



EmX Stakeholder Perceptions Report



Final Report:
Prepared for: Lane Transit District

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September 2009



Acknowledgements

Community Planning Workshop wishes to thank all the partners involved in making this project happen – the Oregon Transportation Research and Education Consortium, Lane Transit District, city planning staff from Eugene and Springfield, and transportation professionals from across the country.

We would especially like to thank Tom Schwetz and Mary Archer at Lane Transit District for their enthusiasm for the project and their faith in the learning experience. Also thanks to Terry Moore for transportation and, more importantly, report framework wisdom. Lastly, thanks to our Project Director, Bob Parker, who valiantly led us through the project from beginning to end.

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Table of Contents

I. Introduction.....	1
Purpose.....	2
II. Methods.....	4
Interviews.....	4
Focus Groups.....	4
Surveys	4
III. Findings.....	6
Perceptions of the EmX.....	5
Transit and Related Community Goals.....	6
Decision-Making.....	7
Communication.....	8
LTD Funding	9
Economic Impacts of the EmX.....	10
Urban Form Effects.....	10
IV. Recommendations	12

Appendices

Appendix A.....	Policy Makers
Appendix B.....	Community Members
Appendix C.....	Business Community
Appendix D.....	Planners
Appendix E.....	LTD Staff
Appendix F.....	NEPA Summary

INTRODUCTION

Lane Transit District (LTD) is a regional transit provider in Lane County, Oregon. LTD developed a bus rapid transit (BRT) called the Emerald Express that began operating in January of 2007. Guided by public input, LTD selected a BRT system because it was seen as a good fit for a community that is growing, but does not have the travel demand or population to warrant a light rail system. The first phase of LTD's BRT system was funded as a "demonstration project" by the Federal Transit Authority (FTA). One unique aspect is that it is in the smallest metropolitan area of any BRT system. While examples of BRT projects exist in large U.S. cities like Seattle, Washington and Boston, Massachusetts, smaller metropolitan areas are now looking to the Eugene-Springfield area to see if BRT can be a successful transportation option in their community.

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and other transit agencies across the nation are observing the two-year old Franklin Corridor line of the Emerald Express (EmX) to evaluate the probability of success of BRT in a medium-sized city. To date, LTD has completed the planning process for two lines, the Franklin Corridor and the Pioneer Parkway Corridor, and is in the planning phase of a third line, the West Eugene EmX Extension (WEEE). While the Franklin Corridor is operational, the Pioneer Parkway Corridor is under construction and slated for operation at the end of 2010. The WEEE is still in the planning phase. LTD is in the process of evaluating alternate routes for the WEEE but a final decision about the route alignment has not yet been made.

The current route connects the central LTD bus stations in Springfield and Eugene using the Franklin Boulevard corridor. Much of this route offers exclusive right-of-way to the EmX bus, which allows for a faster ride and more frequent service compared to conventional buses. The EmX has a number of features that seek to incorporate accessibility into its operation. Apart from being offered as a free service, EmX vehicles have been specially designed for easy wheelchair boarding and bike access. The system includes audible pedestrian crossing devices at major EmX stops to aid the visually impaired. Furthermore, all EmX users are offered easy access to the service through decreased wait times and faster trips (as compared to standard LTD bus service).

The EmX system is also an appropriate match for the Eugene-Springfield area because it will allow LTD to expand BRT incrementally in accordance with demand and available funding. In fact, the EmX was one of a handful of federally funded BRT demonstration projects in medium sized cities in the United States. Therefore, LTD and its EmX system are setting precedent for other medium sized cities to follow. Evaluating the current EmX system will assist both LTD as it moves forward in its development of new lines and other transit districts in medium-sized cities as they evaluate BRT as a transit option.

Evaluation of the BRT is important not only because the FTA has evaluation requirements, but because it offers LTD a framework for improving the BRT. The FTA

evaluation requirements focus on *outcomes* which are long-term and are intended to measure the success of the system through pre-determined criteria. Because the EmX system has only operated for two years, an outcome evaluation is premature at this time. A second type of evaluation focuses on *process* – or the mechanism by which an organization implements its programs. In the case of the EmX, the planning and development process is important because the municipalities of Eugene and Springfield have decision-making authority over EmX alignments.

Because LTD is in the process of both constructing and planning new lines, evaluating how the planning and environmental review process is perceived within the community will assist the transit district future BRT expansions. To better understand community perceptions of the BRT development and evaluation process, LTD is collaborating with the Community Planning Workshop (CPW) to examine stakeholders' perceptions of the EmX. In short, this report represents one component of a *process* evaluation: stakeholder perceptions.

PURPOSE

This report examines stakeholder's perceptions of LTD's process for the planning, environmental review, construction, and operation of new lines of the EmX, LTD's bus rapid transit system. This process includes recommending a locally preferred alternative (LPA). A separate document, the Evaluation Framework, examines the evaluation criteria that focus on the outcomes of the EmX.

Stakeholders are individuals and groups who will be affected by the development and operation of the EmX system. Specifically, this document examines if and why these stakeholders value the EmX, how they view its future expansion, and what they think of the EmX planning and environmental review process.

CPW interviewed planners, community groups, business owners, policy makers, and Lane Transit District (LTD) staff to understand their perceptions. More details about each stakeholder group and their goals are detailed in Appendices A through E. CPW selected these groups for two main reasons. First, other LTD evaluations focused on two other groups in the community: patrons and neighbors (e.g., residents and businesses near existing or proposed routes). Rather than replicate previous work by LTD, CPW focused on perceptions of members of the community that have not yet been examined by LTD.

Second, previous evaluations focused on the outcomes of BRT rather than the planning and environmental review process. In short, this report evaluates stakeholders' perceptions of the EmX planning and environmental review *process* rather than its *outcomes*. This focus on other stakeholders allowed CPW to better understand issues related to the planning and environmental review process.

Analysis of stakeholder perceptions is important to help LTD for three key reasons:

1. **Improving the Data:** CPW collected data from stakeholders to explain and enhance the data that has already been collected by LTD through rider surveys and neighborhood meetings.
2. **Understanding Community Goals:** Discussing the topic of goals is important because it helps LTD know what goals the community has for the EmX. Evaluating the community's perspectives about goals may be an important addition to evaluating LTD's own goals and the goals of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).
3. **Analyzing the Process:** Analyzing the stakeholders' perceptions of the planning and environmental review process is important for three reasons: (1) community participation is an important goal for LTD; (2) both LTD and the community believe that community participation helps to create good decisions; and (3) this analysis is an important way to understand adherence to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process (called the *environmental review* process in this report) and its requirements (see Appendix F for a more detailed discussion of the NEPA process.)

Federal Transit Administration (FTA) policy requires transit districts to follow NEPA procedures in developing their proposals to receive funding. In addition, LTD and other stakeholders believe NEPA effectively involves stakeholders and transit experts working together to create alternatives. This process is intended to result in better decision-making. Finding out from stakeholders how they perceive the EmX planning and environmental review process, its strengths and weaknesses, and what is legally required should better inform LTD's future planning and environmental review processes.

The stakeholder interviews explored whether the environmental review process needs to be better communicated, if the reasoning behind this process has to be explained, and how stakeholders gain their understanding of the LTD environmental review and decision making processes.

This report has three additional sections:

II. Methods describes the various methods we used to gather and analyze stakeholder information.

III. Results discusses how stakeholders feel about the EmX and its development and implementation processes.

IV. Recommendations uses stakeholder input as well as conclusions reached through the research project to offer recommendations for LTD about how to improve the current and future EmX environmental review and decision making processes.

METHODS

To understand stakeholders' perceptions of the planning and environmental review process, CPW conducted interviews, focus groups, and online surveys to examine community perceptions. We also examined information concerning best practices for evaluating processes.

INTERVIEWS

CPW conducted interviews with key people in five stakeholder groups: (1) city planning staff; (2) community groups; (3) the business community (4) LTD staff; and (5) policy makers. These interviews focused on the following topics:

- The interviewee's role in the EmX development process
- The interviewee's ideas of how to improve the EmX development process
- Perceived and actual goals, benefits, and costs of the EmX

FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS

CPW conducted two focus group meetings with LTD staff and planning staff from the cities. The goal of the first focus group was to understand the points at which planning staff were involved in the EmX planning and environmental review process and to understand what information flows between LTD staff and other community groups. A second focus group explored communication between city and LTD planners during the EmX planning process and identify strengths, weaknesses and opportunities of the current process in the planning community. The LTD staff who participated in the focus groups included planners, customer service representatives, marketing representatives, and other professionals.

SURVEYS

CPW worked with the Eugene and Springfield Chambers of Commerce to distribute a survey to businesses in Eugene and Springfield. The survey included questions about perceptions of the EmX, the EmX development process, and the effects of the EmX on businesses and the area as a whole. CPW also surveyed residents of the Fairmount Neighborhood, the neighborhood adjacent to the current EmX line on Franklin Street between Alder Street and Walnut Street. This survey was used to learn about businesses' perceptions of the Franklin Corridor EmX development process. See the Business Survey Report and the Fairmount Neighbors Survey Report for analysis of the survey results.

