

**BURNSIDE BRIDGEHEAD CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**Committee Meeting**  
**May 9, 2006**  
**Session Notes**

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**BBHCAC Members in Attendance:** Jim Andrews, Mike Bolliger, Jeff Brooks, Norm Chusid, Lynne Coward, Dike Dame, Joni Hartman, Tim Holmes, Bruce Murray, Robert Wentworth, Michael Whitmore, Chuck Willis, Brian Wilson.

**PDC Staff in Attendance:** Kia Selley, Sarah Harpole, Trang Lam, Bruce Allen.

**Others in Attendance:** Bill Hoffman (PDOT), Doug McCollum (PDOT), Chris Hymes (PDOT), Judith Gray (Kittelsohn & Associates), Hermanus Steyn (Kittelsohn & Associates), Gilly Burlingham (Buckman N.A.), Lee Purlman (Freelance writer).

Facilitator: Sue Dicile.

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*Note:*

*“Q” = CAC member question*

*“A” = an answer contributed by the previously noted presenter, unless otherwise noted.*

*“C” = CAC member comment unless otherwise noted. (Public comments are noted in separate sections)*

The meeting convened at 3:00 pm.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no opening public comment.

**ADMINISTRATION**

**Review of April 11, 2006 Meeting Notes**

- The notes were adopted without revision.

**BURNSIDE COUCH (BC) COUPLET DISCUSSION AND UPDATE**

Bruce Wood provided opening comments. Highlights included:

- The Couplet is of critical importance to the renewal plans for the industrial east side and the Burnside Bridgehead (BBH) project.
- Outstanding issues include:
  - The timing of the BBH project with BC Couplet completion;
  - Shortfall in BC Couplet funding, which is now estimated at \$19 million.
- PDC Commission met and authorized extension of Central Eastside Urban Renewal Area (CES URA) funding up to approximately \$35 million.
  - This is important because a percentage could go to the eastside BC Couplet. This presents “a great opportunity”
- The entire BC Couplet needs to be in place to be an east side catalyst – any proposed “interim” solution to address BBH project access is not a long-term solution.

Bruce Allen provided follow-up comments. Highlights included:

- PDOT has new cost estimates for the eastside BC Couplet. It estimates \$21 million cost estimate based on 2007 dollars with a 20% contingency.
- Existing funding sources include –

\$5 million	Federal funds
\$2 million	Urban Renewal funds (Some from the CES URA extension)
\$2 million	Regional transportation project selection process (MTIP)
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\$9 million	TOTAL
- The PDC Director is taking the lead on a funding strategy for the balance. Other sources could be –
  - Federal earmarks from Representative Blumenauer.
  - Developer contributions.

Q: How much must be secured/identified in the near term?

A: (PDOT) The full amount would have to be available to start construction, but engineering can be advanced without the full funding in place. Engineering will begin in the fall of this year. Three advantages to starting soon:

- 1) Added term adds inflation;
- 2) Allows BBH project development to proceed;
- 3) Facilitates 12<sup>th</sup> and Sandy (historic 7-Up site) development.

Q: Will the engineering take into consideration a “plan B” if funding doesn’t come to pass? For example, eliminating every other streetlight, or similar cost saving measures?

A: (PDOT) We will look at value engineering and ways the project could be phased. But details like streetlights, which were developed in the project plans in conjunction with the community, would not be taken out. They are too fundamental to public agreement about the east side Couplet.

Q: Does the \$21 million include the buildout to 12<sup>th</sup> and Sandy?

A: Yes.

Q: Could we not do the full buildout to 12<sup>th</sup> and Sandy, if all the money didn’t come through?

A: No, that transition at 12<sup>th</sup> and Sandy is key.

### **EASTSIDE COUPLET SIMULATION**

Bill Hoffman, Burnside Couch Couplet project manager at PDOT, presented an eastside Couplet simulation that had previously been shown to City Council. He noted that PDOT has been working with a citizens group, Friends of the Burnside Couch Couplet, which funded the simulation for both the east and west sides. The simulation illustrates the look and operation of the completed Couplet, and included building elevations and landscaping, as seen from a driver or cyclist traveling the completed Couplet.

