

Franklin Street Study Phase II
Public Advisory Committee Meeting

April 1, 2015

Room 24, Portland City Hall

Committee Members: Markos Miller, Kevin Donoghue, co-chairs; Christian MilNeil, Jamie Parker, Jon Graback, Elizabeth Hoglund, Sally Oldham, Alex Landry, Bill Hall, Steve Hewins, Bob Stevens, Hank Berg, Chris O’Neil, Ethan Boxer-Macomber

Staff: Mike Bobinsky and Jeremiah Bartlett, City of Portland Public Services; Alex Jaegerman, City of Portland Planning Department; Darryl Belz, MaineDOT; Carl Eppich, PACTS; Catherine Offenbergl and Duncan Allen, IBI Group; Don Ettinger and Randy Dunton, Gorrill-Palmer; Carol Morris and Scott Hastings, Morris Communications

The meeting started at 6:04 pm.

Mike Bobinsky, Director of Public Services for the City of Portland, opened the meeting. He thanked the Public Advisory Committee (PAC) for their hard work to get the project to this stage and their flexibility during the process.

Jeremiah Bartlett, Transportation Systems Engineer for the City of Portland, noted that he had been working on Franklin Street since his early consultant days in 2002 and he felt it was very exciting to see how far the project had come during that time.

Carol Morris, Morris Communications, took the floor and reviewed the agenda for the meeting. She asked that comments be kept concise so that everyone would have time to speak. She also noted that it was a PAC meeting and not a public meeting and asked any members of the public to either make comments on the available flip charts, or come talk to the team individually after the meeting if they had input they would like to give.

Markos Miller, co-chair of the PAC, thanked everyone for coming. He said that a lot of work had gone into finding a solution that was acceptable to everyone. He noted that there are compromises and it would not be the perfect road for any one person. He hoped that everyone could see enough elements that they like in tonight’s presented version so that they would be able to support it moving forward.

Cathy Offenbergl, IBI Group, took the floor and began the presentation of the final recommendations. There were six key themes: Reconnections, Streetscapes, Bike/Ped,

Gateways, Restoring Lincoln Park, and Nodal Development. The road design had to work with traffic capacity needs, including agreements with the MaineDOT and the Federal Highway Authority (FHWA) in regards to Interstate 295 off-ramp traffic and vehicle Level of Service. A graphic was shown to illustrate that traffic volumes were highest at Marginal Way and continuously and significantly decreased as one progressed along the corridor towards Commercial Street. The consulting team felt that the proposal did a good job of balancing the different modes of travel.

Carol asked for any questions about the overall plan before the presentation moved on to four specific focus areas along the corridor.

Markos asked if the plan met the minimum MaineDOT and FHWA requirement for no decreases in vehicle level of service or if there were improvements in level of service.

Cathy responded that in some areas the recommendations are projected to improve on the vehicle level of service and noted that the overall travel time is also lowered under the proposal.

A committee member commented that they had been surprised but pleased to see that despite a lowered speed limit, the travel time for driving the length of Franklin Street had actually gone down.

Cathy moved on to look at areas of the corridor in more detail starting with the intersection of Franklin and Commercial. The team is proposing a single-lane roundabout for this intersection. They found that it best served the needs of the intersection, including the traffic volumes and large numbers of summer pedestrians. It also allowed for a visual and physical gateway and opened up room for improved sidewalk facilities. Cyclists would have their choice of operating as vehicles through the intersection or using a bike path alongside the pedestrians. It was also noted that there would be more parking spaces along Franklin than discussed at the previous PAC meeting. Two quick animated clips were shown to demonstrate how the roundabout could safely and efficiently handle vehicles and pedestrians.

A committee member said that they liked the roundabout from a vehicular standpoint but were worried about pedestrians. In particular they were concerned that when a ferry or cruise ship docks at the pier large volumes of pedestrians are let out at once and that may overload the intersection.

Cathy responded that roundabouts are useful in handling low volume vehicle conditions as they allow for constant flow rather than one mode stopping for the other. She explained that this reduces vehicle delay and, from the standpoint of pedestrian safety, roundabouts have traffic calming effects by reducing vehicle speed.