FINDINGS

This section discusses the results of our research organized by the following topics: perceptions of the EmX, transit and related community goals, decision-making, communication, funding, economic impacts of the EmX, and urban form effects. Each topic contains sections about consensus points between stakeholders, other points raised by stakeholders, and CPW's interpretation of this information.

PERCEPTIONS OF THE EMX

Within each stakeholder group, some individuals held positive perceptions and others held negative perceptions of the EmX. These individuals also spoke about the positive and negative perceptions of the EmX held by other parts of the community. There was not consensus across stakeholder groups about the success of the EmX.

While policy makers and planners viewed the EmX as a success, some members of the business community and some community groups were less enthusiastic. In particular, while large businesses value the EmX and other LTD services because they reduce the costs associated with providing parking for every employee or customer, smaller businesses don't feel like they get enough benefit associated with the payroll taxes that they pay. Regardless of their perceptions of the EmX, the business community has a strong sense of investment in LTD because the operating costs are supported by payroll taxes.

Overall, the community members we talked to believe there is not broad community support of the EmX because the community does not have enough information about the EmX or BRT. However, community members stated that LTD has effectively worked with various parts of the community to learn about their needs during the vehicle design and procurement stages.

Planners, policy makers, and LTD staff support the EmX and believe that it has local support. In addition, these stakeholders mentioned EmX's national recognition and support from other transit districts and from the FTA. Therefore, planners, policy makers, and LTD staff believe that the success of the EmX is beneficial to the Eugene-Springfield Metropolitan Area because of the benefits and positive attention it brings. In addition, this support comes from the central role of the EmX in the region's transportation strategy.¹

Also, some stakeholders mentioned that their perception of the EmX was based on specific criteria such as ridership or community input. Identifying these criteria and communicating whether or not the EmX has met them is important to better

¹ Bus rapid transit was introduced into in the Eugene-Springfield Transportation System Plan (TransPlan) in 1986. The 2002 TransPlan laid out a route map for the EmX. This plan, developed with public input, describes the region's transportation strategy.

understanding stakeholder perceptions (see the Evaluation Framework Document for more details on this topic). In addition, giving stakeholders better and more targeted information could be key to improving perceptions. For example, one policy maker said that their perception of the success of the EmX is based on the amount that the EmX is subsidized. Clarifying that all transit is subsidized would help the public properly evaluate the EmX.

CPW's Interpretation: There seems to be a gap in perceptions of the success of the EmX between LTD staff, policy makers, and planners and the more complicated perspective of the business community and the community groups we talked to. While LTD staff, policy makers, and planners see the EmX as a success, the business community and the community groups, are less certain. A possible explanation for the gap could be that stakeholders assess the success of the EmX at different times and by different criteria—they have different frames of reference². Business owners and community groups might assess success within a shorter time frame than LTD staff, policy makers, and planners, making it important to understand how these evaluation periods differ when considering how stakeholders assess the success of the EmX.

TRANSIT AND LAND USE

Planners, LTD staff, policy makers, and members of the business community all recognized the necessary connection between transportation and land use. The comments from the business community focused on the economic effects of land use planning. Planners, policy makers, and LTD staff were more interested in how to coordinate land use planning.

Policy makers in Eugene saw transit as an important component of their sustainability goals. LTD staff said that convincing people of the concept of bus rapid transit over light rail or other transit forms was still an important part of their work.

CPW's Interpretation: It is interesting to note that stakeholders from community groups did not mention broad ideas about transit in their discussions of the EmX. This could suggest that LTD, city staff, and other transit advocates could do a better job tying the EmX to broader ideas about transit. Also if the connection between transportation and land use were better understood, more actions might be taken to connect these areas in practice as well.

² For example, business will focus on how the EmX directly benefits business and planners and policy makers will look at broader community impacts of the EmX such as changes in other transportation options, land use impacts, etc. The criteria with which these stakeholders evaluate the EmX are explained in the Evaluation Framework Report.

DECISION-MAKING

The decision-making process refers to the development of alternatives, choosing the locally preferred alternative, and the design process. LTD staff, the LTD board, and the city councils make these decisions with input from city planning staff and from the public.

We found two main consensus points among all of the stakeholder groups related to decision-making. First, the decision-making process has improved over time. Stakeholders have become more satisfied with the process. Second, stakeholders recognize that the decision-making processes required for EmX development are inherently long (in part due to NEPA regulations), which makes the decision-making process more challenging. The decision-making process is further complicated by stakeholder turnover; many residents, employers, employees, riders, and policy makers leave, change positions, or take on different roles during the long process.

The public, particularly the community groups and the business community, appreciated that LTD involved them in particular aspects of the development of the Franklin line. For example, LTD facilities staff created a full-size mockup of the chosen vehicle to show to community members, particularly those community members with wheelchairs and bicycles. This demonstration was mentioned by both community members and LTD staff as an example of good collaboration. The business community also mentioned their relationship with LTD, specifically the extensive one-on-one discussions LTD had with corridor businesses.

Community groups, planners, and policy makers said that the more collaboration involved in the decision-making process, the better. Community groups, planners, policy makers, and staff cited The West Eugene Collaborative (WEC) as an example of effective collaboration between residents, businesses, planners, policy makers, the City of Eugene, and LTD. This group had no decision-making authority, but created a broad vision for West Eugene that many stakeholders admired. However, LTD staff pointed out that too much compromise as a result of collaboration can dilute the effectiveness of the transportation system that is created. It is important to time collaboration processes correctly.

In determining the corridors for the West Eugene route, some LTD staff felt in retrospect that they deferred too much to Eugene planning staff, and did so prematurely, before having truly made adequate efforts to defend their choice. Some LTD staff feels that the City of Eugene is not explicit enough about communicating with the public that the city has accepted having an EmX route in West Eugene and the vision of BRT through their approval of TransPlan. Communication of these ideas by the city could improve LTD's relations with neighborhood groups.

City planners discussed the role of planners and planning documents in the LTD decision-making process. Coordination between city planning and LTD planning and decision-making is important. For example, city corridor planning and LTD route planning should be concurrent. LTD staff and policy makers proposed further time savings by engaging in the decision making process (particularly NEPA) for several routes at once. To do this properly, LTD needs adequate funding, which it does not have at the present time.

The business community strongly believes that they should have a significant role in the decision making process because of their role in financing LTD. For example, large payroll taxpayers should have their transportation needs met by LTD. Smaller businesses want to feel as if they are getting their money's worth or benefitting in some way from their financial support of LTD. Also because of their special relationship with LTD, businesses feel strongly that it is important that the LTD board continues to be appointed, not elected. The business community believes that there is a disconnect between voters and businesses that would make an elected LTD board problematic for the business community.

CPW's Interpretation: Balancing the benefits of collaboration and the reduced effectiveness of compromise is difficult, especially without seeming disingenuous. Using informal collaboration techniques, particularly using liaisons that connect the LTD staff or board to individuals in the community, can improve information sharing and decision making. In addition, LTD should be more explicit about when public meetings can influence decision-making and when the meetings are informational. LTD should be careful to communicate when the public can no longer influence the alignments. LTD should explain that this point is early in the process due to FTA guidelines.

COMMUNICATION

All of the stakeholder groups agreed that LTD communication has improved through the years of the EmX development processes. The survey results suggest that there is still a ways to go. The fact that substantial numbers of businesses say that they did not receive notification from LTD is one indicator of the need for improved communication.

The business community, community group representatives, and planners all felt that, while LTD communicates a good amount of information, its content could be improved. In particular, they felt that in the past LTD has hidden impacts or not communicated them completely. One planner suggested using an approach that identifies and communicates the worst possible physical impacts of a corridor's development to the public, and then, through the development process, could reduce the perception that LTD is withholding information.

Also, LTD, community groups, and planners all spoke to how LTD could better explain why BRT was deemed the right transit solution for the Eugene-Springfield Metropolitan region. Both LTD's BRT message and project updates could be communicated more frequently. One of the most common critiques of LTD's communication with the public is that LTD has not been successful at communicating the big picture (the 61-mile system) and why BRT is the right regional solution (versus light rails or streetcars).

While LTD places much of the information stakeholders seek on the LTD website or uses mass mailings, this information was not often discussed by other stakeholders. Matching communication methods to stakeholders' preferred or most used communication type is important. About 74% of those who responded to the survey of the Fairmount Neighbors said they got most of their information about LTD through the newspaper. Fifty-two percent of respondents to the business survey used the newspaper. The most common communication method business owners used was the chamber newsletter,³ with 71% using this method. Although 65% said they used the Internet to learn about LTD, 80% said they would not use social networking sites like Facebook. When business owners were asked about their preferred communication method, 79% preferred email, 39% said regular mail, and 23% preferred personal contact.

