

CENTRAL CITY LINE STEERING COMMITTEE
MEETING 1:15 P.M.

Minutes of March 29, 2016 Meeting
Spokane Convention Center, Room 302A
334 W. Spokane Falls Boulevard

MEMBERS/ALTERNATES PRESENT

Anne Marie Axworthy, Greater Spokane Inc.
Lisa Brown, Washington State Univ. - Spokane
Ryan Carstens, Spokane Community College
Kathy Fritchie, Browne's Addn. Neighborhood
Collen Gardner, Chief Garry Park Neighborhood
Cheryl Kilday, Visit Spokane
John Lemus, People First
E. Susan Meyer, Spokane Transit Authority
Mark Richard, Downtown Spokane Partnership
Harlan Shellabarger, Cheney Free Press
Scott Simmons, City of Spokane
John Sklut, Gonzaga University
Steve Trabun, Avista
Kevin Twohig, Spokane Public Facilities Dist.
Amber Waldref, City of Spokane (Chair)

STAFF PRESENT

Karl Otterstrom, Director of Planning (Secretary)
Kathleen Weinand, Transit Planner
Don Skillingstad, Capital Projects Manager
Brandon Ropez-Betty, Senior Communications
Specialist

CONSULTANTS/GUESTS

Catherine Ciarlo, CH2M
Randy Knapick, IBI Group, Inc.
Andrew Warlock, City of Spokane
Paul Kropp, Citizen

MEMBERS ABSENT

Mark Aden, DCI Engineers
Karen Byrd, Logan Neighborhood Council
Mark Mansfield, University Dist. Dev. Assoc.
Gary Pollard, Riverside Neighborhood Council

1. WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS, AND AGENDA REVIEW

Chair Waldref called the meeting to order at 1:13 p.m. Chair Waldref welcomed the group to the Steering Committee meeting. Gave a brief update on the February meeting and the alignment decisions to date. Outlined the goal of the meeting, which is to come to consensus on an alignment. Attendees introduced themselves.

2. PUBLIC EXPRESSIONS

Chair Waldref asked if there were any members of the public who wished to speak. There were none.

3. ADMINISTRATIVE TASKS

Chair Waldref asked if there were any changes to the minutes from the February meeting. There were none. **John Lemus made a motion to approve the minutes. Colleen Gardner seconded the motion. Motion approved unanimously.**

4. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Don Skillingstad provided update on the status of the project development process, reviewed the overall project timeline, status of the station and stop location analysis, NEPA and SEPA documentation work, and the vehicle and power research. Mr. Skillingstad also explained that the project team had upcoming meetings with Gonzaga University regarding the Cincinnati corridor and with the City of Spokane on the Mission corridor.

Ms. Gardner asked if she could get an update on the Mission Ave. meeting. Mr. Skillingstad explained that no decisions would be made on station locations, but an update would be provided to the Chief Garry Neighborhood.

Scott Simmons asked if a decision has been made on the vehicle and power. Karl Otterstrom explained that the topic was on the agenda for the meeting. Mr. Otterstrom also explained that the vehicle has always been an electric vehicle, but there are also options for the vehicle type that were up for discussion at the meeting.

5. DOWNTOWN ALIGNMENT ALTERNATIVES

Mr. Otterstrom explained the goal of the meeting is to come to a downtown alignment decision to forward to the STA Board and Spokane City Council in April. He outlined the downtown alignment outreach that has been completed to date and identified the three remaining alignment options.

Chair Waldref explained the previous process six years ago was to eliminate options that members couldn't live with and that may be a way to proceed.

Ryan Carstens asked if the temperature of the Downtown Partnership meeting has changed.

Chair Waldref polled the group on the three alignment options. General consensus of the group was that the two-way Main option was not a first choice. Members could live with either the Main/Riverside option or the Spokane Falls/Main option.

