
COMMUNICATION MEMORANDUM

Meeting Date: 6/18/2019
Staff Contact/Dept.: Emma Newman/DPW
Staff Phone No: 541.726-4585

**SPRINGFIELD
PLANNING COMMISSION**

INFORMATION SHARE:

The Main-McVay Transit Study has been coordinating with the Main Street Safety Project to engage the community in planning along Main Street. Following up on Planning Commission the June 4th Work Session inquiries, staff is providing the following information to update the Commission on community feedback received and a staff recommendation on transit mode choice for Main Street. The transit mode choice decision will go to the Main Street Governance Team, City Council, and Lane Transit District (LTD) Board as part of the Locally Preferred Solution transit decision, which will also include deciding on transit alignment. This step will align with the Draft Plan and Policies step in the Main Street Safety Project Planning Phase process, which is shown on the current project schedule occurring in summer 2020.

Issue

The City of Springfield and LTD are going through a process to narrow the possible transit solutions for Main Street through the Main-McVay Transit Study. Through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) planning process, “build” projects are compared to “no build” projects so that a project that differs from existing conditions can be compared to existing conditions as well as future conditions both with and without the project. The “build” project selected as a result of the Main-McVay Transit Study is referred to as a “Locally Preferred Solution” (LPS) and is comprised of transit mode choice (i.e. Enhanced Corridor or EmX) as well as transit alignment for each corridor (i.e. where the transit service will operate). Based on this project’s community involvement efforts and technical analysis so far, staff recommends removing the EmX option from consideration as a short term (approximately next 10 years) transit solution for the Main Street Corridor and selecting Enhanced Corridor as the transit mode choice for the Main Street LPS.

Background

The purpose of the Main-McVay Transit Study is to evaluate the most promising transit options for the Main Street and McVay Highway Corridors as potential solutions to address growing concerns about safety, congestion, and quality of life that could be improved through transportation improvements. In Phase 1 of the Study, Main-McVay Corridor residents, businesses and property owners, education representatives, community organizations, agency staff, and elected and appointed officials met to share, learn about, and understand these issues. Phase 1 considered technical analyses, reviewed a range of transit options, and identified the most promising transit options for the Main Street and McVay Highway Corridors. In spring 2015, the Springfield City Council and the LTD Board of Directors recommended that the most promising transit options, based on stakeholder input, should move forward for additional study. For Main Street, the options that were advanced for further study included: No-Change; Enhanced Corridor; and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), which is locally known as EmX.

As part of Phase 2, the project team worked early and collaboratively with business and property owners to inform and solicit input regarding the future of public transportation along Main Street. Initial Phase 2 outreach included phone calls to business owners, corridor mailings, website updates, meetings on-site with business and property owners, public meetings at City Hall, presentations to community groups, e-updates, and individual correspondence and follow up to written comments that were submitted. The Main Street Governance Team met in May 2016, considered feedback received up until that point, and removed the widest right-of-way design option from further consideration and analysis. Based on community input, the Governance Team also directed the Study to further evaluate Enhanced Corridor as a design option in addition to BRT. After the initial Phase 2 outreach and narrowing of transit design options, the Study was paused in order to coordinate more closely with the Main Street Safety Project that received funding midway through Phase 2 of the Transit Study.

In May 2018, the transit study project team, which consists of City of Springfield and LTD staff, recommended to the Main Street Governance Team that the Transit Study advance the Enhanced Corridor transit mode option as the preliminary preferred mode for the Main Street Corridor. The team communicated this preliminary mode recommendation to the Governance Team at their June 2018 meeting and recommended that the Study communicate this preliminary mode recommendation to the Springfield community through the next outreach opportunity for the Main Street Safety Project. The project team also shared that it was not able to make an alignment recommendation without additional technical information from the safety project that will become available as the Planning Phase of Main Street Safety Project progresses. The full Locally Preferred Solution decision for the Main Street is planned to occur concurrently with the Draft Plan and Policies step in the Main Street Safety Project Planning Phase process, which is shown on the current project schedule occurring in summer 2020.

Coordinating Safety and Transit

In coordination with the Main Street Safety Project, the Main-McVay Transit Study engaged the community in providing additional input on the transit mode choice for Main Street through an online open house that was open for community input in November and December 2018. The online open house was viewed by 450 people with a total of 177 comment submissions; 116 participants responded to the transit question within the online open house.