Jeremiah added that even in a standard intersection, turning motions mean that there would always be pedestrian conflict points. Roundabouts keep both pedestrians and motorists focused on one conflict at a time. The slow design speed also helps to make sure that people are moving slowly and are prepared for the intersection. The team has been in contact with the city's waterfront coordinator, Bill Needelman, who is very aware of the challenges here and believes the roundabout concept has the most potential for handling these conflicts. Bill is encouraging further review with cruise ship operations folks as the team works through the details of final design.

A committee member noted that it was not just the safety impacts of the large volumes of pedestrians but also the potential for traffic backups.

Jeremiah replied that backups would be a concern in any type of intersection given the volumes in question.

A committee member noted that they had originally been very skeptical of a roundabout but had completely come around to the idea. They felt that not only would it function but that it would greatly improve the look and feel of the area.

There was some discussion clarifying what the bike facilities would be in the roundabout. Green areas on the map around three sides of the roundabout indicate portions of the sidewalk (separated from the travel lane by a curb) that would be a designated bike lane striped separately from the pedestrian area. Commercial Street itself would not have bike lanes but could have sharrows (Share the Road striping) if the city were so inclined.

A committee member asked if the crosswalks could be moved in toward the roundabout.

Jeremiah responded that the crosswalks were set back one car length from the merge into the roundabout to allow motorists to focus on one conflict point at a time.

A committee member said they felt that the lanes exiting the roundabout could be narrowed somewhat. They also felt that the bike lanes on the sidewalk around the roundabout could lead to conflicts at the crosswalks. Cathy pointed out that the traffic speed through the roundabout would be slow enough that even less confident riders could navigate it in the road.

Don Ettinger, Gorrill Palmer, noted that this was a conceptual plan of a single-lane roundabout and that many of the details being discussed would be ironed out in the design phase.

There was some discussion further explaining how the bike facilities worked. It was noted that the one corner without the bike path did not have them due to space constraints. In the design phase, it might be possible to shift the intersection to fix this.

Cathy moved on to present the section covering Lincoln Park and the reconnection of Federal Street. Lincoln Park was proposed to be expanded between 62 to 78 feet. This would bring the park to 91% of its original size, restoring 65% of the area lost.

Federal Street would have a full reconnection. There would be no crosswalk on the north side of Federal Street due to safety issues with turning vehicles. The sidewalk between the park and Federal Street would be expanded to facilitate use. A development lot would be opened up between the courthouse and Franklin Street.

A committee member asked if it would make sense to widen Franklin on the north side of Federal slightly to have a full two lanes coming out of the intersection.

Don Ettinger said that because there was only one lane going into the intersection from the south, the new configuration should work fine.

A committee member said that they found many issues with the Federal Street intersection and hoped that it could be looked at more closely in the design phase. They very much wanted to see the crosswalk on the north side of Federal and felt that people would cross there whether there was a crosswalk or not. They also felt that the crosswalks should be closer to the intersection than shown. That said, they noted they were very happy to see a full reconnection of Federal Street.

A second committee member agreed that the intersection needs all four crosswalks, saying that they could not accept the idea that fewer crosswalks would make things safer.

Councilor Kevin Donoghue also was in favor of having all four crosswalks. He noted that the internal paths in the park would bring people to that corner and they would then want to cross the street.

Markos Miller said that he had previously mentioned to the consultant team that the crosswalk in question was desirable. He was confident that the team would look at it much more closely in the design phase.

Three additional committee members also voiced opinions in favor of the missing crosswalk.

Cathy then moved on to look at the area surrounding the proposed reconnection of Oxford Street. Oxford Street would be right-in right-out on both sides of Franklin and parallel bike and pedestrian crosswalks would allow bicyclists and pedestrians to cross. A short separated cycle track would lead from Boyd Street to the bike crossing. Lancaster Street would not have any through connection.

A committee member said that they were very glad to see this connection [at Oxford Street].

Councilor Donoghue agreed and added that if there was to only be a crosswalk on one side, the team had picked the better side.

A committee member said that Oxford was an important connection to make because the road runs the full length of the peninsula. They were opposed to the short bit of cycle track feeling that it was unnecessary and at odds with how bikes would use the surrounding streets. They then asked what the lane widths of Oxford Street would be and what the design speed of Franklin Street would be.

