

Transit Proposals Beginning to Generate Discussion



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Brent Warren



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The city's new [Connect Columbus](#) initiative got started last month with multiple "plan van" appearances around town and a series of meetings on the west side. Among the proposals and ideas discussed is a look at four different "premium transit" scenarios. Should Columbus pursue a straight-line light rail system like Salt Lake City, or a streetcar system meant to revitalize the urban core like Portland? How about the Charlotte model, in which a radial system connects different employment nodes to downtown via light rail and bus rapid transit?

“It’s a fundamental question we will have to work through in all of these meetings,” said Paul Moore, of project consultant [Nelson Nygaard](#). “Looking at (individual streets) in isolation, we get a sense of opportunities, but transit works as a system. Showing how other places developed their premium transit is helpful in understanding how people want to connect, and how we can make those connections.”

“Any of them could work in Columbus,” he said, adding that feedback from the Connect Columbus process could also indicate that none of those strategies is supported by the community, in which case another approach would be developed.

The next opportunity for feedback will be June 1st through 4th at North Broadway United Methodist Church in Clintonville. Open sessions are being held during the day and presentations will be given on the first and last day. Representatives from Nelson Nygaard and from the City of Columbus will be on hand to present a wide range of new options and scenarios for getting around the northwest side (which for these meetings will include Clintonville, the University District and downtown).

Two additional sessions will be held later in the summer, one for northeast Columbus and the other for the south side. Residents from any part of Columbus are welcome to attend any of the meetings.

The west side meetings focussed mostly on issues specific to that side of town. Options were presented for West Broad Street, for example, that show how it could be redesigned to balance out the needs of its many users.



“A lot of cities have streets like this, streets that are doing a lot of the transportation work,” said Nelson. “Cars, transit, pedestrians... even bikes, frighteningly enough!”

Traffic counts show that much of Broad is wide enough that two lanes could be removed without a significant impact on car traffic. Renderings presented at the meeting show what the street would look like with dedicated bike lanes or a Bus Rapid Transit system running down the middle.

Development scenarios were also presented for some of the more accident and congestion-prone intersections in the area. At the corner of Harrisburg Pike and Mound Street, for example, a rendering shows a redesigned intersection and a more robust street network meant to alleviate the traffic problems.



"That's one of the highest crash locations in the city," said Nelson, adding that change is already coming to that area with the SPARC redevelopment of the former Cooper Stadium. "So in the future, do we widen it, or do we recognize that there might be redevelopment, and we could create alternative networks that could help to resolve some issues?"

"That's what Connect Columbus does in general," said Patti Austin, Planning and Operations Administrator for the Department of Public Service. "It gives us ideas and a plan for connections, so that as things redevelop, we are ahead of the curve."

More information, including the full presentation from last month and details on upcoming public meetings, is available at www.columbus.gov/connectcolumbus.

COTA's [NextGen](http://www.cota.com/nextgen) initiative also has meetings scheduled for the first week of June; in Westerville, Dublin and on the south side. More details at www.cota.com/nextgen.

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<http://www.columbusunderground.com/transit-proposals-beginning-to-generate-discussion-bw1>