Columbia City Council Pre-Council Minutes

Monday, August 19, 2013 6:00 p.m. City Hall – Council Chambers 701 East Broadway

Council members present: Mayor McDavid, Fred Schmidt, Mike Trapp, Karl Skala, Ian Thomas, Laura Nauser (arrived at 6:08) and Barbara Hoppe

Absent: None

Mayor McDavid called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

Health Impact Assessment Report of Transit:

City Manager, Mike Matthes introduced Jason Wilcox and Lisa Goldschmidt to lead us through this report, which is a follow up from a previous report. The HIA was conducted by the HIA Partner Team (Department of Public Health and Human Services, Central Missouri Community Action, PedNet Coalition) with representation from advocacy and community organizations, local government, and Columbia residents.

Mr. Wilcox explained that in 2011, Columbia Transit faced budget cuts and higher fuel costs combined with increased student ridership, leading it to increase fares and change its routes and services to accommodate more riders. Public support, led by CoMET, for transit helped to mitigate some of the proposed cuts. During 2012, the HIA Partner Team conducted Columbia's first HIA on the health effects of expanding and improving bus service. There was no evidence to suggest negative outcomes concerning expanded transit. Based on a city council request, a second HIA was conducted, to identify potential health outcomes of a utility fee designated specifically to fund public transportation, known as a "Transportation Utility Fee." This presentation demonstrates those findings and recommendations for the second HIA.

Mr. Wilcox explained that the health of the community is influenced by policies and programs from other domains such as education, transportation, and urban development. An HIA is an evidence-based research tool used when proposed policies, programs or projects are under active consideration to inform decision-makers about the potential health risks and benefits of their proposals. HIA provides recommendations to minimize negative health outcomes and maximize positive ones, but it is simply for informative purposes, not advocacy. HIA's for more complex decisions generally require more time for literature reviews, gathering of expert and stakeholder opinions, collection of new primary data, and informing decision-makers, although this HIA also included those actions, performed between February through May of this year.

He defined the project goals to include; Assessing potential health effects of funding expanded public transit in Columbia via a designated transportation utility fee; determining the likelihood of these health effects, given the best possible evidence, and; providing recommendations for how funding transit expansion could maximize positive and minimize negative health outcomes.

The partner team identified four health-related indicators most likely to be affected by the addition of a transportation utility fee and a decrease in residents' disposable income: food insecurity, stress, decreased health care access and, poor housing conditions and housing security.

The assessment included a variety of data sources such as literature reviews, a community-based survey conducted in partnership with Columbia Transit (456 responses), and interviews with stakeholders from local health and social service agencies.

The population targeted by the HIA is individuals and families up to 150% of Federal Poverty Guidelines (FPG) which for a family of three is approximately \$29,000. Columbia's current poverty rate is approximately 19%, affecting approximately 11,000 of 48,000 households. Also included in the target population are fixed-income households, such as seniors. He explained how the population was identified using data from energy assistance resources in Boone County.

He provided information on what a transportation utility fee is and explained that most public transit systems in the U.S. do not make a profit off fares alone, so systems rely on federal and state subsidies to help fund operations. However, subsidies have decreased over time, and more transit systems are relying on local sources of transportation funding. Popular local sources of funding include transportation sales taxes, taxes on gasoline, and property taxes. The recent economic downturn has made local funding sources potentially unsustainable, so some jurisdictions have turned to a new, alternative form of funding called a transportation utility fee, where users are charged a fee to connect their share of costs to the benefit they receive from the transportation system. The fee is most often based on the number of trips that are generated. He provided information and examples on how trip generations are calculated. Different jurisdictions nationwide use fees between \$1.50 and \$6 per month. This HIA assesses singlefamily homes a \$4 per month fee and multi-family homes a \$2 per month fee. Under this model, the total amount raised from a transportation utility fee would be over \$3.7 million per year, with 54% coming from commercial properties and 46% from residential properties.

The transportation utility fee, combined with a transportation sales tax, and matching federal assistance would potentially provide Columbia Transit an additional 3,500 hours in operations per year. The easiest fixed route increase would be to add eight hours of Sunday service. Adding additional service hours

on weekdays or reducing headways during peak hours are more expensive options, but would allow for earlier and/or later service. A final example would be a reduction of the current 40-minute weekday peak-hour headways to 20 minutes by adding buses to each route.

Review of the literature and input from key informants and community members strongly suggests that what may seem like an insignificant amount to some – \$2-4 monthly – could further harm the most vulnerable Columbia residents. The costs of food, energy, higher education, housing, and health care increased during the recent economic downturn. These added expenses disproportionately burden low-income and fixed-income families.

