

US 97 Bend North Corridor Project – Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC)
Meeting Minutes
12/13/07

CAC Members in attendance:

Mike Schmidt	Wayne Schnur	Mike Lovely
Michel Bayard	Jeremy Green	Jeanne Newton (phone)
Tim Larocco	Bill Smith	

ODOT & COIC Staff in attendance:

Rick Williams, ODOT	Jon Heacock, ODOT	Amy Pfeiffer, ODOT
Angela Findley, Parson Brinckerhoff	Andrew Spreadborough, COIC	

Welcome, Meeting Overview and Introductions

Mike Schmidt called the meeting to order and introductions were made. Rick Williams said that today's meeting will focus on the Purpose, Need, Goals and Objectives statement process. Additionally, the group will discuss the public scoping process.

Draft Purpose and Need, Goals and Objectives

Rick Williams reviewed the Purpose and Need Statement and Goals and Objectives document. Rick said that the project Purpose and Need establishes the basis for developing a range of alternatives – alternatives that are considered must address the Purpose and Need. Goals and Objectives guide the outcomes beyond those that meet the Purpose and Need, and deal with the non-highway components.

Rick Williams and Angela Findley launched a PowerPoint presentation that provided background on the Purpose and Need Statement and Goals and Objectives. Rick said that the Purpose and Need is the “why” we are doing the project. Rick reviewed the project needs, including congestion and safety. He said that the narrative section of the Purpose and Need Statement includes these details in an effort to define the nature of the problem we are trying to solve.

Michel Bayard asked for clarification on how safety was identified as an issue. Rick said that the project area is within the top 5% statewide for accidents. Tim Larocco asked how recent the information on safety is. Rick answered that the data is from 2006, though the 2007 data will be more detailed when available. Mike Schmidt asked if there were any fatalities in the project area. Rick answered that there were one or two fatalities included in the data. Mike Schmidt observed that there were not a lot of accidents, statistically. Rick said that since the project area is within the top 5% statewide for accidents, ODOT is required by mandate to address. He said to keep in mind that safety is only one of the issues, the other being congestion. Tim Larocco said the actual accident rate is likely higher; not all accidents are reported. Rick confirmed that only reported accidents can be counted. Jon Heacock said that it would not be an exaggeration to say that only 50% of accidents are reported.

Rick Williams said that most of the issues in the project area are related to congestion. He referred to the Purpose and Need Statement, and said that we are trying to determine if the current information establishes the problem. Mike Schmidt said that people are aware of the congestion, and know what times of the day are most congested. He said it would be helpful to include data on the percent of capacity the highway is at; e.g. 130% of capacity. This would make the numbers more meaningful.

Rick reviewed the Goals and Objectives table within the document, noting that the Goals and Objectives were identified by the Steering Team and CAC. He said that they may be worded differently than originally stated by CAC members; several were combined into generic goals and objectives. He asked the group to review to ensure that the info is complete.

Rick Williams said that Goal 1 was not specifically addressed by the CAC or Steering Team, but reflects a required aspect of the NEPA process. He read through the other goal areas in order. He explained that Goal 7 – “Avoid, Minimize, or Mitigate for Impacts to Natural and Built Environment” is the NEPA component that includes the “bugs and bunnies” portion of the process. Jeanne Newton asked why consideration of “Air Quality” was not included as an objective under Goal 7. Rick said it was not included because Central Oregon is not designated by the DEQ as a “Non-Attainment” area for air quality. Jeanne agreed, but said that over time the region could become a Non-Attainment area if air quality is not a goal. Rick said that the area is not approaching the threshold, but protection of air quality can be added if it is brought up during the scoping process. Mike Lovely said that we agree that we don’t want air quality to get worse, and suggested we list it as an objective. Rick said it can be added.

Rick Williams said that Objective 9A – “Enhance safety for pedestrians and bicyclists” is different than the objectives under Goal 3 which deal with modal access. 9A deals with safety. Mike Lovely asked if the Goals and Objectives are listed in priority order. Rick answered that these are not in priority order. Eventually this table will be converted to a matrix, and proposed alternatives will be screened by each objective measurement to determine the degree to which they accomplish the Goals and Objectives.

