

MOUNT-TABOR

NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

Bruce Treat, MTNA co-President, 5834 SE Lincoln St. Portland, OR 97215, Sixxking@msn.com

May 12, 2009

VIA E-MAIL JOSEPHJO@TRIMET.ORG AND MARCHAND@TRIMET.ORG

Jon Joseph
Marketing Coordinator
TriMet

Dan Marchand
Planner
TriMet

Re: MTNA Support for TriMet's Couplet of No. 71 Bus on Lincoln St.

Dear Mr. Joseph and Mr. Marchand:

I'm writing on behalf of the Mt. Tabor Neighborhood Association ("MTNA") to express support for TriMet implementing the couplet idea on 52nd Avenue and Lincoln Street between Division and 60th Avenue. At MTNA's April 15th general public meeting, the neighborhood voted 26-10, with five abstentions to support TriMet's couplet idea for the no. 71 bus on Lincoln Street.

As you may recall from attending previous MTNA meetings and TriMet polling, there are both pro and con couplet people in the neighborhood. TriMet did some survey polls in 2008 and the result of those surveys, announced at the November MTNA meeting, was 18-16 in favor of the couplet. TriMet distributed the surveys to over 600 homes but because of the relatively low response, TriMet didn't feel the couplet was warranted but said that the door wasn't necessarily closed to enacting the couplet in the future.

Mike Shaver, a Lincoln St. neighbor, then came to a MTNA meeting in January (MTNA traditionally doesn't have a December meeting) seeking the support of MTNA in favor of the couplet. Mike felt that there were bicycle and other safety issues on Lincoln. After much discussion, MTNA asked Mike to see if he could gather signatures in the neighborhood in support of the couplet and MTNA would take it under consideration.

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Mike returned to the February MTNA meeting with a petition containing almost 200 signatures in support of the couplet. Some in the MTNA expressed concern that not everyone was being heard as well as concern about Mt. Tabor Middle School students and the elderly walking extra blocks to use the 71 bus. Paul Leistner, a neighbor on 57th St., volunteered to put leaflets on houses affected on Division from 52nd to 60th and on 60th from Division to Lincoln announcing that MTNA would be voting on the issue at its March 18th meeting. John McLaren, MTNA's webmaster, also posted notice on MTNA's website announcing the March 18th vote.

Shortly before the March meeting, Paul called me and said that due to illness, he'd been unable to distribute notice of the couplet vote along Division and 60th and asked that MTNA postpone the vote until the April meeting. I told him that it wouldn't be a problem. At the March meeting, I made such an announcement and that was reflected in the Minutes from that meeting. John McLaren also updated the MTNA website to reflect the upcoming April 15th vote.

I should add here that in addition to my responsibilities as co-President: communications coordinator that I have also been MTNA's Secretary since June 2007 and have been in charge of keeping the Minutes for all MTNA meetings since then when I was present. On the few occasions I have missed meetings, I have someone else perform my duties. I took the Minutes for the November 2008, January 2009, March 2009 and April 2009 meetings. I was unavailable in February and Heidi Kohne was acting Secretary for that meeting and kept those Minutes.

These Minutes are all distributed via email to people who provide their email address on the sign-in sheet at MTNA meetings. During the time period from November 2008 through March 2009, the list of email recipients was in the neighborhood of about 80-95 people and after about 20 new people listed their email address at the April meeting, the list is currently at about 115 people. My practice has been to distribute Minutes within a week of the meeting.

In addition to providing the Minutes via email, drafts are also posted on MTNA's website by John McLaren when he gets them via email along with everyone else.

