

Burnside Bridgehead Citizen Advisory Committee Meeting

Tuesday, December 13, 2005
Meeting Notes

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**CAC Participants in Attendance:** Jim Andrews (Vice Chair), Mike Bolliger, Norm Chusid, Lynne Coward, Dike Dame, Joni Hartman, Tim Holmes (Chair), Brooks Koenig, Bruce Murray, Michael Whitmore, Chuck Willis, Brian Wilson, Bruce Wood (Developer), Michael O'Connell (PDC Project Manager).

**Other PDC and Development Team members in Attendance:** Bruce Allen, Sarah Harpole, Ann Griffin, Fred Wearn (PDC staff); Gary Larson (Mulvanny G2), Hermanus Steyn (Kittelson & Associates), Geraldene Moyle (Group McKenzie). Lois Cohen (Zetlin Strategic Communication).

**Facilitator:** Sue Dicile

**Members of the Public:** Lee Perlman, Sean McCusker, Emily Simon, Kathryn Ackerman.  
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Note:

"Q" = a CAC member question

"A" = an answer contributed by the presenter of the agenda segment, unless otherwise noted

"C" = a CAC member comment, unless otherwise noted

(Public comments are noted in a separate section)

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

- No public comments were made at the opening public comment period.

ADMINISTRATION

Review of Meeting Notes From 11/29

The following revisions were made to the meeting notes:

- A comment on page 2 was clarified to make the suggestion to seek environmental uses for Block 69 that could result in tax or LEED credits more understandable.
- A point about member absences was revised, to clarify that a member missing 3 meetings would be contacted about their intentions by the Chair.

Appointment of Alternate Members

PDC suggested that alternates be appointed by the PDC Director instead of the Commission, so that the process would not be delayed by the five week lead time for getting onto the Commission agenda, and the process would in general be more streamlined. During discussion, it was noted that Commission appointment supports greater awareness of and accountability for the CAC by Commissioners. A third alternative was proposed that, if an appointment was turned down by the Director it would be reviewed by the Commission. A show of hands indicated that the majority of CAC members favor appointment by the PDC Director. The facilitator suggested that the third alternative addresses a broader range of group concerns. There were no objections to adoption of the third alternative.

Parking Lot

It was agreed that good ideas that are raised in the meeting but are not germane to the current agenda item will be recorded in a "parking lot" (list of deferred items). It was noted that the list will be included as part of the notes from each meeting.

TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS AND TRAFFIC IMPACTS

Introduction

In opening remarks to this agenda segment, Bruce Wood illustrated a project map, and noted that:

- A Burnside/Couch couplet transportation arrangement provides the necessary street ambiance and traffic speed for the Burnside Bridgehead project as proposed.

- The traffic configuration and accompanying project design and amenities are a long way from finalized, and that CAC input is important at this initial stage.
- The couplet configuration is necessary to the project as proposed, as it supports necessary densities.

Overview

Hermanus Steyn provided an overview of the transportation and traffic issues. He illustrated two couplet alternatives (See the graphic handout that was provided at the meeting). Key points included:

- Subsequent to a 2004 study, City Council adopted the “NE 3rd Alignment” as the preferred alternative.
- Benefits of the NE 3rd Avenue alignment alternative for pedestrian crossing and access include:
 - Reduces the number of traffic lanes on MLK between NE Couch and E Burnside.
 - Provides for access to the project site from the Burnside Bridge.
 - A stop for the projected streetcar is not easily accommodated at the project site with the MLK alternative. The NE 3rd Ave alternative provides a more advantageous streetcar stop option.

Q: What traffic volume is anticipated on Couch east and west through the development?

A: I could say “1300 vehicles per hour” and that would not give you a good sense of volume. If you go to NW Glisan and Everett you will get a good sense of the volume. *(Note: Later in the meeting it was noted that SW Alder/Washington or SW Clay/Market are more analogous examples.)*

Q: What speed is anticipated through the curve, and what signalization is anticipated at the end of the bridge?

A: We have a concept only at this point. There will be some safe crossings that are signalized but those signals will be “slaves” to the big intersection so that the flow of traffic is not interrupted. The design speed is still being considered.

Q: When bikes on Ankeny reach MLK the traffic movement and signalization presents a problem now. What’s planned for that intersection?

A (CAC member): That is being addressed in another bike/traffic project.

Q: Is there a chance that the 3rd Avenue alternative could make it more congested at rush hour or push more traffic onto the side streets?

A: It is believed that it will not because it reduces the number of traffic conflicts at the large intersections.

There was a difference of opinion on the CAC as to the alternative endorsed by the Burnside/Couch CAC. The adopted BCTP conceptual alignment at NE 3rd contains a ramp in the 3rd Ave. ROW. The Opus Burnside Bridgehead proposal is different from this concept in that there is no ‘ramp’, but rather the couplet is on top of the parking structure for the project. All agreed that the City Council has adopted the Burnside/Couch couplet concept and that any proposed revision would need to go back to Council.