Cathy responded that that they would be 10-foot lanes.

Carol added that the design speed was proposed to be 25 mph. This would need approval from MaineDOT but in preliminary talks they had shown openness to looking at the change.

Don Ettinger added that the posted speed would have to work with the design speed.

Councilor Donoghue said that he liked the proposed bike lanes on Franklin but was concerned with how they would work with the hoped-for bus service.

Randy Dunton, Gorrill Palmer, replied that there were many options as to how that could be handled in the design phase. In many cities buses do cross into bike lanes at stops. It is possible to design to avoid this but they would significantly add to the width of the corridor and were generally only warranted in areas of high bus traffic.

Carol added that the team had been in communication with METRO and that they would be included when this was looked at in the design phase.

Don Ettinger noted that the bike lanes and the buffer were 8 feet together and that this was about the width of a bus.

A committee member noted that on North Deering Street there was bus service and a buffered bike lane and it worked quite well. They were more comfortable dealing with bus drivers who drive for a living than with general traffic. He went on to add that the Portland Housing Authority had plans for a building at Lancaster Street and that there should be a crossing there to accommodate the existing residents and the potential for this future building.

A committee member said that there were happy to see the road pushed east in this section. They would like to see buildings built up to the existing height limits for the area. They also liked seeing the connection of Wilmot Street between Congress and Cumberland. They reiterated that crosswalks should be moved closer to the intersections and pointed out the crosswalk on the south side of Cumberland Street was practically a mid-block crossing. They also felt that Lancaster Street should have a bike/ped crossing and disagreed with the

consultant's earlier statement that drivers would not respect two mid-block crossings in this stretch of road.

A committee member stated that as a commuter they felt that too many crossings would be a problem for traffic flow and that they felt the presented option was a good compromise.

Markos stated that he also would like to see a crossing at Lancaster and that he did not like the cycle track at Oxford. He asked why this stretch of Franklin Street had a median throughout.

Cathy responded that the median was reserving space for an eventual left turn lane at Oxford Street so that the design would not preclude a full reconnection there.

Jeremiah added that it also allowed for a pedestrian refuge should a Lancaster pedestrian crossing be added.

Markos also noted that he would like to see buildings along this stretch and did not like seeing road set aside for storm water usage instead.

A committee member noted that they would be asked to show support for this proposal and if there was any provision to reflect the tweaks the committee wished to see.

Carol responded that the team was keeping track of the points being raised and would be trying to address them before the report became final. If not addressed, they would be clearly identified in the final report, along with an explanation. She added that each member would have the opportunity to state their position later in the meeting and should note if any particular point would be a deal breaker rather than a nice thing to have.

A committee member said that while this wasn't a perfect solution and a lot of people were not necessarily here to voice their views, they would be voting in favor of this plan. It was a good compromise and represented good work. Details could be worked out later.

Cathy moved on to present recommendations for the Marginal Way end of the street. The intersection treatment was changed from the previous PAC meeting, and she hoped that they would agree it was for the better. The plan also showed much more of the place making elements they were recommending. The team envisions making this a gateway entrance to the city.

A committee member felt that it was a mistake to make westbound Marginal Way traffic's only option to be getting onto I-295. The Bayside neighborhood is developing quickly and this would be a restriction, one that would only be needed at peak traffic times. It would also significantly complicate things for bicyclists.

A representative of Portland Trails said that they were very happy with the improved crossing and felt that it would better serve the Bayside Trail. The wide crosswalk shortened the crossing distance and gave more room for a mix of bike and pedestrian users. They appreciated the work that had been done.

A committee member asked if it was beyond the scope of the project to consider moving the northbound off ramp to change the turning restrictions.

Randy Dunton replied that the team had looked at a number of different options for the off ramp but did not find any that were feasible. In particular having a "u-turn" lane to Marginal did not allow space for trucks to make the turn.

Councilor Donoghue said that he was impressed with how the crossing had been moved closer to the Bayside Trail and in this configuration he could even maybe see using the trail. However he still felt that Marginal Way itself was a better bike route and although he would accept this compromise, he felt a two-way cycle track on the south side of Marginal was required to make up for the blocked westbound lane.

