City of Seattle - University of Washington Community Advisory Committee

Final Meeting Notes
Meeting #107
September 14, 2010
University of Washington Tower
4333 Brooklyn
Seattle, WA 98105
22nd Floor

Members and Alternates Present
Matt Fox                        Kirsten Curry                        Eric Larson
Daniel Kraus                   Betty Swift                            Heather Newman
Elaine King                    Chris MacKenzie                       Chris Leman
Pat Cowen                      Eastlake Community Council
Chris MacKenzie                Wallingford Community Council
Neal Lessenger                 University of Washington
Kirsten Curry                  Laurelhurst Community Club
Ashley Emery                   University of Washington Faculty
Hien Dang                      University of Washington Students

Staff and Others Present
Steve Sheppard                 Tracy Green – Sound Transit
Theresa Doherty                Cary Root - WASHDOT
Eric Larson                    Josh Kavanaugh
Hiem Dang                      Barbara Quinn

I. Welcome and Introductions
The meeting was opened at 7:08 by Daniel Kraus. Brief introductions followed.

II. Approval of Agenda/Housekeeping
A. Approval of Minutes for Meeting #106 – The minutes for Meeting #106 were unanimously approved.
B. Approval of Agenda – Theresa Doherty asked if the U-Pass Updates and 520 Plan could be moved up before the Review of CUCAC 2008 and 2009 Annual Report. It was agreed to move the U-Pass Update and 520 Plan up on the agenda.

III. U-Pass Update
Josh Kavanaugh from the UW gave the committee a presentation on the U-Pass Program. He handed out a program profile with key program performance matrix. He stated that there is both good and bad news concerning the program.

Good News:
- The Program continues to perform extraordinarily well.
Drive alone rate of 21% is the envy of large employers. He noted that other large organizations such as Boeing and Microsoft are hovering around 60% on ride alone rates. These are considered exemplarily employer commute trip reduction programs, so it is clear that the University is achieving extraordinary results.

The ratio of vehicle trips generated to the campus population is campus population continues to improve. The campus population is up 28% since U-Pass program was instituted but trip generation is down just over 15% in the same time period. He offered the conclusion that the investment UW makes in the U-Pass program is the reason there is such robust transit service in the University District. He noted that the University consider this a major a community benefit and direct benefit to our constituents, the University community.

There has been significant improvement over time for issues such as neighborhood parking, congestion on the streets, all very good news.

**Bad News:**

Concurrently he noted that there is some troubling information, primarily related to continued funding for the program. He noted that:

- The overall program is in an extraordinarily perilous situation concerning ongoing funding and support levels.
- The total transit costs of the U-Pass program have increased significantly over the last three years and it is increasingly difficult in today’s tight state budget climate to find additional money.
- With the downturn in the economy transit ridership is up significantly. This is a positive trend for efforts to promote alternatives to single occupancy vehicles and something that would normally consider to be a good trend. However this is putting a strain on the University. Under the current program structure, the UW is billed for every one of these increased rides. Therefore there has been a 20% increase in the cost of the U-Pass Program attributable solely to the number of rides that the University purchases on an annual basis – about 15 million rides per year.
- Fare costs have been increasing. For three consecutive years fares have increased for King County Metro and the five other partner agencies associated with the U-pass program. These fare increases are also born by the University and have resulted in unprecedented cost spikes.
- The University is running up against funding constraints from its internal operations. Traditionally, the program has been subsidized both from internal operations – parking fees and by the Central Administration. Central Administrative support has been lagging behind program cost increases. Net proceeds from the Parking Program fees especially are nearly tapped out. The University simply can’t afford to raise parking rates fast enough or high enough to off-set the U-Pass increases without displacing many of those currently using the UW lots into the neighborhoods, which UW does not want to do.

Overall the net result of the above is that charges to the U-Pass customers for their co-pays have increased and this increase is beginning to driving people out of the program. He noted that the latest cost increase was 98% for students and 75% for faculty/staff with another 10% for faculty/staff added later), deeply concerned. This radical increase in the program costs to users is driving patrons away from the program.

Concurrently the University has been pursuing a policy to encourage major life-style changes that reduce the need for commuting to campus altogether. The goal is to provide a solution that is a true multi-model
commuting solution with more students living in the University District who never have to use a car in the first place. This certainly solves their commuting problems. However, for the broader program there is a down side. Many of these individuals, faced with increasing program costs, have chosen to forgo participation in the program and are no longer purchasing U-passes. The result is that they are no longer utilizers of the program overall. This is it like healthy people leaving your insurance pool. The overall result is that student participation in program this fall is the lowest in the 20-year history of the program.