Mr. Wilcox and Ms. Goldschmidt reviewed the recommendations for this HIA, which take into account research on the transportation utility fee as well as data gathered in the community survey. If a transportation utility fee is determined to be a funding source, Council should consider reducing or waiving the fee for low- and fixed-income populations. They recommend the City research alternative funding sources that have worked in other communities and further solicit community input on funding options when gathering data for public transit proposals, such as CoMo Connect. They also suggest increasing public outreach about how the bus system works and to adjust the transit hours of operation to accommodate shift workers. Ensure that bus stops are located near healthy food options, health care facilities, neighborhood parks and recreation facilities, and social welfare and community services. Create routes and timetables that are consistent and post them at all stops. Ensure the Columbia Transit website is timely and easy to navigate. Consider adding Sunday service, which would allow residents to access to the community.

Mr. Wilcox discussed next steps to include the Partner Team conducting both a process and impact evaluation of the HIA to identify areas for future improvement, and to monitor the implementation of included recommendations. Additionally, the Partner Team will communicate its findings through a full report and executive summary available on the Columbia/Boone County Department of Public Health and Human Services and CoMET websites. They will also present findings before other community groups.

Council person Hoppe asked if there was anything fund in research that showed community health benefits that are achieved when transportation is easily accessible. Mr. Wilcox explained that there was, and that information was found and presented in their first presentation earlier in the year. Council person Thomas asked if the health benefits could be weighed against the negative health impacts of the additional fee for low and fixed impact. Mr. Wilcox replied that there are greater opportunities for finding employment and

other long term good benefits. Mr. Thomas asked if the negative impacts affect mostly low income residents. Mr. Wilcox replied that most are found to be low

income, but anything could plunge middle income households to low income.

Council person Skala felt that utilities are the biggest issue and that area should be focused on as people are sleeping with space heaters and suggested that the energy issues be looked at closely along with transit. Mr. Wilcox replied that low income homes prioritize homes, food, utilities and on from there. Mr. Thomas asked if there are there currently waivers for other utilities or other things. Staff replied that there are not for utilities.

The Executive Summary for this report can be viewed here: https://www.gocolumbiamo.com/CMS/bcmanager/downloadfile.php?id=10511

The Full Report can be viewed here:

https://www.gocolumbiamo.com/CMS/bcmanager/downloadfile.php?id=10512

The HIA Presentation can be viewed here:

https://www.gocolumbiamo.com/CMS/bcmanager/downloadfile.php?id=10633

SS/HB 253:

Toni Messina, Civic Relations Manager, provided an overview of this bill which could potentially have an effect on revenue for municipalities. Legislators are asking for council support or opposition for this issue. Supporters of this bill say we risk losing businesses to other states if we don't make these cuts. Opponents of the bill agree with the Governor's veto, which is subject to override. Ms. Messina asked Council, if as a group, does Council agree that one risk outweighs the other. There are currently not enough House members to override the Governor's Veto. Mayor McDavid asked how Missouri legislators have voted. Ms. Messina explained that Representative Rowden originally voted for the bill, but now has concerns on how this could affect educational establishments in Columbia. Two others support the bill; two oppose; and one was absent and did not vote, but would likely vote to sustain veto.

Mayor McDavid is aware that the University of Missouri opposes this bill. Mr. Sklala supports the Governor's veto and encourages Council to send a letter of support for the veto. Mayor McDavid felt that Council should do so individually. Council person Nauser added that Council has a lot to do locally, and involvement at the State level adds more to that plate and issues like this should be handled individually.

Mr. Thomas asked if there are specific impacts to Columbia. Ms. Messina was not sure there are specific impacts.

Council agreed to submit letters of support or opposition on an individual basis since the issue is complex and doesn't have direct known impact to Columbia.

The summary of information on this issue can be viewed here: https://www.gocolumbiamo.com/CMS/bcmanager/downloadfile.php?id=10493

Columbia Housing Authority to discuss their Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) program:

Mr. Matthes introduced Phil Steinhaus, Executive Director of Columbia Housing Authority. Mr. Steinhaus stated that the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) is a pilot program offered by Housing and Urban Development (HUD). He commented that the project proposed a voucher system, which is more financially stable than the current model. Funding over the past twelve years has decreased significantly and the RAD program would allow Columbia Housing Authority (CHA) to enter into a long term contract at a locked in rate. As part of the application, CHA has to show potential lenders willing to invest in the program. He reviewed the pre-submission requirements approval process. If the application is not approved, CHA will still continue to operate as is under the Section 8 model.

Mr. Skala felt that resident mobility is good thing and there are benefits to being locked into 20 years on a fixed rate. Mr. Steinhaus added that he did not see a down side, other than it being a complicated process to get started on.

The application overview for this project can be viewed here: https://www.gocolumbiamo.com/CMS/bcmanager/downloadfile.php?id=10458

The presentation on this item can be viewed here: https://www.gocolumbiamo.com/CMS/bcmanager/downloadfile.php?id=10632

Other Topics Council Wishes to Discuss: None.

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at approximately 7:00 PM.