Markos said that a lot had been gained here and that the outcome could have been a lot worse. He was also concerned about restricting westbound Marginal Way traffic. He felt this was the best option though, as all other options involved adding more lanes and that this was more reversible.

Another committee member agreed that they supported this as an improvement over the past options but that they were not 100% happy with it.

At this point Carol asked PAC members to give their opinions and comments on the plan. She asked that each person say if they supported the overall plan and if they had any elements that if they went unfixed it would result in their withholding or revoking support.

The first committee member said that it had been an interesting process being a part of the PAC. He was a little worried about the narrowing of Franklin at the Commercial Street end and felt the growth assumptions were too conservative. He did like the roundabout there and felt that it would help to accommodate the extra growth. Overall he felt the plan was a good compromise and supported it.

The next committee member said that she used Franklin frequently as an off-peninsula resident. In talking to other off-peninsula people about Franklin, the most common response was "What's wrong with it?" But they felt that while the road served the purpose it was built for, it might be time for a new purpose. She liked leaving the crossing at Lancaster off the

proposal for now but retaining the option to connect there in the future. The proposal was not everything she wanted but was a good compromise and she would support it.

The third committee member said that he was good with the proposal, though he was concerned about the roundabout handling high-volume pedestrian events.

The next committee member was comfortable with the plan as a whole and felt that it struck a good balance between peninsula residents and those driving in. In general he was content with everything, even the Marginal Way intersection, though they would like to see the westbound Marginal way movement unrestricted. He understood why it was restricted, however, and agreed that there did not seem to be a better solution at this time.

The fifth committee member agreed with much that had been said. It had been a long process and a lot of work had been done to include as many people as possible over the years. He felt that the design presented reflected all of the concerns he had heard. Although there were still some minor issues, he was confident they could be worked out in the design phase. He wanted to see pedestrian crossings on the north side of Federal Street and at Lancaster Street.

Jeremiah was excited about the proposal. The city had long been trying to find ways to connect across Franklin and this would let that happen. There were still discussions to be held but he felt that they had a good relationship with all parties including MaineDOT and felt that all issues could be addressed.

Markos said that he looked forward to supporting this plan. It was not his dream road but he felt it was a good compromise. He liked the crossing at Marginal Way and the fact the intersection would not be widened. The plan would allow for more bike/ped crossings and for more development. He felt that MaineDOT had been cooperative and that they would be a good partner going forward. Everyone involved had been working on this very hard and it showed.

Councilor Donoghue thought the process has been good over the long history of the project and it has had far-reaching impacts that improved the city's processes across the board. A lot of good things have come together all at once to create this plan. He would now be looking toward how the project will be funded. He felt the biggest thing to work on was making sure the Federal Street connection happened in the best way it could.

A representative of Portland Landmarks said that she felt the process had been a good one and that they had enjoyed being a part of it. She appreciated Markos' leadership and everyone's commitment to working together and learning. She loved the Lincoln Park expansion. The Park and the Federal Street reconnection were the biggest issues for Portland Landmarks and they are happy to see them both included. She also liked the 25 mph design speed.

The next committee member felt that the plan looked great. He was very happy with the Marginal Way intersection compared to what had originally been presented. The biggest complaint for him, as a representative of East Bayside, was the lack of crossing at Lancaster Street.

The next committee member said that he supports the plan that was presented and felt that it would be a large gain on what exists. He was disappointed about the lack of crossing at Lancaster Street. He was surprised at just how much he liked the crossing treatment at Marginal Way and felt that was a big boost to their support. Pedestrian concerns were a big issue given how many people that live in the area rely on walking to get around.

The twelfth committee member said he agreed with much that had been said and that he supported the proposal. He appreciated the efforts of city staff, the consulting team, and Markos in making this happen. The issues that still existed could be addressed in the design phase before anything was actually slated to be built. The new road would be something to be proud of and would be more balanced between modes. The most serious concern left was the design and placement of crosswalks at intersections.

The next committee member agreed that the end result was something to be proud of even if there were still some things to be worked out. He is a Peaks Island resident and noted that the islanders had been very skeptical of a roundabout at Commercial but he felt that some were coming around to it. As a long time bike commuter, he was in favor of the roundabout and felt it could be navigated on a bike in the travel lane easily. He felt that the expanded crosswalk at the Marginal Way intersection was a huge improvement, but was still concerned about the restricted movement from Marginal Way west bound.