Mr. Kavenaugh also noted that the program is now being adversely affected by the City of Seattle’s commercial parking tax. The University essentially levies a 56% tax on parking in its lots to support the U-pass program. This is the difference between the cost of providing parking and the charges. This difference is then provided to the U-pass program. The City now taxes parking 12.5%. This bleeds money form the U-pass program and the City tax essentially becomes a tax on the U-pass program. This reduces the monies available for the U-pass program by about 20%. He noted that there was a robust discussion of this issue with the Seattle City Council but as of this date there has been no resolution to this issue. He noted that this also affects other major institutions such as Seattle Children’s.

Mr Kavenaugh asked that CUCAC and its constituent organizations consider weighing in on this issue and encouraging the City of Seattle to provide some mechanism to give credit for the Transportation Management Plans against the commercial parking tax.

Chris Leman stated that he considered the commercial parking tax an important incentive to discourage overuse and overbuilding of parking. He stated that he hoped that the University and students were not opposing the use of the commercial parking tax, but instead exploring some limited credits. Mr. Kavenaugh noted that the only thing that has currently been requested is an exemption for the University. In addition he noted that the tax only relates to pay parking not free parking and that there might be some better method for regulating parking whether there is a per stall fee whether it is paid or free.

Mr. Kavenaugh also noted that the University is pursuing considerations of a transportation demand management fee that would essentially be a surcharge on parking. He noted that the University internal charge of 56% on its parking rate is presently considered part of the parking charge and subject both to a sales tax and the commercial parking tax. If it becomes a separate surcharge it might not be subject to these taxes. This might require action by the legislature and the University is pursuing that.

Mr. Kavenaugh noted that one of the changes being considered for U-pass is to make participation mandatory for all students. This alone would reduce the cost of the U-pas from $100 to $75. Eliminating the parking tax would further reduce further.

IV. 520 Plan

Theresa Doherty introduced the program managers for the 520 projects. Ms. Doherty noted that CUCAC had received previous updates on this issue. In February 2008, CUCAC received a presentation about Rainier Vista Land Bridge by Christina Kenney, then in September Tracy actually presented to us the Sound Transit Station design as well as the Pedestrian Overpass. In November the Regents approved the Pedestrian Bridge, in July the City of Seattle requested a new design be submitted to the City of Seattle Comprehensive Streets Policy. January 2010, separate from that issue, the Regents reviewed the Rainier Vista Land Bridge that CUCAC had reviewed in 2008. In 2010, UW, Sound Transit and City of Seattle agreed on a new Rainier Vista concept instead of the Sound Transit Pedestrian Overpass. That concept included an at-grade crossing of Montlake, the FTA was not supportive of the at-grade crossing. Eventually
August 2010 Sound Transit Pedestrian Bridge that crosses Montlake that bridge is paired with the Rainier Vista Land Bridge.

Ms Doherty then showed the Committee a series of illustrations of the current proposal. In essence this pairing the Rainier Vista land bridge with a new Sound Transit pedestrian bridge. The idea is that you will be able to go from the Sound Transit Station totally grade separated. Ms. Doherty noted that the process is now progressing to looking at funding and other agreements concerning this action. Actual design is ongoing and is anticipated to come back to CUCAC as early as December of this year.

Chris Leman asked if the University is supportive of this proposal. Ms. Doherty noted that the concept has progressed only to location and until there is a design put before the various committees it is too early to say that there is any official University endorsement. However it appears that the location at least is acceptable.

V. Review of CUCAC 2008 and 2009 Annual Report

Steve Sheppard prepared the CUCAC 2008 and 2009 Annual Report for the committee review. Steve noted that he has revised the draft report based upon both comments at previous meetings and comments called into him. He noted that at the last meeting it was determined that there should be some increased discussions of traffic and transportation. He directed the Committees attention to these changes. He then asked for additional comments.

Matt Fox would like changes to:

- page 3 introduction 2010-2011 letter J evaluation of improvements to promote increased pedestrian safety and efficient commuter connections strike that and put in increased pedestrian safety, commuter connections, and transit connections or transit connections to adjacent neighborhoods;

  Chris Leman strongly endorsed this change he noted that many of the busses that the University helps fund presently by-pass stops in Eastlake and that if this was changed then use of transit to and from the University from that area might significantly increase.