CPW's Interpretation: LTD sees itself as very communicative, while stakeholders perceive this communication differently. While communication has improved, stakeholders believe communication is key and must continue to improve. LTD communicates extensively through its website and other community meetings, but it must continue to seek ways to communicate more effectively. In particular, continuing to focus on communication of the vision of BRT in Eugene will make communication about more controversial topics easier. Stakeholders would like to see more communication through newspaper as well as informal meetings. When possible, LTD should use the methods that stakeholders prefer to communicate information.

LTD FUNDING

All of the stakeholders believe that funding structure of LTD and EmX could be better communicated. Stakeholders differed on what details they wanted to know about LTD's funding system. Policy makers think that LTD should be clearer about the difference between operational funds and capital investment funds. Also, some policy makers were unclear on why LTD applied for BRT funding and whether federal funding availability influenced mode decisions.

Businesses care deeply about funding because they are the primary funders of LTD through their payroll taxes. Business owners do not feel that the public understands how LTD, and specifically the EmX, is funded. LTD staff agree with this point and feel

³ This is probably a reflection of the fact that the CPW only administered the survey to chamber members.

there should be additional clarification that there is separate funding (primarily federal) for the EmX than the funding used for other LTD services. Both planners and community groups discussed funding very little, suggesting they may not recognize its important role in determining LTD decision making.

CPW's Interpretation: Our discussions with these stakeholders suggested that many aspects of LTD funding are poorly understood by members of stakeholder groups and that the funding should be explained better. LTD could explicitly mention the funding sources for capital and operating costs in meetings and information about particular projects. LTD may also want to create a funding FAQ (frequently asked questions) and post it on the BRT section of the LTD website.

ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF THE EMX

While many stakeholders recognized the potential for the EmX to improve the economic vitality of the Franklin corridor, no one understood the details of these economic effects because this data does not exist.⁴ This data could include information on property value changes, type and amount of development along corridors, and increased business near EmX stations. Most stakeholders commented that they understood that the newness of the system prevents these economic impacts from being well understood by LTD.

While many stakeholders are hopeful about the possible economic impacts of the EmX, the planners were the most confident about this potential. They believe that the EmX is already affecting economic development and acts as a community building block. Still, they and other stakeholders want to know more about economic development related to BRT both within Eugene-Springfield and in other cities with BRT. Understanding the economic impacts of the EmX would also inform planning for the EmX and understanding its effects on urban form.

CPW's Interpretation: Because so many stakeholders are interested in the economic impacts of the EmX, this topic would be a useful area for further research.

URBAN FORM EFFECTS

This section discusses stakeholder perceptions of the effects the EmX has had on the urban form of the community, within BRT corridors, and near BRT stations. These effects include BRT components such as designated lanes.

Most stakeholders agreed that the biggest obstacle to LTD is finding acceptable routes for the EmX. While policy makers and planners saw the challenges of BRT's urban form as surmountable, business owners had fundamental concerns about designated lanes. These concerns focused on whether designated lanes limit left turn access for autos. In

⁴ The EmX has not operated long enough for any meaningful evaluation of economic impacts.

general, all stakeholders were concerned with the EmX's impacts on other transportation modes (bicycle, pedestrian, and car) especially concerning the importance of designated lanes and the compatibility of designated lanes with other modes.

Meanwhile, planners and LTD staff are concerned about the lack of designated lanes along some of the most important sections of the routes. In general, staff feel LTD has the right-of-way where it is less necessary (like in the Gateway section of the Pioneer Parkway extension), but lacks right-of-way where it is most needed (such as along some sections of the Franklin corridor). Yet planners feel that LTD has led the cities in creating good urban form around EmX stations.

CPW's Interpretation: The examination of the impacts on urban form needs to be tied to the big picture explanation of the EmX to be most effective. While some stakeholders realize compromise is required to incorporate BRT into the urban form, other stakeholders still need to be convinced.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This section summarizes CPW recommendations informed by recommendations from the stakeholders. These two groups of recommendations are very similar, indicating that CPW supports many of the recommendations that stakeholders made.

LTD should improve the way it communicates its funding structure to the community.

A simple explanation of how the EmX is funded (capital investment funds vs. operating cost funds) would help LTD gain community buy-in. Also, because businesses support LTD through payroll taxes, businesses feel that they are heavily invested in the services that are offered. LTD should approach its outreach to the business community in a way that shows appreciation for this support. Outreach to the broader community could also communicate support for the local businesses that support LTD. For example, LTD could use advertising to thank or request support for local businesses.

LTD and its jurisdictional partners should communicate the full build-out vision of BRT in Eugene-Springfield.

To meet regional land use and transportation goal, development of the EmX has to coincide with its original vision. This will require some difficult and potentially politically-charged decisions by the municipalities. The long-term build-out vision must be clearly communicated to the public. Sharing the big picture of BRT in the area would help community members accept the EmX. LTD's jurisdictional partners play an important role in communicating this vision, its public support, and its origins in TransPlan. These jurisdictional partners have a responsibility to understand the full build-out vision. LTD could aid policy makers in gaining this understanding through a handbook that explains why BRT was chosen, what the vision looks like, and common points of conflict and support among stakeholders. This support is also bolstered by joint work sessions with the city councils. Instead of just marketing the EmX specifically, LTD should also focus on marketing the benefits of better transit. Convincing the public of the benefits of transit might help gain public support for the EmX.

LTD should prepare city councils, board members, and the public for the degree of impacts a full build-out of BRT will have and get their support for this long term investment.

Eugene and Springfield have already approved the vision of the EmX through their approval of TransPlan. LTD needs to prepare the city council and board members to talk about the degree of impacts with their constituents. While many of these impacts will be positive, there will also be short-term corridor focused

negative impacts. LTD must communicate these impacts to policy makers. If the city councils and board are better informed, they are better able to ensure support for the EmX as a long term investment. This support also allows the cities to leverage the large investment that LTD is making to support land use and economic development decision making at the city level.

LTD should strive to share as much information as possible, even if it causes controversy.

LTD should be more up front with controversial information because it enhances credibility with the public. It may also reduce conflict later in the project. LTD should be careful to use communication methods that are most effective with the stakeholders who will be most affected by these decisions. For example, community members talked about getting most of their information about LTD through newspapers. While LTD should recognize that they do not control the message that the newspapers deliver, LTD should recognize newspapers are an important information source for community members. Looking to other effective communication methods would also be useful. For example, businesses relied on the Chamber of Commerce newsletters. More generally, LTD should be careful to go beyond what FTA or NEPA requires when communicating controversial information and effects.

LTD should communicate with community members in informal spaces.

Creating more informal environments helps community members air their grievances. To get messages out to the public, LTD could hold informal meet-and-greets in places where community members are already going (i.e. the grocery store). This approach has been used with positive feedback by local officials in the Eugene-Springfield area. Someone on staff or on the LTD board can act as a liaison between business owners and LTD.

This liaison should also make an effort to personally and informally meet with business owners to build trust and relationships. During the early stages of EmX development, a board member took on this role to gain support for the EmX concept among the business community with great success. These informal relationships should continue to be used to build support for the EmX.

LTD should work to identify required BRT elements and acceptable levels of compromise.

LTD should prioritize which elements of BRT are necessary and which elements are eligible for compromise. This prioritization could result in policy-level design standards for the EmX, which would specify percentage of designated lanes and specifics about other elements of BRT that LTD would require in the design.

These standards should be based on studies of the current lines that examine when compromise has been problematic and when compromise still allows BRT to be effective. More generally, LTD should not bow to demands by the public to include alternatives if these alternatives are not feasible. Rather than advertising the EmX as flexible, LTD should focus its advertising on the fact that they are creating a long term investment in a proven mode.

LTD should collaborate more closely with local governments.

While this coordination is challenging because of the complexity of the planning departments and the difference in funding and development cycles, this coordination could be improved. Improving this coordination requires working with many departments within city government, not just a single department. LTD should take advantage of existing resources within the city planning departments and coordinate more closely with land use planning. LTD could work more closely with the Neighborhood Services Division in Eugene, which has already established good relationships with neighbors and neighborhood groups. Also, the planning staff, city officials, and LTD could work together to investigate creating a transit overlay zone. Collaboration could also be increased during capital investment planning. While creating relationships with planners is important, coordination must also come from the leadership to be most effective.

Getting stakeholder input at the correct time and clearly establishing roles in the process is important.

LTD staff are transportation experts and should not be afraid to come across as experts. At the start of meetings, LTD should say whether or not the attendees will influence decision making through this meeting. LTD should communicate when the public can no longer influence design. LTD should explain that this point is early in the process due to FTA guidelines.

The public's role was to decide whether BRT is the right mode alternative to develop. The public made this choice in 1986 and again in 2001 when BRT was included in TransPlan. It is time to move on to the next step. The role of stakeholders is to figure out the details of the routes and how to get them there.

LTD should improve its BRT website.

LTD sees its website as a useful conduit of information and public relations. However, much of this information is hard for stakeholders to find. In particular, LTD should organize the EmX pages more logically, organize the Frequently Asked Questions section more logically, provide clear and up-to-date information, and provide links to reports, surveys, and evaluations relevant to

the EmX. More about these recommendations can be found in the Website Evaluation Report.