Mike Schmidt asked about Objective 3C – “Accommodate Alternative Modes” – and asked if we should be looking out 20+ years. For instance, why aren’t we looking at the ability to add a bus lane? Should we incorporate alternative transportation modes into the project? Rick responded by saying that the fact that alternative modes are listed as a goal means that we want to consider it within the solution. If an alternative deals with alternative modes well while another does not, the alternative that does address alternative modes will have an advantage. Mike Schmidt asked why “X’s” are showing up only on some objectives. Angela Findley answered that an X is shown on the objectives that were identified within a meeting of the group. Angela also said that in the case of transit as an alternative mode, if an alternative addresses transit well, it would also meet the objectives under Goal 8 – “Ensure Compatibility with Local and Statewide Plans.”

Mike Lovely asked if rights-of-way can be purchased anticipating future needs. Rick said that ODOT would need to show the specific need to purchase ROW, as opposed to speculative purchases. This requirement was enacted to ensure ODOT doesn’t enter the real estate business. Jon Heacock said that ODOT cannot go beyond a 20-year window when acquiring ROW.

Rick asked again if the CAC had questions regarding the Purpose and Need Statement – are any changes needed? Jeanne Newton asked about the Draft Need Statement background section, page 2, where the document states that US 97 was designated as an “expressway.” She asked for the definition of expressway, and how it compares to “parkway.” Rick said that “expressway” is a functional classification for highways. Interstate is the highest classification, and expressway is lower. The term parkway is a title for the section of Highway 97 in Bend, but it is not a classification. The Parkway is designated as an expressway, which means that ODOT has the goal of removing intersections. Mike

Schmidt said that the Bend MPO supported the designation of US 97 as an expressway, under the belief that this designation would lead to additional funding. He said that Oregon Transportation Commissioner Randy Pape' has said that the designation puts the highway in a higher category of expectations regarding access. Jeanne Newton asked if the changeover of three OTC commissioners would lead to a policy change at the OTC level. Rick said that the OTC members are appointed by the Governor, so there would likely be consistency in policy over time. Mike Schmidt said that OTC commissioners are confirmed by legislators, and this process may be looked at more closely with the discussions about potential funding increases.

Rick Williams asked if the CAC thought the Goals and Objectives were captured accurately, and if any changes were needed. Mike Schmidt said that the only change discussed by the CAC is to add an objective about air quality. Besides that change, the Goals and Objectives are good. Rick encouraged CAC members to attend the public meeting scheduled for January 24. Mike Schmidt said that he could publicize the meeting through the Chamber of Commerce newsletter.

Overview of Public Scoping set to begin in January, 2008

Angela Findley referred to the PowerPoint slides describing the public scoping process. She said that the purpose of the NEPA scoping process is to inform the public, agencies and other stakeholders that ODOT is working on this project. The process gathers public comment on the Purpose and Need Statement and Goals and Objectives. She said that it provides opportunity for the public to identify issues and concerns important to the community, and she pointed out that the CAC is not the only opportunity for the public to identify goals and objectives. She said that the process also includes identifying potential impacts to the environment; not just the "ducks" but also including social impacts.

Angela reviewed the schedule and notification timeline, saying that there is a 30-day scoping timeline which is the first opportunity for the public to voice comments about the project. The scoping meeting is scheduled for January 24, and the 30-day comment period will run roughly from January 10 to February 10. They will get the word out by media releases, newsletter, putting ads in the paper, and through a project website which will be launched by January 10, roughly. Rick said that the goal is to send the newsletter to everyone around the project area. All Bend residents will get a postcard with information on how to learn more about the project. Angela said that they will not be mailing as broadly after the first newsletter; interested parties will be encouraged to get on the mailing list for future newsletters.

Mike Schmidt asked about the project timeline – including construction. He said that he is getting calls from property owners asking about the timing. He suggested the public scoping process provide specific information about the construction timeline to inform the public that things will not happen overnight. Rick said that the only timeline known currently is the NEPA process. After the NEPA and Record of Decision, the ROW will need to be acquired and funding secured. Mike Schmidt said that even this general overview would help the public understand the project timeline. Bill Smith said that the NEPA timeline is for three years – and asked when residents will know more about the timing, or if they will need to sell their homes. Rick said that the preferred alternative will be known by that time, and probably sooner.