- page 5 the last bullet CUCAC’s role – topic of discussion was review of its by-laws, rules, regulations, (strike the and) role, and relevance;

  Mr. Fox noted that the issue being discussed was not the role of CUCAC but rather its relevance and that he wanted that highlighted.

- page 6 key issues covered under other issues add a bullet “in February CUCAC sent a letter reiterating it’s serious concerns about the design of the proposed new business school. He noted that that was a 2007 issue CUCAC was still talking about in 2008

Chris Leman observed that the report format was useful and recommended that work begin as soon as possible on the 2010 report. He also asked that the report be re-titled to indicate that it also includes the 2010 and 2011 work program.

It was moved and seconded to adopt the report as amended. The motion passed unanimously.

Chris Leman asked that the work program section of the annual report be re-printed in the minutes for Meeting # 107. Steve Sheppard agreed and that Section appended in the highlighted boxed section below:
Part 3
2010 to 2011 CUCAC Work Program

1. Ongoing and routine activities

The City University Agreement identifies the role of CUCAC. That agreement states in part:

*that the responsibilities of the CUCAC shall be to review and comment upon the following actions regarding the physical development of the University and the greater University area: the draft and final Master Plans, (including the Transportation Management Plan, policies, development standards, public outreach plan), major and minor amendments to the Master Plan, environmental documents prepared under SEPA, all annual reports.*

CUCAC will continue these activities in 2010 and 2011. Items to come before CUCAC under its basic charge shall include:

a) The 2010 UW Annual Report
b) The 2010 University Trip Reduction and Transportation Management Plan Reports
c) U-Pass Annual Report
d) Environmental and design documents related to specific building projects arising for the Campus Master Plan

In addition, CUCAC would like to be updated on the progress of construction of projects it has previously reviewed and particularly the renovation of the HUB.

2. Additional areas for future focus

The City University Agreement identifies the role of CUCAC. That agreement states in part:

*that the responsibilities of the CUCAC shall be to review and comment upon the following actions regarding the physical development of the University and the greater University area: the draft and final Master Plans, (including the Transportation Management Plan, policies, development standards, public outreach plan), major and minor amendments to the Master Plan, environmental documents prepared under SEPA, all annual reports and other issues identified by CUCAC members, represented community organizations, the University and the City.*

In that capacity, CUCAC has identified the following additional areas, above and beyond its role reviewing specific projects and reports, that it wishes to consider in 2010 and 2011.

a) Review of the effects of the University of Washington’s acquisition and leasing

When the City University Agreement was last amended, the leasing restrictions on the University within the University District were eliminated. This decision was not without controversy and the amended agreement discussed an evaluation process that would occur five years after the amendment. The City University Agreement stipulates that:

*DPD shall lead an interdepartmental team, including the Department of Parks and Recreation, Office of Economic Development, Office of Housing, the Seattle Human Services Department and the Seattle Department of Transportation, to prepare a 5-year summary report in 2008 on the impacts of the UW leasing and acquisition upon the UDNUCV. DPD will combine the information provided under Sections II.D.1 and 2. for the preceding five years, and will provide an analysis of University leasing and acquisition within the UDNUCV. DPD will provide this analysis to the University and CUCAC for their review and comment*
prior to submission to the City Council.

This is and remains an important issue for surrounding neighborhoods. The evaluation has not occurred and CUCAC urges that the City undertake this or a modified similar process in 2010 or 2011.

b)  A ten-year interim evaluation of CUCAC’s experiences with development under the current Campus Plan.

The Campus plan has now been in place for nearly 10 full years. Under the provisions of its adoption by the City, the plan will remain in effect for a period of ten years or until the 3 million square feet of development authorized under the plan is used. Information provided by the University shows that in all campus sectors, except for the west campus, development has proceeded slowly and the plan is likely to remain in place for many years or even decades to come. CUCAC members believe that it is now time for CUCAC to conduct an evaluation of its experience reviewing projects and issues under the plan. This effort should include a careful review of the various University Annual Reports and identification of any major issues or concerns that members and their constituent organizations have identified.

It is not anticipated that this effort necessarily involve new or expanded research or study on the part of the University, but instead its focus would be on identifying issues from members. CUCAC members have read the 9 issues of the University’s “CMP Annual Report” and Members have identified at least one site that they would like to see removed from future consideration for development

c).  Review of impact of SR 520 in the area around the Montlake Triangle.

