

Metro Council weighs City Club recommendations on regional transportation

On May 18 the Metro Council got its first opportunity to discuss the City Club of Portland's recent report on improvements to the region's transportation system.

In early March, the City Club's membership endorsed a research report that included among its recommendations:

- having Metro, rather than the Oregon Department of Transportation, administer transportation funds that ODOT currently provides directly to cities and counties
- transferring responsibility for most highways in the metropolitan region from ODOT to cities or counties in which those highways are located
- transferring ownership, financing and maintenance responsibilities for non-freeway bridges within the metropolitan region across the Willamette, Clackamas and Tualatin rivers (except for the Steel Bridge) over to a new bridge authority to be established by Metro and managed as regional assets
- improving land use and transportation planning and coordination between Metro and local governments in Clark County
- changing the voting structure of the Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation so that only elected officials from cities and counties are voting members, and their votes are weighted in proportion to the sizes of the populations they represent within the Metro urban growth boundary.

[Read the full report](#)

Portland lawyer Steve Griffith, who chaired the research committee, along with committee members Richard Ross and Peter Livingston, met with the Metro Council to discuss the report's recommendations and how to implement them.

Councilor Carl Hosticka expressed skepticism about the prospects of Metro taking a greater role in managing the region's transportation network or that there would be support among local governments for such a role. "Authority is normally granted to someone else. It is not seized unilaterally," he said.

Griffith acknowledged that building support for a stronger Metro role in transportation governance would be difficult and that it could not happen if Metro were not willing to assume that responsibility. "The political path must include Metro acceptance of this responsibility," he noted.

Council President David Bragdon expressed that, "If you were trying to build a [transportation] system from scratch, you'd never build it like it is today" with multiple and overlapping jurisdictions managing incomplete parts of a regional network. "However, when you talk about reform, you have entrenched interests seeking to maintain the status quo."

"I'm concerned that Metro taking on additional duties would fundamentally change how successful Metro has been" in dealing with regional transportation issues, added Councilor Rod Park. "Metro doesn't own any of the [transportation] system. We can look at the system more objectively."

Councilor Carlotta Collette, who currently chairs JPACT, asked why the report recommends removing the votes and participation of JPACT members from Vancouver, Clark County and the Washington State Department of Transportation while also calling for more collaboration between Metro and local governments in Clark County on land use and transportation planning and investments.

The main argument in support of changing the JPACT membership is to provide greater proportional voting representation among those from whom transportation dollars are raised. "The money raised and spent by JPACT is raised and spent in Oregon," noted Livingston, though he underscored the importance for continued collaboration between Metro and the greater Vancouver area.

In the course of the discussion the Metro Council offered no commitments to pursue implementation of any of the report's recommendations but expressed appreciation to the City Club's research committee members for the time and efforts they put into the development and promotion of the study.

[Learn more about JPACT](#)

[Learn more about how Metro plans for the region's transportation system](#)

Posted on May 19, 2010