City of St. Helens Central Waterfront Redevelopment

Goal:

As part of its long-term plan to revitalize the Central Waterfront, the City of St. Helens is exploring the option of filling in a portion or all of its wastewater treatment plant lagoon to create a usable landmass, thereby connecting the St. Helens community with the former Boise Cascade Veneer and Boise White Paper sites and the Riverfront District.

Economic Benefits:

Filling the wastewater treatment lagoon is under consideration. It is greatly over-sized for current demand and presents an obstacle to realizing the redevelopment potential of the available waterfront sites. It must be done safely, and in a manner that is revenue-positive for the City. Initial feasibility evaluations have been conducted in the areas of market demand and governance structures. Findings from these studies indicate:

- Demand is high, ranging from 6.1M to 8.4M cubic yards. This compares to the initial projected capacity of the St. Helens facility of 2.2M to 4.0M cubic yards.
- The main drivers for disposal demand, in descending order, are:

    (1) Lower Willamette River channel deepening (2.6 – 4.9 million CY, exclusive of Portland Harbor remediation volumes);

    (2) Portland Harbor Superfund Site remediation (2.8 million CY);

    (3) Brownfield remediation (665,000 CY); and

    (4) All other sources (not readily quantifiable).
- St. Helens is strategically located, close to a large customer base. Greatly reduced transportation costs (in comparison with other options further away) make St. Helens the single-most cost-effective alternative for sediment and soil disposal.
- Net present value analyses show a range of $106M - $141M; revenues the City can use for waterfront redevelopment or other needs.
- Construction, operation, and maintenance will provide long-term employment opportunities.
- A facility of this type benefits the State by providing a lower cost alternative for sediment and soil disposal (when compared to transporting to more distant locations). **It also ensures the revenues generated are kept in-state.**

City's Objectives:

- Optimize Risk/Reward Ratio to City
    - Minimal impact to the City's creditworthiness or debt capacity
    - Maintain a sustainable cash flow
    - Retain as much excess revenues to the City's account and discretionary fund
- Ensure success and minimize risk by thoughtful approach to governance and management
    - Reliable continuity with management and operational skills
    - Avoid project fatigue in governance as well as in the community
    - Do not unreasonably limit the City's control over operations

- Embrace structure with efficient and effective decision making
- Avoid assuming unreasonable long term risk to the City

Work to Date:

Long-term economic development planning is well underway, with community engagement and visioning efforts, including corridor plans for the two primary arterial accesses to the central city funded by the ODOT/DLCD Transportation and Growth Management program and the Waterfront Area-Wide Framework adopted in October of 2016. The advancement of these large-scale, area-wide plans are in alignment with, support, and are enhanced by a waterfront redevelopment of the type that is made possible by this project. Converting the lagoon into accessible public land aligns with the community's larger redevelopment vision. Work conducted:

- Initial technical and feasibility analyses
- Detailed market analyses
- Governance and funding options evaluation
- Initial wastewater treatment plant impacts analysis

Important Considerations

- The St. Helens facility would receive only sediment, sludge from its wastewater treatment plant, and soil. No construction debris or putrescible, industrial, or hazardous waste would be accepted.
- From a technical and regulatory perspective, and with use of proper engineering systems and controls to ensure environmental protection, the site is a viable location for disposal of sediment and soil.
- While there are multiple competitors that can accept soil from upland sources, there are no competitive facilities with the ability to directly offload sediment from barges. This eliminates additional handling and significantly reduces the overall cost as well as environmental impact.
- Benefits to the State include:
    - Significantly lowers transportation costs for the Portland Harbor cleanup, maintenance dredging, and Lower Willamette River Navigation Channel maintenance
    - Significantly reduces cost (both financial and community impact) or possibly avoids transload facility (construction, operation, maintenance, and closure)
    - Enhances environmental protection, enhances public benefits, and increases community acceptance relative to all other existing alternatives
    - Significantly lowers greenhouse gas emissions associated with all other available alternatives by eliminating ground-based sediment transportation
    - Increases safety through avoidance of large-scale truck transport

Next Steps

The City is seeking a $1.54M grant from the State of Oregon to continue the feasibility evaluation, initiate permitting and site characterization with the Departments of Environmental Quality and State Lands, and others, and to conduct proof of concept analyses.