Appendix A

Policy Makers

INTRODUCTION

This appendix describes the perceptions that local policy makers have of the Emerald Express (the EmX) and its related planning and development processes.

To gather this information, CPW interviewed City Councilors, County Commissioners, Lane Transit District (LTD) Board members, EmX Steering Committee members, and other government officials. We selected these individuals because of their involvement in the development and implementation of the EmX. Additionally, these policy makers have unique positions in that they rely on LTD to provide them with the information that they need in order to make recommendations or decisions regarding the EmX.

The focus of our interviews was placed on the policy makers' perceptions of the EmX and LTD's processes for development and implementation. The topics that were discussed and the information that resulted are presented within this appendix.

PERCEPTIONS OF THE EMX

Most policy makers viewed the EmX as a success. When asked to explain how they measured the success of the EmX, the overwhelming response was ridership.

Some policy makers were a little hesitant to call the EmX a success. These policy makers believed that it was too early to tell. They believed that the extension routes of the EmX (Pioneer Parkway and West 11th) would give the community a better idea of whether bus rapid transit (BRT) was the right choice. They would measure the success of the EmX based on how much the system was subsidized by local business owners and the government.

Policy makers said that the EmX could only be successful if it runs within designated lanes.

TRANSIT AND RELATED COMMUNITY GOALS

Most of the policy makers that we interviewed discussed the relationship between transportation and land use. Several policy makers even suggested that LTD and city planners should work more closely.

Eugene's policy makers also discussed the connection between mass transit and the sustainability goals of the cities and county. These policy makers listed recycling efforts, LEED certified development, and bus rapid transit as effective methods of meeting sustainability goals.

One policy maker believed that LTD should pay close attention to technology changes in transportation so that the EmX would not become outdated too quickly. This policy maker was suggesting that in order for the EmX to continually contribute to the

sustainability goals of the community, LTD must stay updated with innovative transportation technologies.

DECISION-MAKING

When asked how they would change the planning and development process of the EmX, most policy makers said that LTD is doing it correctly. Some policy makers stated that the process was long, citing the federal government and required public input as main reasons for the length of the process. However, policy makers were quick to say that the length of time, even though long, was the right amount of time and that it would be impractical to speed it up.

One policy maker proposed the idea of expanding the evaluations of future EmX routes so that more miles can be encompassed into the system per phase. They thought a four-mile route (Franklin Corridor) was too short and that a longer route might be more appropriate due to the length of time it takes to evaluate and develop an EmX route.

Another policy maker suggested the use of collaboration methods as a way to speed up the public input portion of the planning and development process. This policy maker envisioned collaboration between the public, the cities, and LTD. This policy maker believed that the more trust that could be developed between the public and LTD, the faster the public input process would go.

COMMUNICATION

Policy makers did not provide a lot of comments on LTD's culture and communications. However, the comments the policy makers did make were positive. One policy maker said that LTD is forward thinking, using the EmX as an example. They explained the comment citing the visionary nature of the EmX project and LTD's ability to take steps to alleviate these issues for the future. Policy makers commented that LTD was criticized at times, but that LTD handles the opposition well and does a good job of completing projects. Policy makers suggested that LTD change the way it approaches a route. They suggested that LTD look at a route extension and its impacts through the eyes of the landowners and business owners that it would affect. Policy maker comments about LTD staff were always positive. Policy makers described LTD as high quality and incredible.

LTD FUNDING

Funding came up often with policy makers. They pointed out how important it is for LTD to be clear about the difference between operational funds and capital investment funds. Policy makers believed that some of the issues that the public has with the EmX stems from the misunderstanding between the two types of funding.

Budget information from LTD is very important for LTD Board members and Committee members.

One policy maker suggested that LTD work with the cities to analyze where they could help LTD with its funding.

One policy maker suggested that the more subsidized by local businesses and government the EmX was, the less successful it could be. This policy maker wanted to know if BRT was truly the best choice for the area, or if it was just a system that the FTA was funding at the time. They explained this comment by saying that they fear that LTD just applied for whatever federal funding was available even if the system didn't match the needs of the local area.

ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF THE EMX

Policy makers felt that LTD could do more to tell a positive story about the EmX. A part of the good story would be the economic effects that the EmX has on an area. Though policy makers thought it might be too soon to tell whether the two are directly related, they believed that after Pioneer Parkway has been operating for a while LTD might have more data to support the claim that the EmX has positive economic effects on the community. One policy maker said that if residents could describe the EmX as an asset, then that would be an indicator of positive economic effects of the EmX.

URBAN FORM EFFECTS

Some policy makers stated that one of the biggest obstacles for LTD is finding the routes for the EmX. Each individual in the community has their own opinion of where the best place for the EmX would be. If LTD worked with the cities more closely, they could develop nodes that the EmX could then link to. This type of transit-oriented development would follow the Eugene-Springfield Transportation System Plan (TransPlan) and maybe pave the way for future EmX routes.

One policy maker pointed out that the EmX should not overwhelm other modes of transportation. They believe it is important for LTD to continue to include bike lanes and pedestrian sidewalks in future EmX designs.

EVALUATION

We asked policy makers what they would like to see evaluated regarding the EmX. They responded with these questions:

- What are the carbon dioxide and green house gas emissions of the EmX?
- Does the EmX reduce impacts on congestion and car use?
- Is the EmX flexible and adaptable to advancements in transportation technology?
- Does the public understand the big picture of BRT in Eugene?
- Do people of all ages and backgrounds use the EmX?
- Does the EmX make people view public transportation differently?

We also asked policy makers how they would like information about the EmX provided to them. Most policy makers said that they are mostly interested in outcomes. Policy makers wanted final reports, not multiple or preliminary drafts. Policy makers also wanted to receive the information that they need to make decisions with plenty of time to actually review the information before making a decision or recommendation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

If policy makers believed that improvements to LTD's planning and development process of the EmX could be made, then we asked them to make recommendations for improvement. The recommendations were largely related to how LTD could get more community buy-in of the EmX with a handful of other recommendations related to other issues in the process. Following is a discussion of policy maker's recommendations:

- **Increasing community buy-in.** Policy makers believed that a simple explanation of how the EmX is funded (capital investment funds vs. operating cost funds) would help LTD gain community buy-in. They also believed that sharing the big picture of BRT in the area would help community members accept the EmX. To get these messages out to the public, policy makers suggested spontaneous, informal meet and greets in places where community members are already going (i.e. the grocery store). Have someone on staff or on the Board who can act as a liaison between business owners and LTD. This liaison should make an effort to personally and informally meet with business owners to build trust and relationships.
- **Public meeting suggestions.** Policy makers emphasized the importance of staying open to public input whenever public meetings are held. The public can tell the difference between meetings where their input is actually heard and collected and meetings where the decision has already been made and they have been invited to participate as an afterthought. When LTD does have the public's attention, it is important for LTD to tell positive stories about the EmX.
- **Keep the vision alive.** Policy makers said that it is very important for LTD to keep politics out of route placement. However, policy makers conceded that politics will always be a part of transportation decisions. To be as successful as possible, the EmX has to follow the original visionary intentions. With politics in the middle, LTD could fall far off course and lose the benefits of the EmX.
- **Collaborate with local government.** Most of the Eugene policy makers that we interviewed wanted to emphasize to LTD that they support the EmX. With that in mind, policy makers thought that more collaboration between LTD and the City of Eugene would be appropriate. The Springfield policy makers that we interviewed did not comment as openly about this recommendation.

Appendix B

Community Members

INTRODUCTION

This appendix examines community members' perceptions of LTD's process for the development and implementation of new lines of the Emerald Express (EmX), LTD's bus rapid transit (BRT) system.

METHODS

CPW gathered community perceptions through interviews with six community members who had various levels of involvement in the planning process for the EmX. They represented involvement in the following groups: the West Eugene EmX Extension (WEEE) Corridor Committee, the West Eugene Collaborative (WEC), Residents for Responsible Rapid Transit, Active Bethel Citizens, the Jefferson-Westside Neighborhood Association, Eugene Sustainability Commission, Friends of Eugene, Lane Independent Living Alliance (LILA), and the Environment Center of Sustainability. We chose these six people based on recommendations from LTD as well as recommendations from other interviewees. These six community members represent a small percentage of the community that has been involved in some sort of communication or collaboration with LTD regarding the EmX.⁷ It is important to recognize that they are meant to present a perspective that differs from riders and the general public, and that their opinions do not represent the community as a whole.

We also conducted a survey of residents in the Fairmount neighborhood, which is adjacent to the Franklin Corridor line of the EmX. The contents and analysis of this survey can be found in the Fairmount Neighbors Survey Report. The survey was created on Survey Monkey and sent out via email to 112 neighborhood residents who subscribe to the Fairmount Neighborhood Association email list, and 34 filled out the survey. The purpose of the survey was to find out about LTD's communication with neighborhood residents and public participation in the process before, during, and after the Franklin Corridor was built. The survey also contained questions about residents' general perceptions of the EmX and LTD.