As noted above, the Campus Master Plan has now been in place for nearly 10 full years. In some areas development has progressed in ways that were either unexpected or not anticipated under the plan. The most notable such location is the area near Husky Stadium where a combination of the Link Light Rail Station, probable State Route 520 interchange development, and anticipated expansion of the Husky Stadium have significantly altered the direction and nature of development anticipated under the University’s Campus Master Plan. This area will clearly see significant and major changes.

This is also an area of great general concern to the broader community. As the major access to much of Northeast Seattle, development here that might restrict general access presents major challenges. CUCAC strongly advocates that the University, City and other agencies jointly coordinate planning for this area. CUCAC would like to be involved in those discussions as they move forward.

d)  Evaluation of improvements to promote increased pedestrian safety and efficient commuter connections

Either in close coordination with, or independent of, the overall review of the impacts of State Route 520 and Link Light Rail construction in the Montlake triangle area, CUCAC member organizations have noted a need to seriously evaluate pedestrian safety issues in the east campus area, and particularly across Montlake Boulevard. This area already experiences high volumes of pedestrian crossings from the East parking lots to the Central Campus. With the changes in the Montlake triangle area, the volume of pedestrian crossing is likely to increase.

CUCAC would like to see a commitment from the University of Washington to increase public safety and ensure efficient commuter connections, both pedestrian and vehicular, particularly to the light rail station and the Burke Gilman trail, with the caveat that any improvements recommended do not further inhibit vehicular traffic along either Montlake Boulevard or the NE 45th Street Viaduct. CUCAC would like to be involved in those discussions as they move forward

e).  Open Space and landscape planning

The Master Plan made various commitments to augment current open spaces and identify opportunities for
new open space on campus. To date this effort has not occurred. CUCAC recommends that such an effort be conducted and would like to be involved is such.

f). The effects on the neighborhood of University of Washington expansion outside of the immediate Seattle campus areas (South Lake Union and Northwest Hospital)

The University has undertaken a program of expansion and decentralization in Seattle, primarily by University Hospital. Major new facilities are under construction, with more now planned, in South Lake Union, and the University recently purchased Northwest Hospital. Some CUCAC members have expressed concern over the cumulative impacts of this expansion and have struggled with the issue as CUCAC’s role in these areas appears to be limited by its initial charge in the City University Agreement. Nonetheless CUCAC would like to be kept appraised of this process. In addition, some member organizations representatives have expressed concerns over the impact of traffic between the various satellite developments and the main campus and would like to see this issue further evaluated.

g). Planning for changes in the West Campus area as a result of the construction of new student housing

With initiation of construction of the new student housing on West Campus, change in the character of this area, which has been ongoing for years, will accelerate as the influence of student residents in the area likely increases.

The University has operated programs north of 45th Street to mitigate the impacts of students on this area and limit conflicts between non-university and university residents. The University has also extended its conduct code beyond its Major Institutional Boundaries to help alleviate any negative student behavior in the north of the 45th Street area. The student housing area in West Campus is within the University’s MIO boundaries so the student conduct code already applies.

CUCAC recommends that a major effort be made to look at the integration between the new University development and the area bounded by I-5, NE Pacific Street, NE 45th Street, and 15th Avenue NE. This effort should include an evaluation of the possible mutual benefits available to the University and nearby business owners and operators as a result of the increase in student housing. CUCAC would like to be involved in this evaluation and effort and in reviewing its conclusions.

VI. General Updates

A. University Developments – Theresa Doherty: Nothing new to report.

B. City Actions – Steve Sheppard: No new City Actions. Gave general updates on Children’s issues and permits.

VII. New Business/Other Business

Chris Leman brought up a presentation CUCAC had about six months ago concerning how to improve CUCAC liaison to other groups. He noted that he had volunteered to be liaison to the Marine University Global Climate Policy body. He noted that he felt that there might be better student attendance if there was more outreach from CUCAC to the various student organizations. If they knew about CUCAC and put a face on it, we should encourage them to come, it’s a loss not to have the seats filled. He noted that he had believed that he would be put in touch with this organization. This did not happen. Ms. Doherty responded that she would look into this.

Steve Sheppard noted that the conversations that Mr. Leman was referring to grew out of a discussion of the role that CUCAC and other agencies played in the review of projects and whether there was a general liaison function between CUCAC and such groups as the architectural committee. He noted that there was no resolution on this issue.
Mathew Fox noted that the University is commencing on an effort to find candidates for the new University President. He suggested that it would be appropriate for CUCAC be involved in some way in the new president search. Theresa Doherty agreed to keep CUCAC informed concerning the presidential search effort.

**VIII. Adjournment**

No further business being before the Committee the meeting was adjourned.