A representative of the Portland Chamber of Commerce said that the chamber had originally been primarily concerned with making sure that car and truck traffic was not impeded by any changes. Through the process, he had learned and been able to convince others that it was not that black and white. He felt there were some big positives to the plan, such as tearing down the "wall" of Franklin with improved connections and better use of real estate. It would also greatly improve the ambiance of the area and in doing so improve the whole peninsula. He felt the level of bike/ped service was appropriate and that the shared space concepts seen at Commercial would gradually be expanded along the corridor as people got used to it. He also liked the roundabout and felt it was a robust solution that would be able to handle additional traffic volumes if needed. They were concerned about the restricted movement at Marginal Way. He also would have liked to see the land next to Lincoln Park used for development rather than expanding the park but thought that the improvements to Federal would significantly improve the park, which would make the surrounding parcels more desirable. This was a good thing and he felt that the park had been handled the right way. Finally, he was glad

to see that the use and height discussions were largely left off the proposal and could be worked on in more detail going forward.

The final committee member present said that he largely agreed with everything that had been said before them, particularly the positive aspects. He also felt that the lack of a crossing at Lancaster was a concern and also agreed with the concern that the narrowing of the street at the Commercial end would not be able to handle traffic. He felt strongly that people needed to move away from single occupant car travel and felt that this plan would help to balance out modes so that other modes were more viable. Overall, he saw the proposal as a terrific outcome.

A committee member who was unable to be present at the meeting due to illness sent comments in via email. He liked the roundabout and the narrowing of Franklin at the Commercial Street end. He also appreciated the reconnection, particularly that of Federal Street, and the extension of Lincoln Park. He did question the safety of back-in angled parking on Federal Street. He wished that bold options had been taken at the Bayside Trail intersection and felt that overall the corridor could be even more bike and pedestrian friendly. He understood the compromises though and is in support of the plan.

Carol asked for a show of hands and found unanimous support from the PAC for the plan, except for one abstention due to concern about the lack of a pedestrian crossing at Lancaster Street.

Cathy took the floor to review next steps. IBI Group recommends that the implementation be done in three steps with the Commercial Street end first, the Marginal Way end second, and the middle portion third. They acknowledged that the Marginal Way intersection is scheduled to be worked on in the near future but felt the Commercial end had the least complications and could be completed fairly quickly. The report will include recommendations on how the road could continue to function during construction. The cost estimate is still being refined but at the time was around \$27 million for the project.

A question was asked about the phasing and how the current project scope included an initial engineered design for the Marginal Way intersection.

Cathy agreed that this was the case and that they were recommending that the Preliminary Design Report (PDR) be expanded to include the whole corridor. This would allow for a better understanding of grade and alignment issues.

A committee member asked how the price broke down by proposed phase.

Cathy responded that it was approximately 30% of the total for phase 1, 40% for phase 2 and 30% for phase 3.

Carol took the floor and explained that the next step was for the team to present the plan to the City's Transportation, Sustainability & Energy (TS&E) Committee on April 15th. It will then go to the City Council, in May if possible.

There was some discussion about what role the PAC could play in this and it was felt that it would be helpful if some key representatives could come to the meetings to express support.

Carol continued by saying that the PDR would take place in May, June, and July. MaineDOT requires that two public meetings be held as part of this process.

A committee member asked for some more information on the possibility of expanding the PDR.

Don Ettinger replied that development of the vertical and horizontal alignment for the entire road corridor was important. It is being recommended that this all be looked at the same time, but the team is not presuming it would be an addition to the existing contract.

Mike Bobinsky said that this would be worked on more going forward. He also noted that they were contemplating inviting the entire Council to the TS&E meeting in May to expose them to the plan early on. They were trying to work to streamline the process and would let the PAC know as they have a better idea of the timeline.

Councilor Donoghue noted that the proposed first phase (the Commercial Street end) was the area with the most consensus from the PAC. He agreed that it seemed achievable in the near term.

With no other comments, Carol thanked everyone for all their hard work and accommodation and closed the meeting at 8:19 pm.