The findings are presented in the following categories: LTD communications, decision-making, transit and related community goals, economic impacts of the EmX, urban form, evaluation, and recommendations.

PERCEPTIONS OF THE EMX

There was a general sense among the community members that we spoke with that there is no broad community support of the EmX. One recurring reason given for this lack of support was that community members don't have enough information about (1) the EmX, (2) why BRT was chosen for Eugene/Springfield, or (3) what BRT is. One of the community members pointed out that the business community is generally supportive of the EmX because it is their taxes that help pay for it.

Perceptions of the EmX service were mixed. One respondent to the Fairmount neighbors survey “really appreciate[s] the frequency and speed of the EmX service,” while other respondents want to see improvements to the EmX, such as better connections between the EmX and other buses, better neighborhood connections, and better amenities like better bike parking and carriage. One community member pointed out in an interview that LTD has done a good job of providing service to the disabled community. LTD approached members of the disabled community to determine whether the EmX would be accessible. Other community members, though, don’t find the service provided by the EmX to be sufficient.

TRANSIT AND RELATED COMMUNITY GOALS

The fundamentals of BRT – designated lanes, in particular – came up in some of the interviews with community members. Some community members felt that LTD has compromised too much on these fundamentals and lacks the political will to ensure that the EmX is BRT done right.

One respondent to the Fairmount neighborhood survey said that, with the EmX, LTD is moving in a “good direction” for future transit options in Eugene.

COMMUNICATION

Based on the survey of Fairmount neighbors, the public gets the majority of its information about the EmX from the newspaper (74%), and also relies on LTD’s website for information (26%). Only 9% of survey respondents don’t get any information about the EmX. They also get mailings from LTD and information from LTD’s website. One interviewee mentioned that they get email updates about the EmX from LTD.

One section of the Fairmount neighbors survey addressed LTD communications with neighborhood residents before, during, and after the Franklin Corridor was implemented. Of the respondents to the survey, 74% reported that LTD contacted them about the EmX during the planning stage, 51% reported that LTD contacted them about the EmX during construction, and 47% reported that LTD contacted them about the EmX after implementation.

One of the major critiques of LTD’s communication with the public is that they have not been successful at communicating the big picture and why BRT is right for Eugene. This critique was most clear from one community member who had been opposed to BRT initially. By engaging LTD and getting more information, they learned why LTD had chosen BRT and began to come around to accepting the EmX – although they and others still insist that LTD needs to work harder to ensure that the EmX incorporates all aspects of BRT.

For community groups that have invited LTD to speak at their meetings, they generally feel that LTD provides adequate information and is responsive to follow-up questions.

However, at least one other community member was dissatisfied with the information provided to the public. To them, it is unclear that LTD is telling the whole story to the public – especially in terms of potentially controversial information.

Members of the community have mixed feelings about LTD culture. One community member described LTD as professional and informative, but not accessible or informative on a personal level. Some members of the community want more direct communication and involvement with LTD. One community member pointed out that LTD has improved in this area over the past ten years, and that the community has become more involved in LTD.

One community member pointed out that they would like to see LTD push more for BRT done right, which means sticking to the fundamentals of BRT – in particular exclusive lanes and right-of-way. Other community members made comments that they would be more supportive of the EmX if LTD stuck to the fundamentals of BRT.

DECISION-MAKING

Because all of the six community members that we interviewed have had some measure of involvement in the EmX planning process, they were all able to speak about attending meetings with representatives from LTD. LTD has hosted numerous community meetings about the EmX, and representatives from LTD attend various community meetings – neighborhood association meetings and West Eugene Collaborative meetings, for example. Based on the Fairmount Neighbors Survey, about half of the respondents had attended meetings about the EmX – 42% had attended Fairmount Neighborhood Association meetings about the EmX, and 21% attended LTD public meetings about the EmX.

Three respondents to the survey made positive comments about LTD’s public participation processes, but three other respondents made negative comments about these processes, saying that LTD was not genuine and did not fulfill the promises that it made. According to community members who have been attending LTD meetings since early on in the process, the early meetings were inadequate, but LTD has improved that process over time. Many community members, based on both in the interviews and the survey, felt that the early meetings that LTD held about the EmX were disingenuous. LTD seemed to have an agenda and a fixed idea of what their plans were, and they were just trying to sell that idea, rather than get public input. Community members were more satisfied with LTD’s more recent community outreach. There is more of a sense that LTD is trying to engage with the public, rather than just trying to sell BRT.

A number of the community members we spoke with have served on LTD’s committees related to the EmX, like the West Eugene EmX Extension (WEEE) Corridor Committee. There were mixed responses to this type of collaboration. For one community member,

serving on the WEEE Corridor Committee helped clarify the rationale for BRT in Eugene. Another community member felt that the WEEE Corridor Committee was a means for LTD to fulfill community involvement requirements, but that LTD does not disclose all of the information that the public should have access to.

The appointment of LTD's Board of Directors came up in multiple interviews. Some community members, including one respondent to the Fairmount neighbors survey, criticized the fact that the Board is not elected. They would like to see an elected Board because it would be more accountable to the public. One community member pointed out that the Board is in a difficult position – the public does not always support the Board's decisions because people think the decisions would be better if they came from an elected Board.

ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF THE EMX

Community members had little to say about the economic effects of the EmX. The only related comment was that the EmX has the ability to revitalize an area.

URBAN FORM EFFECTS

There was little discussion about urban form, although it was mentioned that the connection between land use and transportation is important. They said that the plans for the West Eugene EmX Extension will require land use changes. One part of this is that the EmX suggests mixed-use development, while West 11th is mostly commercial and industrial. Land use patterns along West 11th would have to change in response to the EmX.

ENVIRONMENT

Some community members expressed concern that LTD should take more steps to make the EmX more environmentally friendly. One community member asked about whether or not the buses could be retrofitted with better, less polluting engine technology. Another community member wanted information about greenhouse gas emissions, expressing concern that transit should help reduce the negative environmental impacts of transportation.

EVALUATION

Community members mentioned the following evaluations that they would like to see come out of LTD's future evaluations of the EmX:

- Reduction of vehicle miles traveled (VMT)
- Origins and destinations of riders
- Type of fuel used

- Greenhouse gas emissions from the EmX
- More subjective questions:
 - Does the EmX follow the best route?
 - Does it serve the right neighborhoods?
 - Does the EmX revitalize a neighborhood?

Community members would like to know more about the following aspects of the EmX:

- Future expansions of the EmX
- The costs of the EmX to LTD, as well as the opportunities, and challenges that LTD faces
- The possibility of using other, more sustainable types of fuel and the adaptability of the motors of the EmX buses to be more sustainable
- Whether or not free rides are going to continue in the future

RECOMMENDATIONS

There were a few recommendations that came up in our interviews with community members. These recommendations are listed below:

- **LTD should support more multi-modal ride options.** One community member brought up the fact that LTD should offer more options for bikers who want to use the EmX, like Bike 'N' Ride and more space for bikes on the buses.
- **LTD should market transit, not sell the EmX.** Marketing of the EmX has a tendency to make people skeptical, because they think LTD is trying to sell their ideas without getting public involvement. One community member recommended that LTD should instead market the benefits of better transit, like decreased congestion and pollution. Convincing the public of the benefits of transit might help gain public support for the EmX.
- **LTD should share information that might cause controversy.** They should be more up front with this kind of information because it would give them more credibility with the public. It would also reduce conflict later in the project.

Appendix C

Business Community

INTRODUCTION

Lane Transit District (LTD) contracted the Community Planning Workshop (CPW) to examine LTD's evaluation methods and criteria and recommend suggestions for their improvement. This appendix examines the Eugene-Springfield business community's perception of LTD's process for the development and implementation of new lines of the Emerald Express (EmX), LTD's bus rapid transit system.

METHODS

We interviewed representatives from both cities' chambers of commerce, as well as a representative from the Lane Metro Partnership. We selected these individuals because of their knowledge of the larger business communities. These interviews focused on perceptions of the EmX and the development process. Our team also distributed an online questionnaire to businesses in Eugene and Springfield that covered a similar set of topics. After this research, we grouped our findings into the following categories: perceptions of the EmX, transit and related community goals, communication, LTD funding, economic impacts of the EmX, urban form effects, evaluation, and recommendations. The rest of this document contains a detailed description of the business community's comments as they relate to these categories.

PERCEPTIONS OF THE EMX

For the most part, we found that the business community viewed the EmX as a beneficial service. That being said, information gathered from our interviews indicates that support for the EmX may be associated with the size of the workforce a business has. For example, businesses with a large number of employees appear to value the EmX and other LTD services because they reduce the costs associated with providing parking for every worker.

On the other hand, one representative of the area business community noted that small businesses with few employees tend to not be as supportive of the EmX and LTD. According to this individual, a number of small businesses do not feel that they benefit significantly from the EmX or other services, despite having to pay payroll taxes to LTD.