Participants were given an overview of the Enhanced Corridor transit mode as follows:

The transit study's community outreach and technical analysis indicate the most viable transit mode for Main Street at this time is Enhanced Corridor. EmX remains a possibility depending how development, traffic volumes, and funding opportunities change over the next 10 to 30 years. Based on input received in response to the question below¹, LTD and the City will identify key transit improvements in coordination with other transportation improvements identified in the Main Street Facility Plan.

Participants were asked to consider the potential investments of an Enhanced Corridor on Main Street, which could include:

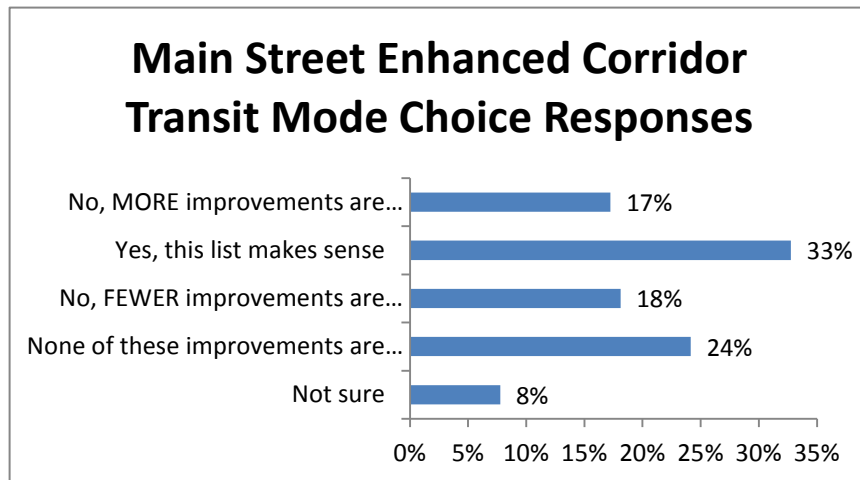
- Transit queue jumps (a special lane and signals for buses to “jump” ahead of other traffic at intersections with congestion delays);
- Better amenities at ground-level stops (such as trash receptacles, benches, shelters, automated fare collection);
- Consolidating stops to 1/3-mile spacing (provides faster, more reliable service and may attract more riders through improved travel times and stop amenities); and
- Deploying different sized buses – 40 to 60 foot – to accommodate fluctuations in peak and off-peak ridership.

In addition, the online open house explained that EmX stations and exclusive transit-only lanes east of 20th Street (except potentially at major congested intersections) would not be included in the Enhanced Corridor option for Main Street.

Following the explanation of the elements of a potential Enhanced Corridor transit mode for Main Street, participants were asked whether they felt this option was appropriate.

¹ The Online Open House question asked participants, “Are the Enhanced Corridor features described appropriate for Main Street?”

Below is a graph illustrating the complete breakdown of how participants responded:



Transit Mode Choice

Based on the technical analysis conducted during Phase 1 and Phase 2, as well as input from community members during Phase 2 of the Main-McVay Transit Study, it is clear that the most viable transit mode option for Main Street is Enhanced Corridor. From the feedback received through the safety project’s online open house regarding the Enhanced Corridor transit solution, there appears to be limited support (17% of respondents) for more improvements than Enhanced Corridor along Main Street at this time. 33% of respondents’ indicated support for the Enhanced Corridor option, which when combined with people who wanted more improvements than Enhanced Corridor represents 50% of respondents. Approximately 8% responses indicated not sure. 18% of responses expressed a desire to see fewer improvements along Main Street for transit. 24% of respondents indicated a desire to not see any of the Enhanced Corridor transit improvements along Main Street.

Given the input received, the Springfield community does not broadly support pursuing EmX improvements along the Main Street Corridor in the near future. The community has reaffirmed that there is still interest and a desire to pursue transit improvements along Main Street and further indicated that these improvements should fall into the Enhanced Corridor transit mode improvement category as defined above. By removing EmX from consideration as a near term transit solution, the transit mode choice for Main Street’s LPS would be Enhanced Corridor, which would be compared to a “no build” option through a future NEPA process.

Next Steps

At the upcoming July Main Street Governance Team meeting, the Main-McVay Transit Study project team will request that the Governance Team consider removing the EmX mode choice from consideration as a transit solution for Main Street and move the Enhanced Corridor and No-Build options forward for further analysis for Main Street.

This summer and fall, the Main Street Safety Project will be developing and refining street design concept alternatives. In coordination with that process, transit alignment options for Main Street will be analyzed. Once the alternatives have been developed and refined, Main-McVay Transit Study will bring forward the full Locally Preferred Solution decision, which will include the transit mode choice and transit alignment for the Main Street Corridor, to the Main Street Governance Team, City Council, and LTD Board.
