State and federal funding with possible tolls.
- Federal!!
- Privatization – carefully.
- Toll bridge. Sell square foot of pavement to people (like the bricks in Pioneer Square).
- Permit fees for single vehicle (one person) using I-5 at peak hour.

What additional information do you need?

- What projects are moving forward in the study.
- Some oil analysts say world oil "production" will peak within 10 years. We should make plans accordingly.
- Want to see how these comments affect the overall plan.
- Be sure to explain the differences between light rail and commuter rail.
- Progress reports on narrowing options.
- Names and affiliations of ultimate decision makers.
- Costs. Criteria easily obtainable. Utilize online technology as much as possible: online chats, discussions, "real" video of meetings and presentations.

Any additional comments?

- If Union Pacific has to add more tracks, we should build extra tracks for commuter trains.

- I-205 is also very critical.
- Several people talked about living near their work – in today’s society we will probably change jobs several times during our working lives – there is no guarantee that one can stay in the same place and keep the same job...
- When evaluating the mix of solutions, do a complete cost/benefit (including non-monetary) for each proposal before recommending any particular set of solutions.
- Very good start – advertise to make public aware of this problem. We will help (the public) if we know.
- Keep our business access clear. Keep trucks out of neighborhoods.
- Consider extending Airport MAX to Vancouver. Also, underground at airport and then cross the Columbia.
- Be up-front if this is only about expanding road capacity.
- Good first class meeting.
- Ideas from “open houses” should be distributed on your website.

Open House Evaluation – Feb. 7th, Portland Kaiser Town Hall

Number of evaluation forms returned: 27

The most important things I got out of today’s event:

- Chance to give my input.
- Something needs to be done about this issue. My fear is that congestion will drive business away.
- The information presented was very informative. The presenters were informed about all aspects of the subject presented.
- Message that the public’s input will count.
- A good summary of the problem, and some great solutions.
- An overview of the problem.
- How congested the corridor is and will get in the future.
- Traffic and livability is more serious than I thought.
- Projections of future congestion.
- Expanded knowledge of the complexity of the problems and solutions.
- Being involved.
- Intro to problem of I-5 corridor.
- It’s rewarding to see that somebody realizes today’s traffic problems and sees future problems and are doing something about it.

Category	1 – Very Worthwhile	2	3	4	5 - Not Worthwhile
Overall Mtg.	16	9	3		
Station Presentations	11	8	8		
Group Discussions	11	9	6		
Displays	14	9	5		
Materials	13	10	5		
Location	16	8	3	1	

Category	1 – Very Worthwhile	2	3	4	5 - Not Worthwhile
My ideas were asked for and listened to	17	7	2		
I know more than I did when I came	11	9	6	1	

For future sessions I would suggest:

- I read the materials before hand. The presentations too long, get very frustrated before have a chance to give input.
- Everything was fine, but its a lot of information.
- Keep up the good work (2 people).
- Spread the stations further apart. Hard to hear the current presentation with the background noise of the next. In the graphic presentation of present conditions: need pictures of Amtrak and specific reference to the High Speed Rail corridor designation, and the opportunities it affords. Commuter rail needs to be mentioned in a number of places: thinking about the future, scenarios.
- More of these events than are planned; the more input the better.
- Please don't enforce the station and small group concept. I prefer to pick up materials at my own pace and go home and read them.
- Continue. Advertise the problem. Make the public aware.
- Probably hard wood flooring affected the noise levels, made it hard to hear at times.
- Representatives of the real power brokers – the movers and shakers.
- More depth information. Perhaps a kiosk with web page for those who do not have access but are interested.
- Review of input by meeting attendees at subsequent meetings.
- Trying to zone in on possible solutions (narrow the focus).
- We need more time for discussions and brainstorming. Couldn't be here for full meeting so not sure at this time, why didn't we have a representative from Oregon from the community. No business person like Vancouver. Resident – we need more residents with no affiliations to groups, organizations or businesses.
- Liquid refreshment other than coffee – punch or cola.
- I am impressed with the presentation and like the small groups moving through the program.

Comments on the Draft Problem Statement and Draft Vision and Values Statement

Open House Meetings: February 6 and 7, 2001

Problem Statement:

- I agree 100%.
- “Regional freeway system” is not well defined in the Problem Statement. Does that include Seattle/Tacoma are in the “region.” If so, we’re not the most congested area along I-5.

Vision Statement:

- I agree with the Draft Vision and Values statement, however I’m concerned light rail advocates may twist it. Even though light rail is touted to meet the Draft Vision and Value Statements, light rail is a proven failure. Even Westside light rail, which I thought might help, did not improve highway 26 traffic. Light rail proponents might try to “sell” light rail using “mobility”, “livability”, “access”, or “regional needs”, but these kinds of “promises” need to be compared with light rail’s bad results.
- The 4th bullet of the Draft Vision and Values statement: “meet” may not be the best verb to describe the intent. Perhaps transportation planning “supports” growth management goals.

Other:

- Try to find strategies that are multi-modal. Are there opportunities to improve mobility for autos, trucks, bikes, freight trains, Amtrak? I believe there are!!