The business representatives that we interviewed all emphasized that regardless of size, one common theme across all businesses was a sense of ownership for LTD and the EmX. This feeling of ownership is a result of the payroll tax that area businesses pay to LTD to fund operating expenses.

TRANSIT AND RELATED COMMUNITY GOALS

While transit in relation to other community goals was rarely discussed during our business community interviews, one individual did mention the role that transit plays

in facilitating development. This stakeholder believed that the EmX has the potential to spur new development along its routes and help reduce the amount of parking that large developments demand. The example of Matthew Knight Arena on Franklin Boulevard was used to illustrate this point. This stakeholder believed that without the EmX operating nearby, the stadium's current design and location would not have been possible.

DECISION-MAKING

During our interviews, most of the discussion about decision-making was related to the topic of payroll taxes. The business community representatives had the following general comments about decision-making:

- The amount of influence a business has during the decision-making process should be determined by the amount of payroll tax paid to LTD.
- Large payroll taxpayers should have their transportation needs met by LTD.
- There is a disconnect between voters and businesses that would make an elected LTD board problematic for the business community.
- There is a great deal of support for the board being appointed.

Apart from these comments, one representative applauded LTD for its willingness to compromise with area businesses when developing the EmX route along Franklin Boulevard.

COMMUNICATION

The business representatives we interviewed had mostly positive things to say about the amount of communication between LTD and area businesses. One representative told us that most businesses in the area feel as though LTD listens to their concerns and invites feedback on new projects like the EmX. Another representative noted that LTD has been very successful in conveying the efforts they have made to serve local businesses.

Despite this predominantly positive response, we did receive a few critical comments related to LTD's culture and their communication with the business community. One representative told us that several area businesses have the impression that LTD staff has been arrogant and closed-minded in the past. While this may not apply today, this individual noted that business owners have long memories, and this perception of LTD staff may take years to change.

Another criticism we heard dealt with the type of information that was communicated to business owners. While everyone we spoke with agreed that there was a sufficient amount of communication, the quality of that information was called into question. For example, one representative we spoke with frequently asked questions about why LTD

service is being cut back despite having high ridership. It was the opinion of this representative that the answer to this question should have been communicated by LTD.

LTD FUNDING

Because LTD's operating costs are funded primarily through a payroll tax on area businesses, the issue of funding came up frequently during our interviews. Incidentally, issues related to funding are not limited solely to this section, and can be found throughout the business community appendix.

From our interviews, two common themes emerged related to the funding structure of LTD: Business owners understand how LTD is funded, and business owners do not feel the general public understands how LTD is funded.

Our interviews revealed that not only are business owners aware that they help to fund LTD's operating costs, there is also a general understanding that their payroll tax contributions do not pay for capital expenditures (e.g. construction of EmX route). Furthermore, the business representatives we spoke with believe that most area businesses feel that the general public does not grasp this distinction.

ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF THE EMX

The business representatives we interviewed did not have much to report regarding the economic effects of the EmX on area businesses. One individual commented that the newness of the EmX system makes it difficult to observe any direct economic impacts, but that in a few years these effects may be more noticeable.

One economic effect that appears to be anticipated throughout the business community is the impact the EmX will have on LTD's operating costs. Our interviews revealed that area businesses strongly support LTD's vision of reducing their operating costs by developing the EmX system.

URBAN FORM EFFECTS

Most of the comments we gathered in our interviews about the impact of the EmX on urban form centered on issues of motor vehicle access. The representatives we spoke with told us that area businesses are always concerned with how new transit projects will affect motor vehicle access to their business, and the EmX is not an exception.

One individual we interviewed commented that the use of designated lanes is one of the main criticisms that area businesses have about the EmX. This individual claimed that not only do designated lanes restrict left-turn access into businesses; they also restrict the type of future development that can develop along an EmX corridor. This representative believed that designated lanes should only be used in areas that have

well-established businesses that will exist for many years (e.g. Sacred Heart Hospital, University of Oregon).

EVALUATION

During our interviews, we asked our business representatives what types of evaluations they think area businesses would like to see conducted for the EmX. The following list highlights a few of the questions this stakeholder group would like to have answered:

- How does the EmX impact payroll taxes?
- Does anyone I do business with use the EmX?
- Does anyone I employ use the EmX?
- Have businesses that had motor vehicle access restricted by the EmX suffered?
- How will ridership be affected when the EmX is no longer a free service?
- Does the EmX create barriers to personal automobile travel?

RECOMMENDATIONS

The business representatives we spoke with had a number of recommendations for how LTD could improve the EmX service and the planning and development process for future routes. Below is a summary of these recommendations:

- **The EmX should remain a free service.** This recommendation was supported by the notion that the success of the EmX is dependent upon attracting as many riders as possible. A key aspect of attracting riders is creating the impression that the EmX is the most convenient form of transportation. Having the service be free to the public is one of the best ways to create this impression.
- **LTD should create alternative points of sale for non-ticket retailing.** LTD reaches millions of individuals each year, and this recommendation urges them to consider alternative forms of tapping into this customer base for revenue. One possible way of accomplishing this would be through installing vending machines at stations.
- **LTD should survey businesses along current EmX corridor.** This recommendation urges LTD to reconnect with businesses along the pilot route and determine if their initial concerns about the system were realized. If LTD finds that these fears were not realized, they could promote this to other businesses when developing future routes. If these concerns were realized, LTD could learn what went wrong and adjust their development process accordingly.

- **LTD should show more appreciation to the business community.** Due to the funding structure of LTD, area businesses feel that they are heavily invested in the services that are offered. This recommendation urges LTD to approach its outreach to the business community in a way that shows appreciation for this support. LTD staff should conduct themselves as if they are working for area businesses, but often this is not the impression that is made.

Appendix D

Planners

INTRODUCTION

This appendix examines planners' perceptions of LTD's process for the development and implementation of new lines of the Emerald Express (EmX), LTD's bus rapid transit system.

METHODS

CPW interviewed five city planners from Eugene and Springfield about their perceptions of the EmX. We also held two focus groups with these five planners, LTD staff, and our team. Our findings are grouped into the following categories: perceptions of the EmX, decision making, transit and related community goals, communication, economic impacts of the EmX, urban form effects, evaluation, and recommendations.

PERCEPTIONS OF THE EMX

Generally, perceptions of the EmX among planners we interviewed were positive. Most planners we spoke with believed that the EmX is viewed positively by the general public. In particular, one Springfield planner pointed out that LTD is well known nationally for what it is doing with the EmX, and the FTA sees LTD as a great example of bus rapid transit development. This success is beneficial to the Eugene- Springfield Metropolitan Area because of the benefits and positive attention it brings to the region. As one planner put it, "LTD's success is Springfield's success."

TRANSIT AND RELATED COMMUNITY GOALS

A few of the planners we talked to framed their discussions of the EmX in the context of broader community goals. Planners made the following key points:

- Setting up comprehensive infrastructure for the region before it gets congested rather than after will help make LTD's transit system much more effective.
- The Principle of Windfalls and Wipeouts is important to transportation planning. This principle states that change produces both benefits and costs to individuals, and stresses that managing those impacts is essential.

DECISION-MAKING

Most of the discussions we had with planners focused on decision-making. In particular, planners discussed the role of planners and planning documents in the LTD decision-making process. Coordination between city planning and LTD planning and decision-making was a major theme that emerged from these discussions. Planners had the following general thoughts on decision making:

- Planners in both Springfield and Eugene said that ideally, city corridor planning and LTD route planning should be concurrent.

- LTD has not constructed all the EmX lines that they had hoped to by now. Some Springfield planners attribute some of this delay to the difficult decision-making process. If the process were more effective, LTD could move more quickly through the implementation process.

Some planners discussed the following aspects of previous iterations of the decision-making process:

- Eugene planners stated that communication between LTD and Eugene planners was exceptional during the development of the Franklin line.
- Springfield’s planning departments were less involved with the development of the Franklin line because the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT), a state-run department, was responsible for most of the corridor.
- The transportation division of Springfield Public Works coordinated very closely with LTD for the development of the Pioneer Parkway, an EmX extension into Springfield.

Springfield planners discussed LTD’s role in the city planning process more often than planners in Eugene. While Springfield supports the EmX and strives to incorporate it into their planning, the details of this incorporation are difficult. In particular, planners mentioned the following ideas about LTD’s role:

- Springfield planners mentioned LTD’s planning seemed to be based more on current rather than future density. LTD’s route and station planning should reflect the city’s projections.
- The City of Springfield’s “customer service approach” can make decision making difficult. For example, in this context it is legitimate for Springfield to have a debate weighing three parking spaces against an entire transit system.

Overall, several planners from both jurisdictions believed that LTD could work more effectively with planning commissions during the EmX development process. While meeting with planning commissions is not required because LTD decisions are not land use decisions, informational work sessions could be useful.