As part of my responsibilities as Secretary, I also send a truncated version of the Minutes to the Southeast Examiner newspaper ("SE Examiner") which publishes them as "Neighborhood Notes." The version that I send them does not include things typical in standard Minutes such as a list of attendees, treasurer's report, etc. because my understanding is that the SE Examiner does not want these type of things in their Neighborhood Notes. Even then, SE Examiner does not publish everything that I and presumably every other neighborhood send their way. What they publish is at their discretion. The version of Neighborhood Notes I sent to SE Examiner is not intended to be official publication of MTNA's Minutes which is accomplished by both email distribution and publication to the MTNA website. The Neighborhood Notes that I sent to the SE Examiner for publication in their April edition included reference to a vote in April on the couplet idea but SE Examiner chose to not publish that particular portion of what I sent them.

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In addition to the above responsibilities for MTNA, I am also a proponent of TriMet's couplet. In order to avoid any appearance of impropriety between my responsibilities to MTNA and pro couplet view, I have always strived to be very communicative and open with both other MTNA board members and the neighborhood. Until very recently, no one seemed to express any opinion that I had been anything other than above board balancing my personal views and my MTNA responsibilities.

About a week prior to the April MTNA meeting, Paul Leistner and I distributed flyers to residents on Division and 60th which would be affected by TriMet moving the 71 bus there. I also distributed the notice to the 90+ people on the MTNA email distribution list at that time and took the extra step of sending the notice to the Mt. Tabor list serve which is not moderated by MTNA and which has around 250 on its distribution list. Through these steps, I heard from three or four people who were pro couplet and four or five who were anti couplet. I passed these messages on to all of the other MTNA board members.

At the April MTNA meeting, Mike Shaver again raised the issue of MTNA supporting TriMet's couplet. He said that in addition to the original approximately 200 people signing the petition that he had picked up an additional 50 to bring the total to around 250 people in support of the couplet.

Much discussion ensued about the merits of the convenience of having a bus on Lincoln instead of walking one block to Division. Those not in favor of the couplet also voiced an opinion that it was unsafe to cross Division or 60th to catch the bus. They also felt that there had not been adequate notice of the impending MTNA vote. In addition to the notices referenced above, it was pointed out to them that MTNA publicly meets at regular times and dates in the same public location. Some people felt that notice had not been in the "Minutes" in the SE Examiner. The response to that was that what appears in the SE Examiner are not "Minutes" but are "Neighborhood Notes." In my role as Secretary, I informed them that what is sent to the SE Examiner included reference to the Lincoln St. vote but that SE Examiner controls what is in their newspaper and chose to not include that part as well as other parts sent to them. This did not come to my attention until a few days before the April meeting. Pro-couplet people voiced concern about Lincoln being a City designated Bicycle Boulevard and expressed general safety issues and particularly about buses turning onto Lincoln from 52nd. MTNA had previously received a letter from the Bicycle Transportation Alliance in support of the couplet.

It was pointed out to everyone by Mike Shaver that if TriMet received a letter from MTNA supporting the couplet, that TriMet would still want to poll neighbors before making a final decision.

Some neighbors at the MTNA meeting expressed concern that the neighborhood was too closely divided and a motion was made that MTNA shouldn't take a position on the couplet. After much discussion, the motion failed by a hand count of 26-14.

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Mike Shaver then asked that MTNA after hearing all of the pros and cons take a pro couplet position. Before a resolution could be reached an amendment was made that should MTNA take a pro couplet position that MTNA's letter to TriMet reflect that some in the neighborhood were not in favor of the couplet. This amendment passed unanimously. After more discussion, the original motion by Mike Shaver as amended passed 26-10, with five abstentions.

As I'm sure you are aware, any neighborhood association, much like TriMet itself, cannot represent the views of every single member or user. Because of people's personal lives and choices, not every voice on either side of the issue may have been heard but there were efforts made by MTNA to notify them of the vote.

I am now writing to you to express MTNA's position that we are in favor of TriMet's couplet idea and also to give you a flavor of the discussion involved in taking that position. As mentioned above, my understanding is that TriMet would likely still gather more information prior to making decision in favor of its couplet idea. I invite you to any future MTNA meeting to discuss any thoughts TriMet may have.

Sincerely,



Bruce Treat
MTNA co-President: communications
coordinator, and Secretary

BWT: