



Oregon

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Draft

**US97: Bend North Corridor Steering Team Meeting
Meeting Minutes
Deschutes County Service Center; DeArmond Room
1300 NW Wall Street, Bend, Oregon, 97701
April 8, 2008, 1:00 P.M.-2:30 P.M.**

Steering Team Members in Attendance: Bob Bryant, ODOT; Ron Garzini, City of Bend; Mike Schmidt, Citizen Advisory Committee; and Dennis Luke, Deschutes County.

Steering Team Leader; ODOT Staff: Jon Heacock, ODOT; Rick Williams, ODOT; Mike Morris, ODOT.

Public/Audience: Tom Blust, Donna Rustand, Rick Root, Tyler Deke, Rich Niederhof, Lori Niederhof, Erik Kropp, Eloise Mattox, and Tammy Baney Melton.

Meeting Coordinator: Bonita Williamsen, ODOT

Recorder: Andrew Spreadborough, COIC

The meeting began at 1:00 P.M.

Meeting dates, brief overview of meeting

Jon Heacock opened the meeting, and announced that all future Steering Team meetings will be held at Deschutes County. Steering Team work session meetings will be held at the ODOT Region 4 conference room. He said that the public is welcome to attend all meetings, and that the project web site has meeting schedules posted.

Jon reviewed the agenda, and said that a today's meeting we will have a final review of the project Purpose & Needs, and Goals & Objectives; and a general review of connectivity options for alternatives.

Final review and comment - Project Purpose and Need Statement

Jon Heacock said that we are in the process of submitting the Purpose & Needs and Goals & Objectives to the Federal Highway Administration. He reminded the team about the project need: to reduce congestion, to improve traffic flow, and to improve safety. The Purpose and Need statement was reviewed by the public during the scoping meeting held in January at Sky View Middle School, and comments were received throughout the public scoping period. The statement was reviewed by the technical advisory group as well as the citizen advisory committee. The recommendation was to keep the Purpose and Need statement in its current form, although access was an issue that came up in the discussions. Jon read the project purpose statement: "The purpose of this transportation project is to reduce traffic congestion, improve traffic flow, and improve public safety on the segment of US 97 between the Deschutes Junction Interchange and the Empire Avenue Interchange." He said the Purpose and Need

statement is unchanged, but that the Goals and Objectives have been modified. Jon said that he is looking for final comments or concerns from the Steering Team before being submitting the Purpose and Need statement to the Federal Highway Administration. No comments were made.

Final review and comment –Project Goals and Objectives

Rick Williams reviewed the project Goals and Objectives, and stated that the goals and objectives are desirable options - not a pass/fail test. They are evaluation criteria used to help differentiate the options. Those alternatives that best achieve the Purpose and Need statement while also meeting as many of the Goals and Objectives as possible become the EIS range of alternatives. He said the process is moving forward, and that we will be moving past the Purpose & Need, Goals & Objectives within a few months.

Mike Schmidt joined the meeting at 1:12.

Rick reviewed the changes to the Goals and Objectives. He described changes to Goal #2, with the language "to the extent feasible" removed, and "is consistent with" added. Jon asked if there was any concern with the change to Goal 2. No concerns were stated.

Ron Garzini stated his concern related to the 20-year study period for the project, stating he thinks that highway improvement will last 50 years. He said that he doesn't want to see what happened on the Redmond project, where the new highway was brought back to meet the existing highway within the 20 year Urban Growth Boundary, where a longer term approach may have placed the highway connection point farther north. He stated a desire to plan with a long-term vision in mind. He asked if this project is tied to the UGB? Rick said that it is not. The project study area includes city and county lands.

Rick went on to summarize the change to Goal 4 – changing "maintain" to "provide" local and regional access. He also summarized the new objective (4C) which says "consider whether barriers occur that affect connectivity between residential areas, commercial areas, and the local street network." Rick said that we don't want the new system to be a barrier between neighborhoods; we want them to be connected as they are today. He asked if there were any questions or concerns regarding these changes. No concerns were stated.

Rick reviewed Goal 5, objective 5A. He said there has been a discussion about what was meant by planned use and zoning. The modification adds definition for these terms. He said Objective 5B was expanded to say "provide design in transportation system to accommodate future land use and economic development." The purpose of this change was to cast a wider net in terms of what is measured, with a focus on what is in place in existing plans. Mike Schmidt asked "design" is being defined. Rick answered that it was related to how flexible the design is, so that it does not inhibit future growth and accommodates land use plans. Bob Bryant said that they can't design based on a speculative future land use. However, this does not preclude us from developing a solution that considers land use beyond what we have in the plan today.

Dennis Luke said that related to design, ODOT is going away from direct access to the highway system. The design needs to be set up so that local streets are able to handle traffic – local streets cannot be too small to connect to the highway. Rick asked if there were any questions or concerns related to changes to Goal 5.

Rick reviewed Goal 6, noting that there were changes were made to include private cost sharing and opportunities to phase construction. Mike Schmidt asked if the highway is designed for 25

years before major maintenance is needed. Bob Bryant said that pavement is designed for 20 years.

Rick said that Goals 7 and 8 have been combined to include both the natural and built environment. Goal 7 will focus on the natural environment, and Goal 8 on socio-economic factors. This will help us differentiate the impacts. There were no changes to the specific objectives. Ron Garzini said that 8E should be “built” rather than “build”

Rick noted objective 6C dropped off the list - long term maintenance. Ron Garzini said that he wants to ensure that we do something maintainable in a safe fashion that is attractive. Jon Heacock said that Objective 6C says “consider long term maintenance, feasibility and cost.” Ron said that attractiveness should be included as well, and is thinking of natural features that are sustainable and maintainable. For instance – highway dividers that are attractive, that we can access safely to water and maintain. Rick said that this consideration may not impact the alignment, but would be a design detail that we will need to consider.

Rick said that Goal 9 includes changes to Objective 9A– adding “and other relevant agreements between ODOT and affected parties.” He said that there may be current or future agreements between ODOT and the city and county that may impact how we are moving forward, and we want to make sure we are consistent with them. Rick said that Goal 10’s change is that “access and mobility” will be added.

Ron Garzini said that he is hung up on Objective 9B. He said that he would like the north end plan to be driven by what is best for the roadway and neighbors, not the Urban Growth Boundary as it exists now. It should be a consideration, but not a major factor. Rick said that there will be a long term discussion about goal exception – all of the options being looked at will need a goal exception. Ron said that the UGB expansion process is imperfect; it is a negotiated process and there are lots of factors and infrastructure pressures involved. The UGB should not be a factor regarding the location where the highway connects. Rick said that we will look at where the UGB located is today. Ron said the Steering Team should consider approaching LUBA for a goal exception if necessary. Bob Bryant asked if the design team can work in this. Rick said that there is nothing in the Goals and Objectives that would require the UGB to determine the alignment.

Open Discussion - Connectivity

Jon Heacock said that we have been meeting with focus groups to get feedback and ideas alignments. The alignment maps used in that process show connections, but they are generic at this point. We are looking at how to focus corridors into alternatives, and narrowing down to the alternatives we can take into design stage. Mike Morris, ODOT Roadway Manager, is attending to provide more information on connectivity options. Jon said that connectivity is how we get from one system to another; connections are critical to the success of our transportation system. Through the work to date, we realize that in addition to US 97, there is the need for a high volume local route in the project area.

Dennis Luke asked how far north connectivity is being considered. Bob Bryant said that the Empire Interchange is on south end, and Deschutes Market Interchange is on the north end. There are standards that tell us how far apart interchanges need to be. These interchanges provide bookends on each end of the project area. We are looking at the section between those points when we look at connectivity. The project will likely result in modified connections for the at-grade intersections – Cooley Road, Nels Anderson, and Robal are not working well. They may be upgraded or eliminated.

Jon Heacock summarized functions and interchange types. Mike Morris provided the definition of interchange: the highest form of a roadway intersection, including stop signs, grade separation, and interchange. Mike reviewed examples of system interchanges and service interchanges, with photos that illustrated interchange types.

Dennis Luke said that the Reed Market interchange on the Parkway was originally at-grade. Bob Bryant said that the at-grade would have met needs for the highway based on 20 year projections. This is an example of a decision on design that exceeded the 20 year projection at the time, through consideration of other factors – including the cost to retrofit in the future. Mike Morris said that design takes into account how much traffic will be accommodated. Bob said that the interchange form was discussed at that time; we didn't want the standard interchange design form, which is why the design had tighter ramps. We didn't want the parkway to appear or operate like an interstate; we wanted an arterial design. Mike Schmidt said that he hoped the mistake made on the south parkway wouldn't be made again – where drivers can't see ahead because of shrubs. He said that visibility is important.

Mike Morris said the biggest challenge will be how to provide connectivity and prioritize types and locations. Key items in the future include connectivity to the local system as well as connectivity to the state system. Ron Garzini said that one of the complicating issues is the Highway 20 connection within the dense urban area. If we can pull Highway 20 traffic off north it would make sense. Jon said that 40,000 to 60,000 ADT are projected for Highway 20 near Bend, which is the same volume projected for Highway 97 within the project area. Ron said that the mall area is the destination for a lot of Highway 20 traffic – it makes sense to have connection to the area.

Mike Schmidt said that for Juniper Ridge traffic heading west on Highway 20 it would be best to avoid surface streets – the quicker they get on the highway makes sense. Ron said that he is worried about the interconnection between Highways 97 and 20 being located in the middle of the shopping area. Anything to pull traffic away from Robal and Empire makes sense. Bob Bryant said that they will be evaluating options, but we are not sure we can accomplish an improved Highway 20-97 connection based on huge right-of-way costs, and uncertainty of Highway 20 volumes. They didn't connect Highways 20 and 97 when the parkway was constructed because of volumes and right-of-way costs. Rather than put them all if the trips on the parkway, the intent was to distribute the traffic across more lanes.

Mike Schmidt asked if the through-traffic on Highway 97 is greater than Highway 20. Jon said that less use Highway 20 as a through- route than Highway 97. He said that they have had volume projections in technical detail provided, including data on Highways 20 and 97. Mike asked if we improve the project area, will it just push the problem elsewhere on system. If more cars on the north end, will it create problems farther south? Bob said that it would, and that the ideal plan is to distribute trips across system.

Mike Morris reviewed options for northern interchange forms, including the partial free-flow and partial diamond interchange types. When designing an interchange, we need to first determine the function (connecting system to system, or providing access to local facility). The design will also consider geography, environmental impacts, and other factors. This process will in turn drive the footprint of the interchange.

Next Meeting

Jon Heacock said that the next meeting will be a work session, and we will bring in more information on interchanges. Ron Garzini asked when the Steering Team will receive input from the focus groups. Jon said that we have been meeting with them over the past month, and

have two more scheduled on Friday. A summary of comments will be produced. Ron said to make sure the focus groups know that the Steering Team is interested in their thoughts and input. Rick Root asked if there is a land use focus group? Jon said that there will be. Ron said that conceptually it would include city, county, and state land use folks, and that they would get together for a periodic review of land use considerations.

Meeting Adjourned at 2:30