Several planners we talked to pointed out that bus rapid transit is part of the Eugene-Springfield Transportation System Plan (TransPlan) and thus must be incorporated into the planning of Eugene and Springfield. Bus rapid transit was originally introduced in the 1986 TransPlan. The 2002 TransPlan laid out a route map for the EmX long before they established rights-of-way along those routes. Although Eugene and Springfield have been involved in determining the locations for the corridors, most concerns are voiced directly to LTD.

One Springfield planner felt that the Environmental Assessment and alternatives development process is inadequate. While a lot of money goes into analyzing

alternatives, the understanding of the effects of these corridor alternatives are not detailed enough to be useful. Also, this planner was concerned that using the NEPA process to disseminate information about the alternatives was not enough. This planner believes that NEPA creates non-specific information, even though it is the basis for decision-making. For example, the planner believes that the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) is selected based on a design document that is too preliminary. In addition, by requiring “no build” as an alternative, NEPA makes decision-makers choose between not making improvements and choosing a non-ideal LPA.

Other planners identified some groups that have been or could be helpful to LTD in regards to decision-making and information sharing. Planners identified the following groups:

- The West Eugene Collaborative (WEC) is a task force that created a series of recommendations for moving traffic and spurring development in West Eugene. These recommendations should be considered by LTD.
- The Project Management Group created by LTD has brought in a diverse, useful group of perspectives together (see FTA Appendix for information on Project Management Groups).

COMMUNICATIONS

One Eugene planner mentioned that LTD culture might be resistant to organizational change. Overall, some planners felt that communication between LTD and Eugene City staff may need to be improved. One Eugene planner got most information about the Pioneer Parkway EmX line from the newspaper, rather than from some other official line of communication.

In addition, some planners felt that LTD could continue to improve its communication with citizens. Although many of the physical impacts of the EmX were known and available to the public for the Pioneer Parkway, some planners from both jurisdictions believe that there is a perception that LTD hides information. One Springfield planner suggested using an approach that identifies and communicates the worst possible physical impacts of a corridor’s development to the public, and then, through the development process, reduces those impacts.

LTD FUNDING

Planners we talked to from both jurisdictions did not discuss LTD funding in great detail. One planner mentioned that the funding cycles for land use and transportation planning do not match up, and suggested that these two cycles should be aligned.

ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF THE EMX

Many of the planners we talked to discussed the economic effects of the EmX on Eugene and Springfield. Planners from both jurisdictions discussed the following topics:

- The EmX is already affecting economic development and acts as a community building block.
- Planners want to learn more about economic development related to the EmX both locally and in other cities with BRT. For example, planners want to hear about the effects of the EmX on businesses along the Franklin corridor that were or were not involved in the planning process.
- Planners would like to learn about whether BRT can be a part of transit-oriented development projects, and if there are examples of this in other cities.

EVALUATION

Planners had a variety of opinions about what evaluation is and how LTD should approach evaluation. One planner said that the Franklin Corridor's high ridership is an indicator of the EmX's success. Another planner pointed out that it is important to examine who the audience would be for any potential evaluation. The target audience will inform what evaluation criteria should be used.

Some of the criteria that planners suggested should be evaluated were:

- Ridership
 - Comparison of ridership on EmX routes to ridership on previous bus routes, particularly those less heavily traveled than Franklin/Route 11
 - Effects of adding fares on ridership (after summer 2009)
 - Number of choice riders
 - Number of new riders
- Economic effects
 - Examination of potential versus known impacts to businesses along established corridors

These criteria are fairly limited and seem to be an incomplete picture of the evaluation criteria that planners have for the EmX before and after the development process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The planners we talked to made recommendations on a fairly narrow set of topics. The following is a list of those recommendations:

- **LTD should take advantage of existing resources within the city planning departments.** In particular, planners suggested that LTD could take advantage of the Neighborhood Services Division in Eugene, which has already established good relationships with neighbors and neighborhood groups. However, several planners recognized that planning departments in Eugene and Springfield are complex organizations. While LTD uses the resources of some divisions of the city planning departments very effectively, both knowing about and using the resources of other divisions is challenging.
- **LTD should better communicate the broader concept and benefits of the EmX to the community.** This communication could be aided by emphasizing the support BRT has from city leaders, riders, and others.
- **There needs to be better coordination between BRT planning and land use planning.** Planners felt that land use planners are the missing voices in the EmX development process. One way that coordination between BRT planning and land use planning could be improved is through open-ended (non-approval seeking) discussions with city planning commissions concerning the process and details of EmX development. Also, this coordination could be improved through LTD's examination of refinement plans, and involvement with the refinement plan development process. In particular, LTD should work with the cities to examine how the EmX fits in with officially designated nodes. In addition, LTD could establish better relationships with the development community to better understand land development.
- **Eugene's environmental groups should also advocate for transit and the EmX.** LTD should create a broad list of potential champions of transit.
- **LTD should create a local (city-based) citizen advisory committee in addition to the Corridor Committees and the EmX Steering Committee.** This committee could be involved in an expanded, pre-NEPA scoping process. The committee could encourage and strengthen partnerships with Chambers of Commerce, Futures Committees, and other groups. Managing the expectations of this committee could be challenging because the committee might expect to have more influence than LTD could give them.
- **LTD and the city planning departments should examine the possible creation of an overlay zone for transit.** This overlay zone could distribute certain benefits for development along EmX corridors.

Appendix E

LTD Staff

INTRODUCTION

This appendix examines the perceptions of LTD staff about LTD's process for the development and implementation of new lines of the Emerald Express (EmX), LTD's bus rapid transit system. CPW facilitated a focus group with LTD staff to learn about their perceptions of the EmX and its development process. We also interviewed two staff members about these topics. Following is a summary of our findings.

TRANSIT AND RELATED COMMUNITY GOALS

Staff members mentioned that the public still discuss light rail and streetcars and have not been convinced that BRT was the right decision. Of those who are concerned or opposed to the EmX, about half are unsure about the entire EmX strategy. More people support BRT once they understand the idea of the entire network. However, every time LTD begins work on a new corridor, questions are asked about what BRT is.

PERCEPTIONS OF THE EMX

Some LTD staff were interested in and aware of the public's perceptions of the EmX. They said that it is hard to get elected officials to buy into the BRT concept because it requires long term vision. In addition, there is no organized group in the community that has a vision for the EmX. While business representatives and riders support the EmX, the area does not have a bus riders union or other community group to advocate on behalf of LTD. Historically, those have come out of communities where the public has had problems with the transit district. Because LTD is so well liked, no group plays this role. LTD staff also mentioned the perspective of partner agencies, who think that LTD is doing a good job.

LTD staff said that people believe that if the EmX was not a dedicated route, there would be no need to cut trees and there would be more resources for neighborhood bus services. LTD staff think people are not yet convinced that BRT provides the long-term benefits that LTD feels it will provide.

DECISION-MAKING

LTD staff discussed the decision-making process at length. These discussions included discussions about the challenges and length of the decision-making process. The length of the planning and development process means that many things can change – including stakeholder perceptions and elected official positions. Stakeholders who LTD communicated effectively in previous EmX processes may not be still involved in the process. Incorporating the needs and perspectives of new residents, employers, employees, riders, and policy makers with those stakeholders who have been involved in the process from an earlier date is challenging.

LTD staff have several mechanisms to try and improve the decision making process and ensure that decision makers have adequate time and the right information to feel comfortable with their decisions. They meet weekly with the planning staff from the cities to try and coordinate all transportation planning with other planning efforts. LTD also uses “corridor committees” as a means to communicate progress on the project and get immediate feedback. Corridor committees are formed to provide input as LTD reviews and evaluates each corridor for expansion of the BRT. The committees include representatives from the residents and businesses along the corridor.

When working on the West Eugene Extension, staff have felt that the City of Eugene has not been explicit enough about communicating that the city accepted both the route in West Eugene and the vision of BRT through their approval of TransPlan. Their communication would improve LTD relations with neighborhood groups.

LTD staff discussed why the Coburg Road line did not go forward. In this corridor, stakeholders had trouble looking past individual property lines to understand both the benefits and costs of BRT. There were also difficulties with City of Eugene right of way and set back codes. Finally, working on both the Coburg Road corridor and the Pioneer Parkway at the same time was not financially feasible.

The staff also examined decision-making processes that went well. They stated that good decision-making concerning vehicle procurement involved extensive communication with the public. For example, LTD facilities staff created a full size mockup of the chosen vehicle to show to community members, particularly community members with wheelchairs and bicycles.

At times, staff include alternatives that are not feasible but are demanded by the public. For example because of complaints about the 13th Street alignment, staff included the 6th and 7th Street alignments suggested by concerned residents along 13th Street. More generally, when alternatives that are not feasible are chosen LTD is stuck with an expensive corridor. Compromise can be problematic. In determining the corridor for the West Eugene route, some staff felt that in retrospect they deferred too much to Eugene planning staff. In particular, they felt that LTD took the 11th Street alignment off the table prematurely, before having truly made a “push.”

