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Metro Chief Planning Officer Carol Inge opened the Western STAC conference by emphasizing the importance of providing transit commuters with a pleasant experience.



Photo by Bill Heard

Transit Officials Look to Improve Bus Stops for Commuters

- Conference at Metro draws 50 officials from western states

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(Dec. 6, 2007) Some 50 western states transit officials involved with improving bus stops, bus shelters and other amenities for bus and rail commuters wrapped up a two-day conference at Metro, Tuesday.

Members of the Western Stop and Transit Amenities Council (Western STAC) heard presentations that included Metro's experience with Bus Rapid Transit and the agency's cell phone 511 real-time bus arrival information program.

The group also heard talks on the use of solar power at bus stops, Seattle's public art program at transit stops, trash collection at bus stops and how outdoor advertising can enhance bus stop amenities.

In her welcoming address, Metro Chief Planning Officer Carol Inge noted that the agency serves some 16,600 bus stops, of which some 3,000 feature shelters and 7,100 have benches. The agency is in the process of installing stops with 200 solar-powered lighting.

Although Metro doesn't own the bus stops, she said, it partners with local jurisdictions and, where local contractors don't provide amenities, Metro provides funds for shelters, lighting, trash receptacles and other things.

"It's a major challenge for us to coordinate and get these amenities in

place," Inge said. "It's important to the experience of the person riding the bus and can make it a more pleasant experience."

James Rojas, a Metro transportation planner and co-chairman of Western STAC, said Metro expects to fund a couple dozen projects such as transit malls, bus shelters and transit centers from the Call for Projects over the next five years.

Keeping stops and shelters clean

Keeping bus stops and shelters clean is a major undertaking. Through its Metro Clean program, Metro this year cleaned more than 55,000 bus stops and shelters, according to Facilities Maintenance Manager Pete Serdienis. A similar program operated by ShelterCLEAN, Inc. is responsible for 2,300 shelters in LA County, which it cleans two or more times a week.

Western STAC, started some years ago by seven transit systems in the Pacific Northwest, brings together transit officials and bus shelter product vendors from the western states for training programs and regional conferences. Membership now stands at about 100.

Chuck Beadle, Western STAC director, said the quality of bus stops has improved in recent years thanks to sponsorship by advertising companies that have built new shelters and financed other amenities.

"Throughout much of the West, bus shelter advertising had not been looked on favorably," he said. "It's now a dominate force in cities throughout the West."

Western STAC conferences are sponsored by Friendly Streets, a non-profit organization that promotes pedestrian-friendly and transit-friendly streets and neighborhoods.

"That gets down to the nuts and bolts of how to keep streets free of litter and graffiti and take care of our transit infrastructure, pedestrian crosswalks and safety issues," said Bill Allen, Friendly Streets executive director.