Project Detail

Gary Larson of Mulvanny G2 provided an overview of four transportation aspects. Handouts with four diagrams were distributed. Key points in his presentation included:

- All uses in the project must be supported by transportation and parking.
- The concept is to create a “flat table” elevation at the promenade level. Benefits of this approach include easier access for pedestrians to the promenade, and the project is connected in a more “visceral” way to the community.

Pedestrian Connection

- Have identified several corners that are important for connecting the project to the neighborhood and the Convention Center. It is also possible and desirable to connect the lower level of the project at 2nd Avenue.
- Traffic running through the project will be equivalent to the flow of traffic downtown. The design speed of 12 mph, along with signals, will create a comfortable fit.
- Pedestrian intersections will be safe, signaled, broad, understandable, and clear.
- Sidewalk will be added to the south of Block 76, providing good passage from Burnside.

- The proposed configuration will enable east bound traffic on Burnside to make a left turn into the project.

Bike Routes

- Currently, Ankeny and Davis are operating well as bike routes.
- In the NE 3rd Avenue couplet plan alternative Couch and Burnside are anticipated to have paths for bike paths except where it goes downhill, where it is safe for bikes to be within the flow of traffic.
- Cross-street bike paths are planned for 7th Ave.
- There will be routes for bikes to move through the project and on and off the bridge with easy access. Eastbound bike lanes coming off the bridge will cross MLK, with a bike lane for safety as there is an uphill grade.
- There will be multiple bike access points to the project as well as multiple bike parking sites.

Transit

A map was shown illustrating current bus and proposed street car lines (See handout)

- NE 3rd Avenue couplet alternative provides better bus and streetcar access to the project and better overall interconnectivity.

Parking

- The parking structure under the project will eliminate northbound traffic on 3rd Ave, which is currently the way traffic gets on eastbound I-84 from the northern part of the Central Eastside Industrial District. However, the BCTP couplet will allow that traffic to be diverted onto streets Ankeny to SE Grand and then onto I-84. It is anticipated that it will be better.
- Parking entrances will be:
 - Off Couch.
 - 3rd Ave at lower level.
 - From Davis, also at a lower level.
- This will allow for parking to enter the project at different levels, which is the best for traffic flow.

Q: Will there be signals on every Couch intersection?

A: Yes. This will be good because we don't want to recreate the Everett/Glisan situation.

C: With both uphill and downhill traffic movement it is complex for cyclists. Lack of full bike lanes on Couch was a non-perfect compromise that was developed during earlier talks on the couplet concept. Ankeny is a great bike path now, but beginners struggle at the intersection of Couch and MLK. This requires a well-marked transition from the pathed to the no-path area.

Q: How many cars do you estimate will turn into the parking area per hour?

A: Don't know but we will get that information for you.

C: Shared lane markings could help, similar to the ones on NW 18th. Also eastbound, as the bridge approaches MLK, there is a right turn lane where the bike lane disassociates. This is one of the worst spots in Portland for bikes to get over. Perhaps blue bike lanes could be considered, or some other type of clearly marked transition zone.

A: These are great ideas and we would like to brainstorm on all of these ideas to a greater extent.

Q: What is the plan for pedestrian circulation on-site?

A: The heart of the project is a large public square, which could be the focus for all kinds of activities. Eventually it will require some kind of management program. A covered space like a winter garden is being conceptualized at the north end off NE Davis. The promenade will be broad to accommodate sitting and strolling. There will be good views into the neighborhood and across the river. Good crossings will be required to make good use of this area.

Q: I like the couplet. The original plan had signalization all the way up to 12th. Have concern about the analogy to Glisan and Everett. The plan needs to be fully funded. Do you see a “downtown” speed compatible with this project, and how do you intend to keep the traffic speed low?

A: We see it as essential to have traffic calming because the project needs traffic to be slow. Don't know if there will be room to have on-street parking but we want to. It gives the signal that this is not a thoroughfare. Also we are seeking to have buses and trucks move through with ease, but not speed. So for instance we hope to have tighter turn radii for bus and trucks. We will need to work on this with PDOT to design options. Everett and Glisan were poor examples. Might look at Alder/Washington or Clay/Market for more applicable comparisons. The speed going into the project is an important value. From our perspective, the slower the better.

Q: Does it make a difference what happens on the west side with regard to the couplet?

A: We can exist without the westside, although it may be a missed opportunity not to do both.

Q: Did you say that the project could not go forward without the Burnside/Couch couplet?

A (Wood): If there is no Burnside/Couch couplet we can't build with the density we have outlined. The Burnside/Couch couplet, which eases functions such as left turns and number of signal phases, generates the necessary capacity.

