



Lane Transit District

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July 18, 2007

Ms. Pauline Hutson
Ms. Ilona Koleszar
Residents for Responsible Rapid Transit (3RT)

Sent via e-mail to Ilona Koleszar at 3RT@comcast.net

Dear Ms. Hutson and Ms. Koleszar:

We are among the recipients of your letter of June 29, 2007, regarding the planning of the West Eugene EmX. We wish to respond to some of the issues raised in your letter.

It is clear that you are very concerned about possible EmX impacts on the character and livability of your neighborhood. Please rest assured that LTD places a very high value on making sure that EmX supports and enhances neighborhoods. EmX goals include compatibility with existing land uses and enhancing the corridor for all users. LTD is especially concerned with creating a safe and inviting pedestrian environment, for virtually all transit users are also pedestrians. In the first EmX corridor between downtown Eugene and downtown Springfield, enhancements have included new pedestrian facilities, new bicycle facilities, improved landscaping, and buried power lines. Similar improvements can be part of all corridors. We are committed to working with you and other neighborhood residents on the design of the West Eugene EmX corridor.

Your letter raised questions regarding LTD's compliance with state and federal planning requirements. The West Eugene EmX would be LTD's third EmX corridor. The Franklin EmX has been operating since January 2007, and the Pioneer Parkway EmX has had all approvals, is funded, and is now in final design. These projects have been funded with federal funds and have met all applicable state and federal planning and environmental requirements. The West Eugene planning effort will meet these requirements as well.

LTD believes very strongly in public participation in decision-making, and the first two EmX corridors were characterized by a very high level of public involvement that far exceeded state and federal requirements. We truly believe that public input can improve a project. Public participation techniques used on the first two corridors included:

- One-on-one contacts with residents and businesses along the proposed corridor
- Multiple mailings to all addresses within one-fourth mile of the corridors
- Planning workshops open to all interested persons
- Open houses
- Public hearings
- Stakeholder group meetings
- EmX Steering Committee review

LTD proposes to use similar public involvement techniques for the West Eugene EmX. Key project decisions, such as the route alignment, station locations, the use of exclusive

lanes, and corridor design would be considered as part of the public process. The joint planning effort is just getting underway, as much of the first several months have been spent coordinating a work plan with the City of Eugene and preparing a public involvement strategy for the project.

One key element of the LTD process will be the use of a West Eugene Corridor Committee to discuss key project decisions. The membership on that committee is currently being established. A 3RT member has expressed interest in participating on that committee and we anticipate that this person and other residents of the Jefferson-West Side neighborhood will be selected for membership by the EmX Steering Committee in the coming weeks.

A primary concern mentioned in your letter is the breadth of the study area to be considered for the West Eugene EmX. Although the Council motion of October 9, 2006, designated West 11th as the next EmX corridor study, the LTD Board and staff have interpreted that more broadly and plan to consider alignment options that generally serve the West 11th "travel shed." This is for two reasons. First, transportation issues are inherently network issues and therefore possible fixes are also network oriented, not limited to a single roadway. Second, because any investment LTD makes in the corridor would use federal funds, there is a prescribed process we must go through in consideration of and decision-making on alternatives. This process requires that we consider a broad range of alternatives at the outset of our process, narrowing this set of alternatives through an iterative process of analysis and outreach to the public and policymakers.

Thus, alignments that do not use West 11th itself will be considered. A distance of one-fourth mile is the generally accepted standard for walking access to transit. However, we are not using exact geographic limits for our study and will err on the side of considering options that might serve the corridor. This would include 6th and 7th Avenues between downtown Eugene and Garfield Street.

However, Highway 99 is clearly a different corridor than West 11th and serves a different transit need. Transit service on Highway 99 would not have any significant impact on West 11th transit use. It is also clear that the Council did not intend for the study area to include Highway 99, as indicated in the Council's specific discussion at the October 9, 2006, meeting of the relative merits of West 11th Avenue compared with Highway 99. A majority of the Council opted to select the West 11th corridor. The Council's discussion at that meeting included questions regarding the distance EmX could be from West 11th and still serve that corridor. The Council was told that 18th Avenue to the south and Roosevelt Boulevard to the north are too far away to serve West 11th transit demand effectively.

It is important to reiterate a primary reason that the Council selected West 11th as the next EmX corridor study. Given that the City decided to embark on a transportation study of West 11th Avenue, it was deemed very important to consider a range of transportation options for that corridor, including EmX. Coordinating the modal studies results in a much more efficient and effective plan.

We also would like to respond to a comment in your letter that EmX is a "high speed commuter" system. EmX is not "high speed" and will not exceed the speed limit for the

street. Travel time is improved by avoiding delay from traffic, signals, and passenger stops.

In addition, EmX is not focused on commuters. The traditional commuter trip – from home to work or school in the morning and back in the afternoon – represents a decreasing share of total trips. EmX is intended to serve all trip purposes within a corridor. This is evident from the service characteristics: the 10-minute frequency operates throughout the day (not just during peak hours), and the service span includes evenings and weekends. EmX needs to serve activity centers along a corridor and not bypass those travel destinations just to transport residents from outlying areas into the central city employment destinations. Preliminary results for the Franklin EmX indicate that nearly half the trips taken are for non-commute purposes, despite the fact that the route serves downtown Eugene and the University of Oregon.

Thank you for your letter. We encourage your continued participation in the process.

Sincerely,


Gerry Gaydos
President, Board of Directors


Greg Evans
Board of Directors

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cc: Recipients of June 29, 2007, letter from 3RT