Chair Waldref asked for some background on why members could not live with the two-way Main option. Mark Richards stated the uncertainty and the unknown of the retail core, that owners have concerns about how this uncertainty can affect upcoming property and lease negotiations in a time that is tenuous. Mr. Richards further explained the Downtown Partnership Board was unanimous in their vote in opposition to the two-way Main concept.

Ms. Gardner was concerned about the infrastructure costs with converting to a two-way Main when that money could be used elsewhere.

John Lemus explained that he liked the two-way Main option as people can get places faster, but that his membership supports other options to help the project continue to move forward.

Chair Waldref stated that the other two options seemed to be equally favorable.

Randy Knapick summarized the commonalities of the Riverside/Main and Spokane Falls/Main options, identified existing land uses, issues and opportunities along each alignment. Mr. Knapick identified potential station locations but explained more analysis is needed to establish specific locations.

Chair Waldref asked what analysis goes into determining the station locations. Mr. Knapick explained that the proposed vehicle has doors on both sides so it provides flexibility on what station type is selected. Other considerations include the location of businesses, alleys and driveways.

Discussion continued about the southbound connections to the Plaza whether it would be Wall St. or Howard. St. Mr. Otterstrom explained that there are challenges with Wall St. in a two-way configuration but it is still on the table. For this reason it safe to assume that Howard Street may be used for the southbound direction.

Catherine Ciarlo summarized the advantages and challenges of the Spokane Falls and Riverside alignments. Chair Waldref asked about the ridership differences between the alignments. Ms. Ciarlo explained that the two block difference will not be substantial. Mr. Otterstrom explained that the ridership models will not pick up subtle differences in certain generators between the two alignments.

Chair Waldref open the meeting up for discussion on the alignment options. Cheryl Kilday stated that Visit Spokane's preference was for Spokane Falls alignment because of the convention center and the park. Kevin Twohig explained that the Public Facilities District Board supports the Spokane Falls alignment. Lisa Brown explained WSU is negotiating a lease for the Jensen Byrd building and trying to develop a structured parking area and they want to integrate the campus with downtown and provide for better bike and pedestrian connections. Ms. Brown supports the Riverside option. Ms. Gardner stated she is thinking about the impacts to Gonzaga University and visitors to Spokane, and the Spokane Falls option brings people to major destinations such as the convention center.

Mr. Richards summarized a white paper prepared by DSP staff and distributed to the Committee members. The whitepaper provides support for the Riverside option.

Susan Meyer asked if there were walking distance concerns for visitors at the convention center going to the mall. Mr. Twohig stated that the concern was visibility of the line going to the downtown core, not the return trip. It's easier to tell guests the line is in front of the convention center and then they will find their way back easier then telling guests to walk two blocks to catch the bus.

Mr. Lemus stated his group has a convention each year and the biggest indicator for where to have the convention is based on transit as all of the membership has disabilities and will make the choice of whether to come to Spokane is based on transit service.

Chair Waldref asked if the ridership information is detailed enough to pick up visitor ridership. Mr. Otterstrom stated the ridership model information does not determine whether trips are from visitors or other trips. Mr. Lemus asked if the 25 is the only route that serves the convention center. Mr. Otterstrom confirmed, on inbound trips only.

Anne Marie Axworthy asked Mr. Richards if the DSP board considered the fact that the Riverside route was further away from the downtown core and perceived parking barriers. Mr. Richards stated the Spokane Falls route has challenges south on Wall St. compared to the Riverside option where the route is only one block long. Discussion continued on the Wall St. issues and should the route continue further west to get closer to the retail core.

Ms. Kilday asked if there has been any review of major events on the central city line, would one alignment have a bigger impact on events than the other. Mr. Otterstrom explained this project would not impact big events, as it would be detoured much current vehicular traffic.

Mr. Carstens asked if we have data that shows what has the bigger impact on ridership, is it local or visitor ridership; also stated Riverside alignment seems to present more development opportunities.

