Memorandum

To: Chair Jon Hinck and members of the Energy and Sustainability Committee

From: Bill Needelman, Waterfront Coordinator

Date: June 9, 2016

Re: Review of the West Commercial Street Multi-Modal Corridor Study Recommendations

Introduction

Growth and change along the Commercial Street corridor running from the Veteran’s Bridge to High Street prompted the City and PACTS to engage in a recent transportation infrastructure study: The West Commercial Street Multi-Modal Corridor Study. Using Alta Planning and Design as the primary consultant, the study looked to build on the recent improvements implemented by the Maine Port Authority at the International Marine Terminal to update the roadway to meet the growing demands of industrial uses and mixed-use developments along the corridor. Given the diverse mix of fisheries, marine industry, freight, and mixed-use upland users, the process tackled a complex opportunity to implement “complete streets” policies within a marine industrial context.

City staff requests the opportunity to presents the results of the process and seeks a recommendation by the Committee to the full City Council on its adoption. The full report is attached with this memo.

Goals of the Study

As guidance to the process, the Study used the following vision statement to inform the process results:

West Commercial Street Multi-modal Corridor Vision – to safely accommodate all modes of transportation while sustaining marine-industrial uses and promoting mixed use development along an important gateway corridor into Portland’s waterfront.

As is clear from the vision statement, there are three primary goals for the Study:

- Improving multi-modal transport – including bicycle and pedestrian safety,
- Protecting and supporting marine industries, and
- Fostering a gateway presence for the corridor.

Study Area

The study team looked at the area shown in the graphic below.
As noted above, the study area includes the International Marine Terminal (IMT) which has recently completed significant roadway improvements. The subject process looked to build on this work while expanding multimodal capacity and improving safety.

The area can be broadly separated into three major sub-areas: West of the IMT, at the IMT, and East of the IMT. As further explained below, the area east of the IMT proved to include the most complex set of issues due to the unique needs of fisheries industries to use Commercial Street for loading trucks within the right of way.

**Significant Recommendations**

While many of the Study recommendations build on past work (such as building connections to the IMT improvements and completion of a West Commercial Street Trail,) there are several recommendations that are unique to the subject process:

- Implementing a 3-lane section with center turn lane West of the IMT. Long-term, portions of the center turn lane could convert to landscaped median pending further evaluation. A center turn lane recommendation reflects the likely creation of more drive entrances to the corridor serving future development on both sides of the street.
- Pedestrian crossing improvements throughout the corridor. The study area is increasing in importance as an employment center. Allowing for safe non-auto commuting and access to jobs and services on both sides of the street is a priority.
- Bike Lanes from the IMT east to High Street. The study area east of the IMT includes the intersection of Commercial Street with 5 privately owned working piers. The need for continued truck loading in the public right of way to serve these piers complicates bicycle and pedestrian access through the corridor, as further discussed below.

**Bike Lanes and Marine Industry**

Through stakeholder outreach, marine industrial interests in the area have expressed significant concerns over implementation of an eastbound bike lane in front of working piers. Truck activity, forklift loading, and commercial traffic is a challenge to all traveling through the corridor, but is essential to keeping these piers viable as support for fisheries and other marine industry.

The Study recommendations seek to balance bicycle and pedestrian safety with working waterfront needs by preserving space in the right of way for truck loading while providing a space for bike traffic. Marine industrial interests – property owners and business representatives – continue to worry that bike lanes and truck loading create an
incompatible mix of uses. The Committee can expect to hear both opinions at the June 15 meeting.