

City of Portland Peninsula Transit Study Committee

The Peninsula Transit Study Committee held its first meeting on January 23 at City Hall.

The purpose of the transit study is to broaden the 2005 Peninsula Traffic Plan to thoroughly consider of and plan for “alternative” modes of transportation, including pedestrian, bicycle, and mass transit. The consultant firm of Nelson/Nygaard has been hired to carry out the study, write the recommendations, and develop the implementation steps.

The Peninsula Transit Study Committee represents neighborhoods, businesses, transportation and housing organizations, and other nonprofits and helps provide public input and steering to the consultant. The committee will meet every fourth Wednesday, January through June 2008, at 5pm at City Hall to review progress of the study. More citizen input will come from two meetings that will be open to the general public.

The purpose of this first meeting was to introduce the objectives and timelines of the study and to hear from committee members on the transit issues that concern them. Some of the concerns raised were:

- Heavy daily inflow and outflow of automobile traffic into downtown and into and through neighborhoods
- Nonenforcement of parking regulations
- Inadequate street signage
- No bus shelters
- Lack of sidewalks, poorly maintained sidewalks, snow/ice-covered sidewalks, slippery brick sidewalks
- Expense and scarcity of automobile parking
- Franklin Arterial’s slicing of the Peninsula and hampering of movement across town
- Inadequate public transportation for people without cars (including subsidized housing residents) coming in from outside the Peninsula
- Better connections among different modes of transportation
- Consideration of walking trails as an enabler of transit; breaks in trails network in Portland area
- Location of bus/rail transportation center “behind a highway cloverleaf”
- Lack of functional, resident-oriented services and amenities (e.g. clothing, hardware, grocery, etc. stores) on Peninsula
- Better methods to encourage use of park & ride
- Inadequate bus routes and frequency
- Barrier to non-automobile transit imposed by I-295; I-295 intersections with their safety issues for pedestrians, including USM students
- Islander parking; more opportunities for islanders to get around on Peninsula without cars; access to Maine State Pier for islanders as development of the eastern waterfront proceeds
- Land use rules that require developers to provide increasingly expensive parking spaces, devote acreage on the Peninsula to garages and parking lots, and encourage car-dependence
- Management of traffic issues associated with new building in Bayside and the eastern waterfront and the city’s infill development in general

Members of the public in attendance also reminded the committee of the complications of seasonal variation in traffic density in the Portland area; suggested pedestrian-only streets; asked for consideration of light rail; and requested better enforcement of snow-clearing of sidewalks and keeping cars off sidewalks.

The first public meeting for the Transit Study will be February 21, tentatively at the Ocean Gateway terminal. The next meeting of the Transit Study Committee will be on February 27.