### **DESIGN OF COUPLET CONTINGENCY (“Interim”) PRESENTATION**

Judith Gray and Hermanas Steyn of Kittelson & Associates gave the presentation. Highlights of the presentation included:

- The critical/limiting factor in the design of an “interim” solution in the event the couplet is delayed is the existing Burnside Bridge lane widths, which is 89 feet. The interim solution as currently envisioned could be accommodated within that width, although a bike lane across the bridge on the north side of Burnside would be discontinuous right next to the project, due to the space limitations.
- Turning templates between 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue and the project can sufficiently accommodate bus and passenger vehicles side by side. Larger trucks can be accommodated in the turn lanes with modifications.
- Signalization configurations at pedestrian crossings remain to be worked out.
- There are still a lot of unknowns about the site plan, but the desire is to have entry points from the couplet to project parking areas. These are needed for retail access.
- Full access to general parking will occur mostly on Davis, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> via Ankeny.
- A right-in/right-out access is proposed on MLK, which would only serve around 150 residential parking spaces.
- A key problem is how retail customers will get direct access to the project site from bridge.
- Another area of concern is eastbound traffic crossing the bridge and heading north on Grand. Currently, cars pass Grand (no left turn), turn left on 6<sup>th</sup>, circle back to turn right on Grand. It is assumed that most of these vehicles would take advantage of an opportunity to turn left onto a new 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue.

A simulation of peak hour traffic operations was presented. Kittleson and Associates noted that the conclusions that can be drawn from the simulation is that the turns into the project at the points required to accommodate the interim solution, will work without undue traffic tie-ups. In fact, allowing the left turns directly off the bridge removes vehicles from the MLK/Burnside intersection, which is currently at capacity. That would be an improvement. Still, the ultimate couplet is preferred.

## DISCUSSION ABOUT LEVEL OF CAC SUPPORT FOR THE PROPOSAL

The facilitator asked the CAC to weigh on whether the interim solution is sufficiently workable as to allow the BBH project to move forward? Brian Bennett added that the fact that the BC Couplet is an urban renewal benefit, not just a traffic improvement, should be figured into the CAC's thinking about this question. CAC responses to this question included:

C: Concern that the contingency could become the permanent Couplet solution.

Q: Surprised the contingency works as well as the simulation shows, but couldn't we take westbound traffic around Burnside and turn it onto Couch at 6<sup>th</sup> and build out just three blocks of the Couplet? This would accommodate any Couplet and streetcar development that would need to be done in the future.

A: (PDOT) It would be too costly and difficult. That solution was considered, but would require taking corners off existing buildings and purchasing those rights-of-way.

Q: Would you build the "interim" solution if it were uncertain the Couplet would be implemented?

A: (Developer) In order to build the project we would need some level of certainty that the Couplet will be built at some point. Approximately 40% of the funds are available and there is the political will to close the gap. So it's a question of "Do we believe it will be built?" After that it's a timing issue.

Q: What is the impact between what we have today and the interim solution on bike lanes?

A: Some of the bike-friendliness would be lost in the trade-off. Some bike lanes on the Burnside Bridge, from MLK to a point just beyond the project would be eliminated. Bikes come down on Ankeny now and could continue to do so but would share a lane of traffic for that space between MLK and the end of the project.

A: If we could move the lane to the north the westbound side of Burnside we might be able to pull the bike lane through but capacity to do that appears unlikely. Also the left unsignalized turn off Burnside creates a hazard for bicyclists traveling westbound.

Q: What is the safest bike route in the interim solution?

A: It is probably the same bike route as exists now. Under existing conditions, the bike lane drops out in some areas along this section, so it is already difficult for bikes. But an additional bike lane gap will be created by the interim solution. Bike lane gaps are problematic at Burnside after MLK because it is uphill, causing bikes to be slow in traffic.

Q: Is there enough lane width on Burnside to create a bike lane?

A: Probably not.

Q: Could bikes take Ankeny to Grand and then be routed down Couch through the S curve?

A: Yes, but there would be a pinch where the bridge begins.

A: (PDOT) These are good concerns, but we won't be able to decide on a design solution here. The CAC should refer this to the city Bicycle Advisory Committee. They are experienced in working through these issues.

