



TO: Elizabeth A. Pauli, City Manager
FROM: Kurtis D. Kingsolver, P.E., Public Works Director/City Engineer *kk*
COPY: Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability Committee
Michael P. Slevin III, P.E., Environmental Services Director/Executive Liaison
PRESENTER: Mike Griffus, Chief Executive Officer, Pierce Transit
Tina Lee, Planning Manager, Pierce Transit
SUBJECT: Pierce Transit's Stream Pacific Avenue Bus Rapid Transit Project
DATE: October 13, 2021

PRESENTATION TYPE:
Informational Briefing

SUMMARY:

Pierce Transit staff will provide an update on the progress of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project. The presentation will address corridor design updates, an update and explanation of a reiterated version of the Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA), and a budget update.

Project partners are hopeful major areas of consensus, including agreement on traffic model inputs and intersection control at 56th Street will be realized in the coming days in order to reach critical project deadlines. Pierce Transit recommends finding resolution in the elements listed below that will allow the project to reach 60% and 100% design. Pierce Transit also recommends a policy framework and rules on reaching consensus be established for how all project partners engage throughout the remainder of the project and future BRT lines built throughout Pierce County.

BACKGROUND:

Pierce Transit launched the beginning of the first bus rapid transit line in the South Puget Sound in 2017 in coordination with project partners including the City of Tacoma, WSDOT, Tacoma Public Utilities, and Pierce County. In 2018 Pierce Transit applied for the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Small Starts program, seeking \$75M in federal dollars in federal project match. These funds are successfully included in the 2022 Presidential budget. If the project partners are able to reach agreement on key project elements and reach 60% design by March 2022, Pierce Transit will share the 60% design development with FTA to allow the Project Management Oversight Consultant (PMOC) to begin their four to five week review of the plans leading into the initiation of the project's Risk Assessment and Project Readiness Review.

The key elements the project needs to demonstrate to FTA are:

- Project Scope and Footprint
- Confirmation scope and footprint do not require National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) reevaluation
- Project Cost Estimates
- Confirmation of availability of funds to complete the project as scoped
- All critical partner agreements must be signed and in place
- Project is included in Puget Sound Regional Council Plans



ISSUE:

The project is nearing a major milestone, 60% design, where the Federal Transit Administration will determine whether or not the project is ready to receive the \$75M appropriated for the project.

Pierce Transit and the City of Tacoma have faced challenges in reaching consensus on multiple elements of this project, which can be expected for work both parties have never done.

Fortunately, the project team has reached consensus on major principles, including:

- Reaffirming commitment to the value of the BRT Project and desire to maintain schedule to realize the \$75 million FTA grant.
- Leaving Traffic Impact Analysis with the current growth rate model at 1.7%, and
- Concurrently running an additional model, at the City of Tacoma and WSDOT's request, with a growth rate number provided by the Puget Sound Regional Council and amended assumptions agreed upon by all project partners.
- This work will provide, a "bookend" to analyze and consider the BRT project's incremental impacts.
- It will also provide updated recommendations – potentially eliminating currently proposed mitigation or modifying recommended mitigation to address BRT project incremental impacts – which will then be utilized to update the project plans for a 60% design set.
- 60% cost estimate will need to be updated to reflect the agreed upon 60% project scope.

ALTERNATIVES:

The alternative, which is not recommended, is consensus is not reached among project partners, a successful 60% design is not realized, and the project is put on hold or canceled. Phasing the project is not a viable option due to the funding structure of the project. This means the South Puget Sound falls further behind in economic competitiveness with Seattle, Bellevue, Vancouver, Spokane, and Snohomish County, all of which have at least one, most have many more, BRT lines in their jurisdictions. With the growing affordable housing crisis in the region, and Joint Base Lewis-McChord reporting the wait on housing is the longest of any army installation in the country, we cannot afford to miss the economic and affordable housing opportunities the BRT will bring to Tacoma and Pierce County.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This is an information briefing only. There is no fiscal impact.

RECOMMENDATION:

This is an information briefing only. There is no recommendation.