C: Regarding the elevation changes, the project should be considered in a 360-degree manner. Use diagrams that show cross-sections east and west illustrating the grade levels for 1st and 2nd Avenues, so we can see how the transportation and access will work for those levels. It might further explain how your transportation plan works.

A: Yes, that would also help articulate the transition to the river.

C: In conformance with good urban form, would prefer the “S” to be brought back to more of a 90-degree corner. It is more compatible with what's on the streets farther up. The “S” is too suburban looking.

C: It will be a tough fight to get straight angles. This is being fought in South Waterfront without much success.

C: Looking at the bike lanes eastbound on Burnside, don't see how they get on Burnside without crossing two lanes.

Q: How can the Burnside/Couch transportation plan best interface with the public plaza. Once rush hours are past, could high volume traffic be redirected in some way to support public uses of the plaza? This would provide the ability to hold events there, and have it “read” more like a local street. The current shape as proposed by PDOT with no parking says “thoroughfare”. I would not support this as proposed.

A: You are right in noting that this is a baseline plan we received from PDOT. This can be further discussed with PDOT.

Q: Are you concerned about a bottleneck between 11th and 14th?

A: No, it is planned as a roundabout.

Q: What trucks will go through the project area? Will truck traffic be compatible with residences?

A: (Woods) This is an urban development. Trucks don't want to go down there but they sometimes do, and those uses have to be accommodated.

C: Trucks are in Northwest going to and from the Post Office all the time. A bit of an inconvenience but it is an urban area and you get used to it.

Q: Can the elevation be used to advantage to get bikes connected to the waterfront esplanade?

A: That is a good idea and we would like to do that.

C: It might be good to get Vic Rhodes or someone from Friends of Burnside Couch who has been working on moving the couplet concept forward to come and do a presentation to this group.

C: Some of the maps used in the presentation are not consistent.

A: This map is what was approved by City Council. Didn't envision the platform, it was dealing with the existing grade. Our proposal has changed.

Q: Concern about the curve for bicyclists. Could there be some kind of barrier that would clearly demark the bike lanes?

A: We agree that a sharper curve would be an improvement.

C: Can't have barriers as they are actually dangerous to cyclists, but there are some wonderful technologies being developed in Europe.

Q: Can you clarify your proposal for the number of lanes on MLK?

A: We have not yet looked past PDOT's base info.

C: The latest iteration of City plans had more lanes, so you will need to address traffic going south on MLK as that traffic bumps into the traffic on Couch and Burnside.

Q: Are you planning signalization at Couch onto the bridge?

A: That is a good suggestion.

Q: Are entrances and exits one-way from the one-way streets?

A: Yes.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Q: Where do you envision deliveries?

A: It's a big issue we haven't looked into yet. Will be somewhat dictated by the transportation system. There are areas where you can't get a truck to, so will consider as we define tenant areas.

A(CAC): Those systems exist now. Can be addressed via truck size.

A(CAC): In Amsterdam there are good examples of arrangements like coordinated drop-off areas.

C: I am not convinced that traffic flow will not be a problem. Side streets are a problem now, without the complication of the project and a trolley. An overpass/onramp should be considered.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS FROM THIS MEETING

Process Agreements

- Ground rules re member absence (at 3 consecutive meetings) and appointment of alternates in the event a member drops out were clarified.
- A list of "parked" ideas will be established.

Summary of key CAC concerns raised in the discussion:

- Speed through the project, and means of controlling speed.
- Communicating a "local street" feeling as opposed to a "thoroughfare".
- Safety for bicyclists, and appropriate transition markers.
- Adequate signalization to support bike and pedestrian safety and the desired speed at and near the project area.
- Urban form that communicates connectivity with the rest of the area.
- Impact of the Burnside/Couch couplet on overall traffic flow, rush hour, side streets, etc.
- Means of making the plaza and promenade area conducive to walking, sitting, events, etc.
- General connectivity of all elevations of the project to the surrounding neighborhood, bridge and river.
- Linkage of the success of the couplet concept to the project as proposed.

Follow-up or "Parked" items:

- Estimate of number of cars turning into the parking area per hour.
- Brainstorming on methods of creating safe and effective bicycle transition zones and markers.
- Clarification of the number of lanes anticipated on MLK (once analysis has been conducted past PDOT's base information).

- Interest in having Vic Rhodes, who has been working on the couplet concept, talk with the group if additional information on specifics or progress of that initiative is needed.

Next meeting on January 10th. (December 27th meeting cancelled).

Meeting adjourned at 5 pm.

Respectfully Submitted by the CAC facilitator

Materials distributed in meeting packet:

-11/29/05 notes with Working Agreements

Materials distributed at this meeting:

-Burnside/Couch Couplet Alternatives

-Diagrams of pedestrian routes, skateboard park, bicycle routes, and public transportation.