C: In order for the CAC to really weigh in on the viability of the interim proposal, these schematics need to show the BBH project with all of the access and exit points. Also, we should see a simulation/evaluation of the option of making three right hand turns when coming eastbound over bridge into the project. If this solution is workable it would eliminate the need for the left hand turn into the project from the Burnside Bridge.

C: Agree that a weakness of the simulation is that it doesn't show cars coming out of the project.

C: It is also difficult for the CAC to weigh in on an "interim" solution without knowing "how long" the interim period might be.

C: The question about whether or not to support the interim solution as presented can't be answered without a better understanding of the "project arithmetic" (i.e. the interim solution's actual contribution to the financial viability of the BBH project.)

C: (PDOT) We hitched the BC Couplet to federal funds because of support from Representative Blumenhauer. This was before the Burnside Bridgehead project. So we knew we would have to go through two federal budget cycles. The next opportunity for a second chunk of money is 2010. Unless there is another source of funding, it will be 2012-14 before the construction of the BC Couplet. The risks in this extended time frame are that there will be change of scope, increased cost due to inflation, and loss of political interest.

**The facilitator asked if there was agreement on the CAC to seek opportunities for other funding, in order to accelerate the Couplet. All CAC members agreed.**

#### **DISCUSSION OF CES URA REAUTHORIZATION AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR COUplet FUNDING**

C: The potential is to reauthorize from \$35 million to \$51 million. This could cover the Couplet funding gap. We should lobby with the City Council to increase the CES URA budget to \$51 million and attach the eastside Burnside Couch Couplet to it. This would be a more secure position.

Q: Does this proposal run counter to the Urban Renewal Area Committee (URAC) Transportation Committee recommendations?

A: (CAC member) We should keep in mind that without the Burnside Bridgehead project, the TIF dollars flatten, so the funds will not get to \$51 million. But regarding the Transportation Committee process, on which I participated, we didn't allot more because \$12 million was already allotted to the Couplet. The additional funds were allotted to IG1 seismic upgrades etc. The only "sacred cow" in those deliberations was routes to the river, which had been long promised to the community. The rest of the \$12 million can be spent as chosen – keeping in mind that that money doesn't exist yet.

C: I propose that this committee (BBH CAC) could say "The left turn from Burnside into the project will work as an interim, but the Couplet needs to happen. The central east side wants the Couplet. PDC needs to figure out how to do this."

**The facilitator asked for a show of hands to determine CAC support for this proposal to support the interim solution while reiterating that the entire Couplet must be built out. Two members voted against, and one abstained.**

Q: (Developer) Who has say over where the allocated money for the CES URA goes?

A: (PDC) If City Council authorizes \$51 million for the CES URA, we would go through a budget process based on recommendations from the URAC. If Council meets in June it could be a three-month process, adopted in September.

C: (PDOT) If we got a decision on an extension to the district, the "contingency" traffic solution would be moot (i.e. We could move forward with construction of the Couplet in a timeframe that would more closely meet the needs of the BBH project).

C: (PDC) We, including the Director, support the BC Couplet 100%.

C: The Westside is considering an option to reduce capacity of Burnside on west side (reduced lanes), which will feed Burnside, so we may end up with less traffic coming into the project than we want.

The facilitator was asked to draft a letter to Council for the BBH CAC's signature requesting increased authorization of the URA to \$51 million in order to accelerate construction of the BC Couplet.

#### **PRIMARY OUTCOMES OF THIS MEETING:**

- A presentation was made by Kittleson & Associates illustrating that the contingent/interim traffic solution proposal is workable.
- CAC members unanimously agreed that new and more timely funds should be sought to build the BC Couplet on an accelerated schedule.
- All but 3 (2 against, one abstention) CAC members agreed to express support for the contingency (interim solution).
- The CAC authorized drafting of a letter, to be sent to City Council under the signature of the CAC Chair, to request increased authorization of the URA to \$51 million in order to accelerate construction of the Couplet.

**Public Comment**

There was no closing public comment.

The meeting adjourned at 4:50 pm.

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Handouts distributed at this meeting:

- None

Respectfully submitted by facilitator Sue Dicile

If you have comments about the notes from this meeting please direct them to the facilitator at 503-287-9345 or:  
[sdicile@aol.com](mailto:sdicile@aol.com)