COMMUNICATION

LTD staff mentioned that LTD should be explaining why BRT was the right decision through letters to the editor, at meetings, and during phone calls with the public. When people bring up light rail, they should refer them to the Urban Rail Feasibility study, which is available on the LTD website.

Even within LTD, not all employees are convinced that BRT is the best option. In particular, the 200 bus operators initially had varying degrees of understanding and

commitment. Convincing them took an educational process that continued right up until the EmX started operating in 2007. Now, most employees support the EmX.

LTD should be communicating its message and periodic project updates more frequently. They should remind people that the public was involved from the beginning what that involvement included, and how that involvement led to the current situation.

For the Franklin corridor, LTD used a private consulting group to aid in public communications and involvement. When working on the Gateway extension, LTD did this work itself. LTD felt that they had learned what they needed to from the consulting group. During the involvement process for the Gateway Extension, LTD realized that photo simulations and other visualization techniques for the public were very important. These visual simulations have been used by transit districts across the country.

LTD communicates a lot of information through their website, because there is simply too much data and information for staff or committee members to disseminate. Communication is very important to LTD, but communication of all impacts is difficult.

Staff have heard that LTD did a great job doing public outreach for the Franklin Route. For the West Eugene corridor, there have been fewer personal discussions and that has been criticized. However, there are so many residents and businesses along the West Eugene corridor that personal discussions with everyone is not feasible.

LTD FUNDING

LTD should make it more clear that there is separate funding for the EmX and for regular buses. Funding is a difficult issue to communicate to the general public, even those who are closely involved like those on city council.

ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF THE EMX

LTD has conducted an evaluation of the 75 programs among 59 organizations that are part of LTD's group pass program. This evaluation resulted in a lot of data that could be used to better understand the economic effects of the EmX on businesses.

URBAN FORM EFFECTS

LTD staff believe that the lack of right of way along sections of the Franklin line will be a significant cost in the future. In the future, Franklin Boulevard will be more like Coburg Road. LTD has the potential, however, to obtain additional right of way as Glenwood redevelops. While this will be more challenging than obtaining right of way during initial development, the opportunity is still available. LTD staff hope that on other lines, the EmX can get exclusive right of way along more of these sections. In

general, LTD has the right of way where it's less necessary, but lacks right of way where it is more needed.

EVALUATION

During operation refinement stage of the Franklin Corridor, when LTD was evaluating how well the corridor was working, LTD staff created a committee with members who had many different specialties (for example, IT, accessibility, etc.) This made refinement much more effective. This team was active for 9 to 15 months after operation began. It was able to both consolidate and examine all the small questions that were raised in individual departments.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The LTD staff we talked to made the following set of recommendations:

- **When implementing a BRT system, the earlier the buses are on site the better.** Their presence allows testing with community members and station design.
- **Committees should include LTD staff from different departments.** This coordination improves information distribution and recognizes connections between different departments.
- **Too much compromise is problematic.** LTD should not bow to demands by the public to include alternatives if these alternatives are not feasible. Balancing and communicating feasibility and compromise should be a priority.
- **Emphasizing flexibility is problematic.** LTD should not advertize the design features of EmX as flexible because then all alternatives become feasible options. Instead, LTD should act more like TriMet, who advertizes that they are creating a long-term investment in a proven mode. CPW's case studies suggest that if too many of the design features are compromised, then the efficiencies of BRT get compromised, and the perception will be that the system was not successful.
- **LTD needs to prepare city council and board members to talk about the degree of impacts with their constituents.** The EmX will have millions of dollars worth of impacts – both positive and negative. LTD must be ahead of this information and help the city councils and board support it as a long term investment.
- **LTD should reexamine the full build out map to ensure it fits current land use needs.** This examination will provide LTD with additional information and support as they move forward. These alignment decisions should be based on land use. They should be publically approved or adopted. This refreshed build out could allow for a programmatic EIS that would allow more than one corridor to be built at the same time.

Appendix F

NEPA Summary

INTRODUCTION

The Federal Transportation Administration requires transit districts to implement the process outlined by the National Environmental Policy Act to make decisions about the bus rapid transit projects that it funds. Therefore, understanding this process is important to implementing these projects

THE HISTORY OF THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT

The environment became a public concern in the United States in the 1960s, which prompted the government to implement environmental protections. Some important environmental legislation, like the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water act, was passed in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 was one such piece of legislation. NEPA was intended to promote environmental protection through legal processes, disclosure of environmental problems, interagency cooperation, and public participation in the decision-making process. Since being signed into law in 1970, some changes have been made to NEPA – mostly on a procedural level – but the spirit of the law has stayed the same.

THE RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER POLICIES AND GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is a significant piece of legislation because it gives teeth to other environmental policies like the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts. NEPA requires government agencies to assess the environmental impacts of all actions they undertake. It also acts as a guideline for agencies that seek to ensure environmental quality. The President’s Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) was created by NEPA, and offers guidance and regulations to help agencies comply with NEPA. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), created in 1970, plays an important role in the NEPA process, both by offering guidance to other federal agencies and by reviewing NEPA documents for adequacy.

Individual agencies and states often have their own regulations that determine compliance. Some states also have “little NEPAs,” (called SEPAs or state environmental policy acts) which generally have more stringent regulations than the Federal NEPA. Oregon does not have a “little NEPA” because state land use and environmental legislation – which NEPA requires compliance with – is fairly strong.

THE APPLICATION OF NEPA

NEPA applies to all major federal actions

Common Acronyms

NEPA: National Environmental Policy Act

EA: Environmental Assessment

EIS: Environmental Impact Statement

DEIS: Draft Environmental Impact Statement

EPA: Environmental Policy Act

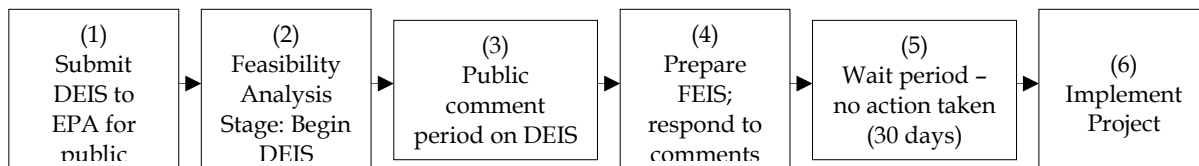
CEQ: President’s Council on Environmental Quality

“significantly affecting the human environment.” Significant impact is determined through a preliminary assessment. The federal agency overseeing the action prepares an Environmental Assessment (EA), which determines whether or not the project will have a significant impact on the existing natural and human environment. Significance is only vaguely defined in NEPA, but is based on the context and intensity of the impact and whether it crosses a “threshold of significance,” which is agency or project specific. If the agency determines there is no significant impact, compliance with NEPA ends with the submission and approval of a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) by the lead agency and EPA respectively.

If there will be a significant impact, the agency must prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which is an in-depth study of foreseeable impacts. It is common for state or local agencies to prepare the EIS for a federal agency, but federal agencies are responsible for reviewing the EIS and submitting it to the EPA. The first step in the EIS process is to define the purpose and need of a project. The agency must then conduct a “scoping” process to determine what other agencies or groups may have an interest in the project. Involvement of other federal agencies and the public from the beginning is an important goal of NEPA.

PROCESS STEPS AND TIMELINE

NEPA does not contain formal time limits for this process, but it generally should not take more than 12 months. The amount of time for public comment is also not specified in NEPA, but must be at least 45 days. The process involves the following steps:



THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

The different sections of an EIS are:

- **Introduction:** Briefly proposes an action, focusing on its purpose and goals. There is also a description of the proposed action, including information about the site.
- **Alternatives:** The proposed action and a no action alternative must be included as alternatives, but multiple alternatives are preferable. In practice, there are usually only three or four alternatives presented in an EIS. Alternatives must fulfill the purpose and need of the project and be reasonably feasible – although they need not be within the agency’s jurisdiction. The agency must assess the foreseeable environmental impacts of each alternative, covering topics like air quality, hydrology and water quality, geology, soil, wildlife, noise, aesthetics,

and socioeconomic and environmental justice impacts. The assessment should address direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of an action, and should include mitigation procedures that address these impacts.

- **Preferred Alternative:** The agency chooses a preferred alternative, which may or may not be the proposed action. In general, if the proposed action includes appropriate mitigation, has less negative impacts than the other alternatives, and adequately addresses public concerns, it will be approved by the lead agency.

There is generally a Draft EIS and then a Final EIS, both of which are open to public comment. Public comments made on the Draft EIS must be addressed in the Final EIS. Public comments can lead to the addition of new alternatives, which have to be studied for their environmental impact before the Final EIS is submitted. In theory, public participation is a vital aspect of the NEPA process, but EISs are not always as accessible to the public as intended. The lead federal agency on the project determines whether or not the preferred alternative and the EIS are acceptable. Yet, even if the EIS and the preferred alternative are deemed acceptable, it is possible to legally challenge decisions in court after they have been made. In general, courts are more sympathetic to people arguing against the action when they have been involved in the public review process from the beginning.