Tim Larocco asked Angela to explain what is meant by "EIS range of alternatives" on page 1 of the Purpose and Need Statement. Angela said that EIS stands for Environmental Impact Statement, and is a document of project impacts that is prepared for public comment, and is used to come up with the preferred alternative. Jeanne Newton said that there is a lot of confusion about this process, regarding

how the corridor study differs from the short-term fix for Cooley Road. She said the projects need to be spelled out more clearly. Angela said that she is working on the newsletter, so this is good input. She said she would include the timeline and process description, including how the near-term solution fits in. Mike Schmidt said that Ron Garzini plans to take the mid-term solution to the Bend City Council in January with a plan for funding. He said this should be integrated into the scoping presentation.

Mike Schmidt asked if the CAC would be working on the Purpose and Need Statement. Angela said that the Purpose and Need Statement comes from ODOT. Mike Schmidt said that access is still a critical component for this project. He said his concern is that if it is not included (in the Purpose and Need), does it preclude the issue from the solution? Rick said that it is included within the Goals and Objectives. The Purpose and Need is the first filter, and is broad. If the proposed solution meets the Purpose and Need, then it is evaluated against the Goals and Objectives.

Bill Smith asked how a near-term fix for Cooley Road can be approved when the long term plan is not known. How can something be implemented in the short term when there is the possibility that it could be bulldozed when the long term solution is implemented? Jon Heacock said that short term alternatives cannot be implemented if they unduly influence the long-term solution. The group working on the near-term solution is looking for an appropriate alternative with the least impact on the corridor. He hasn't seen anything in the mid-term group discussions that would unduly influence the corridor.

Mike Lovely asked how the scoping process would be publicized – does media ads include teevee? He suggested the Redmond Roundup is a good resource, as is the Family Resource News. Angela said that they were planning to advertise in the Bulletin and the Spokesman. She said they also plan to do a survey that is designed to determine how residents use the corridor and to collect feedback on Goals and Objectives. She said that they will also schedule meetings with targeted groups including chambers of commerce and neighborhood associations. She asked the CAC to assist in identifying other interested groups. Mike Lovely said that general membership meetings of neighborhood associations are the best opportunity to connect, though they are held mostly in April and October. Mike Schmidt said that he could assist in pulling together a meeting of nearby businesses. Angela said that the outreach website is not yet live; she anticipates launching around January 10. The website will be US97solutions.org.

Select New Meeting Date for 2008

Mike Schmidt said that the CAC needs to identify meeting dates for 2008. Amy Pfeiffer asked how often the group wants to meet. Angela Findley said that they will be working on updating the Needs Statement, including an update to the data. She asked if the CAC wanted to review the revised version prior to the public scoping meeting. Mike Lovely said he'd like a standing meeting date on the calendar in case we want to meet. Wayne Schnur said that he spoke with a couple other CAC members who are not attending, and reported that they have conflicts with Thursday evening meetings. Mike Schmidt suggested the 2nd Wednesday of the month at 5:00 PM. Jeanne asked when the Steering Team meetings. Mike Schmidt answered that the Steering Team meets on the 3rd Tuesday of the month from 1:00 to 2:30.

Jon Heacock said that the Steering Team composition has changed. Before this change, the Bend MPO's Policy Board was serving as the Steering Team for this project. As they have gone through the Purpose and Need Statement and Goals and Objectives, it is a good time to look again at the

composition. The Policy Board has three city councilors, and the project team questioned if this was the best use of the councilors' time. Additionally, with three councilors in attendance there was a significant public noticing requirement that removed the flexibility in meeting scheduling. The new Steering Team composition will be Ron Garzini and Eric King from the City of Bend, Dennis Luke from Deschutes County, Bob Bryant from ODOT, and Mike Schmidt from the CAC. The city councilors indicated that they were happy to step aside, and will receive regular updates via the Bend MPO Policy Board meetings. Additionally, the public still has lots of opportunity to connect and comment through the public scoping process.

Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.