

EUGENE CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY



Work Session: West Eugene EmX Update

Meeting Date: February 23, 2011
Department: Public Works Engineering
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Agenda Item Number: A
Staff Contact: Rob Inerfeld, PWE; Tom Schwetz, LTD
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ISSUE STATEMENT

At this City Council Work Session, Lane Transit District (LTD) staff and the council will have an opportunity to debrief the West Eugene EmX Extension's February 8 public hearing and discuss the process leading towards a City Council decision on a locally preferred alternative (LPA). No action is requested at this meeting. One additional work session is scheduled for March 9, 2011.

BACKGROUND

On October 9, 2006, the Eugene City Council voted to identify West 11th Avenue as the City's priority for the next EmX corridor study. The LTD Board of Directors endorsed the Eugene City Council's action. Based on this direction, staff began planning the West Eugene EmX Extension.

On January 24, 2011 the City Council received an update on how 58 alternatives had been reduced in response to preliminary environmental review and issues raised by area residents, businesses, and affected property owners. On January 31, the Joint LPA Committee made a draft recommendation that the 13th – 11th Avenue mitigated alternative become the locally preferred alternative for further environmental review along with the No-Build alternative. Public open houses were held on February 1 and 8, to highlight the mitigation measures incorporated into the project design and to reflect the Joint LPA Committee's recommendation. A public hearing was held on February 8, at which time members of the three deciding bodies (City Council, LTD Board of Directors, and Metropolitan Policy Committee) had an opportunity to submit written questions.

At the time of this writing, summaries of the public testimony and answers to the panel questions are being developed and are not yet available. As the summaries and answers become available, they will be provided to the council in advance of the work session or at the work session. A recommendation from the Eugene Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee is attached.

On Monday February 14, the Joint LPA Committee made its final recommendation (from draft minutes):

Mr. Pryor, seconded by Ms. Ortiz, moved that the LTD JLPAC recommend to the Eugene City Council, the Metropolitan Policy Committee, and the Lane Transit District Board of Directors that the West 13th-West 11th Avenue Mitigated Concept Alternative (3MC) and the West 6th/7th/West 11th Mitigated Concept

Alternative (5MC) be forwarded along with the No Build Alternative into the federal environmental review process for further analysis. LTD would incorporate mitigation measures identified through subsequent analysis.

Mr. Pryor amended the motion to include mitigation measures B, C and L. Ms. Ortiz accepted the second to the motion.

The motion passed 7:1, with Mr. Evans, Mr. Eyster, Mr. Chickering, Mr. Leiken, Ms. Ortiz, Ms. Piercy and Mr. Pryor voting in favor of the motion, and Mr. Gillespie voting against the motion.

The Joint LPA Committee discussed a desire to have the Eugene City Council consider both build alternatives in the context of its land use planning deliberations. The draft “Envision Eugene: A Legacy of Livability” offers the following pillars and strategies for consideration:

“Promote compact urban development and efficient transportation options.”

- 1. Meet all of the 20-year multi-family housing and commercial (office and retail) lands needs within the existing UGB, through development of vacant lands and also focusing new development and redevelopment in core commercial areas, corridor areas and downtown.*
- 2. Transform key transportation corridors and core commercial areas as mixed-use neighborhoods that foster active, walkable, community living by providing a mix of residential, commercial, retail, and public uses in close proximity to one another - in many cases within a single building.*
 - Identify focus areas that are ready for change, economically viable, and poised for success.*
- 4. Make compact urban development of core commercial areas and corridors easier.*

“Plan for climate and energy uncertainty.”

- 5. Continue City efforts to reduce greenhouse gas impacts from housing and transportation. These include development of a new Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan, collaboration with Lane Transit District (LTD) to complete the EmX bus rapid transit system, and efforts to encourage existing and new houses to be energy efficient, particularly by using solar energy.*

The project development process includes two decision points. The first is the current decision on selection of a Locally Preferred Alternative based on the October 2010 Alternatives Analysis and subsequent analysis. In order to remain on schedule for the remainder of the project development process, LTD is seeking approvals of the locally preferred alternative from all three decision-making bodies in March 2011. With an affirmative decision, LTD will proceed with the development of the federal environmental review process which will prompt a second decision focused on selection of either a build or no-build option. This decision would likely take place in late fall 2011. LTD will also be preparing a Small Starts grant application due to the Federal Transit Administration in late August 2011. Should the decision coming out of the environmental process be for no-build, then the submitted grant would be withdrawn.

RELATED CITY POLICIES

From Eugene-Springfield Transportation System Plan (TransPlan):

TSI Transit Policy #2: Bus Rapid Transit

Establish a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system composed of frequent, fast transit service along major corridors and neighborhood feeder service that connects with the corridor service and with activity centers, if the system is shown to increase transit mode split along BRT corridors, if local governments demonstrate support, and if financing for the system is feasible.

From Adopted Growth Management Policies:

Growth Management Policy 11

Increase the use of alternative modes of transportation by improving the capacity, design, safety, and convenience of the transit, bicycle, and pedestrian transportation systems.

COUNCIL OPTIONS

Provide feedback to LTD and City staff.

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

This item is for discussion only.

SUGGESTED MOTION

None.

ATTACHMENTS

A. Letter from the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee dated February 10, 2011

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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City of Eugene Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee

February 10, 2011

TO: Kurt Corey, City of Eugene Public Works Director

The City of Eugene's Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee are in support of the West Eugene EmX Extension (WEEE). The WEEE is very important to the LTD's Bus Rapid Transit system and to creating a better city for walking and biking. Transit is essential for a walkable community and to the reduction of vehicle miles driven. There are real benefits for all of Eugene.

We feel LTD has worked hard to mitigate most of the impacts to business and residential access. The W13th – W 11th EMX Option goes a long way to encourage walking, biking, and other transportation alternatives to the single-occupancy automobile.

We oppose the No Build Option and do not think it takes into account the long term needs of our community and should no longer be recognized as a viable option.

We think an extended BRT would encourage an increased ridership that will ensure the system will become self-supporting over time. Making Eugene a great city for walking needs to include a great public transportation system. We believe that includes EMX in West Eugene.

Signed,

Tom Schneider
Shane MacRhodes
Holly McRae
Ted Sweeney
Harriet Behm
Jennifer Smith
Rex Redmon
David Gizara
Rex Fox
Sue Harshbarger