Kathy Fritchie asked if the route can serve the convention center and then head south on Stevens or Bernard, then west on Riverside rather than use Wall St. Mr. Otterstrom stated Stevens and Bernard are options but they have not been studied. Discussion continued with north/south Riverside connection options. Ms. Brown stated the primary goal is to make this project happen.

Scott Simmons stated that the actual ridership is an important consideration. If the primary users are visitors, it benefits local businesses. If primary users are citizens it could catalyze businesses. The issue of who will the riders be is a very important consideration about which alignment is chosen. Ms. Kilday stated visitors make up 25-30% of spending on dining. Mr. Simmons recommends the Riverside option as it has the most opportunities but also likes the opportunities for visitors and the use of the convention center with the Spokane Falls alignment. Would like to have a better understanding of who the users will be. Mr. Otterstrom explained that the users will depend on how you design it; gave examples of other lines that support certain users like Link light rail. Each option may serve a different group but not a major difference.

Chair Waldref asked about altering existing routes to support the central city line. Mr. Otterstrom responded. Mr. Carstens stated the models would show that local riders would be greater than visitor ridership. Mr. Otterstrom stated that local riders will travel farther distances to catch the bus than visitors.

Harlan Shellabarger asked if STA has data that shows how far visitors would walk to get to bus service. Mr. Otterstrom stated studies show that the highest and best use around stations is retail commercial within 600' and then residential outside that. Both corridors would support the central city line.

Steve Trabun stated the original LPA discussions were centered around a fixed route and fixed stations that support economic development and the he is focused on the economic development aspect of the project, that there seems to be better opportunity with the Riverside alignment.

Mr. Knapick gave an update on a similar project in Seattle which helps to support local riders and visitors. This would be similar to the central city line project.

Mr. Richards stated signage and wayfinding can be used to help direct people to and from the convention center if the Riverside alignment is chosen.

Chair Waldref asked the group who supports each option and who could live with each. Most supported the Riverside option but most could live with the Spokane Falls option; no one could live without any option.

Ms. Kilday suggested the committee select an option. Visit Spokane believes there are two good options and either one would work.

Ms. Brown made a motion to recommend the Riverside/Main alignment. Mr. Richards seconded the motion. Chair Waldref called for discussion. There was none. **Chair Waldref called for the vote. Motion passes 13 in favor, one against (Twohig) and one abstaining (Waldref).**

6. VEHICLE AND POWER

Mr. Otterstrom gave a brief update on the status of the vehicle and power research. Based on the research completed and the advancements in vehicle battery and charging technology, Mr. Otterstrom suggested the vehicle mode be modified to reflect current technology by motion of the committee. The original project suggested a trolley type vehicle based on the preferred design which included overhead wires; however since 2014 the working assumption has been the project would not include overhead trolley infrastructure and would instead vehicles would have electric battery capacity to avoid that cost. The action today would be to confirm the working assumption as the project mode in fact.

Mr. Trabun made a motion to redefine the vehicle mode to be bus rapid transit vehicle using electric propulsion. Mr. Carstens seconded motion. Chair Waldref asked for discussion. Mr. Simmons asked if it will be the same vehicle with the same intent. Mr. Otterstrom confirmed. **Chair called for a vote. Motion passed unanimously with one abstaining (Waldref)**

Ms. Meyer stated there are two manufacturers that can supply a vehicle in time for the project.

Ms. Simmons asked if the other three manufacturers can build a vehicle.

Ms. Fritchie is concerned about a 60' bus going through Browne's Addition. Mr. Otterstrom stated there will be further discussions with the neighborhood once the design of the vehicle is furthered.

7. STEERING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation made prior.

8. SMALL STARTS GRANT UPDATE

No discussion

9. STRATEGIC OVERLAY PLAN

No discussion

10. NEXT MEETING TARGET

No discussion

11. ADJOURN

Meeting adjourned at 3:08 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Karl Otterstrom, Director of Planning
Steering Committee Secretary