



Memorandum

Date: June 26, 2009
To: Rex Holloway, ODOT
From: Andrew Spreadborough, COIC
Project: US 97 Bend North Corridor Solutions
Subject: Summary of comments from June 25 Bicycle/Pedestrian Focus Group

Overview

This memorandum summarizes the Bicycle/Pedestrian Focus Group meeting. The meeting was held from noon to 2:00 PM on June 25, 2009, at the ODOT Region 4 Headquarters Conference Room, Bend.

Participants:

Sami Fournier, BPAC
Jeff Speder, HUNS, CAC
Cheryl Howard, BPAC
Ray Thwaites, ODOT
Dan Serpico, ODOT Region 4 Traffic
Michele Sims, BPAC
Rick Root, City of Bend
Carolyn Perry, Tumalo Community Association
Daniel Pearson, The Source Newspaper
Mark Barrett, ODOT
Mike Schmidt, CAC
Glen Bates, BPAC
Chris Marney, Boyd Acres Neighborhood
Whit Bazemore, Cyclist

ODOT/COIC Staff:

Rick Williams, ODOT
Rex Holloway, ODOT
Andrew Spreadborough, COIC

Focus group meeting goal: Follow-up to June 18 meeting, continued discussion on impacts.

Meeting Discussion Points

- Rick Williams provided an overview of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process for the US 97 North Corridor project, including discussion of the project Purpose and Need, range of alternatives, Goals and Objectives, and planning timeline.
- Design detail is not completed yet; design level detail will commence upon selection of the preferred alternative (estimated at 10 to 12 months from now).
- ODOT is taking comments on design-level issues; input is important now, though may not be incorporated into the project until design detail process begins.
- Today's focus – do not want to focus on 'solutions' yet; want to identify issues, bike/ped routes, etc.
- Discussed existing routes (Cooley and Empire), and need to start with existing routes in analyzing bike/ped issues in the project area.
- Reviewed maps marked up by BPAC with existing bike/ped routes and needed route corridors within the West and East alternatives.
- Rick Williams summarized the approach for bike/ped planning on the Redmond re-route project. He said that since bike/ped traffic was not a good fit for the new facility, ODOT and

the City of Redmond improved surrounding city streets for facilitate north-south bike and ped traffic. Options for this sort of solution are being looked at in the project area. He said that improving the grid network (including filling in bike lanes in areas where there are gaps) will be important to bike and pedestrian mobility.

- Rick Root discussed the concept of extending the “Kohl’s Trail” north to Empire, and then crossing the parkway and heading north through the Nels Anderson area to Robal Road.
- Rick Root identified issues regarding bike/ped mobility in the project area: 1) need for a north-south corridor; 2) access to the mall area for the Boyd Acres neighborhood (Robal could be a solution); and 3) the presence of informal/unsafe goat paths, and how to mitigate (specifically, the Fred Meyer Road area near Boyd Acres, and to/from the Jamison/OB Riley neighborhoods).
- Discussed consideration of conducting traffic counts of bike/ped traffic from the OB Riley/Jamison neighborhoods across Highway 20 to the mall area.
- Discussed how speed limits are designated and adjusted. A request for a speed limit change must come from a local jurisdiction.
- Discussed a bike/ped representative being appointed to the CAC. Will discuss with Kim Curley.
- Discussed the importance of working with the City of Bend to add bike/ped improvements to the TSP.

Summary of Focus Group Participant Feedback and Comments

Focus group participants made comments throughout the meeting:

- The Bend Parkway design is not adequate for bike/pedestrian uses. Advocate for better bike/ped design in the North Corridor project.
- While existing routes need to be analyzed, need to think about the informal “goat path” routes, since people tend to take the direct route.
- Question: ODOT has said design detail will not be addressed until a preferred alternative is selected. Does this mean bike/ped issues have no impact on the selection of a preferred alternative? Answer: Bike and pedestrian mobility is included within the project Goals and Objectives. Bike/ped issues are looked at now; ODOT wants to understand the issues. They are important and are being considered now. Additionally, comments made now will be included in the record and will become more important when design detail is addressed.
- Do not want to see a new facility that impedes bike/ped mobility; want to see a facility that encourages bike and ped traffic.
- BPAC met earlier in the week and reached consensus on a couple issues/concerns within the project area: 1) A solution is needed to accommodate bike/ped traffic from the neighborhoods to the west (OB Riley/Jamison area) over or under Highway 20 to the mall area. An overcrossing is preferred. 2) Advocate for the preservation of the Sisters loop ramp (if abandoned) as a bike/ped facility.
- On the east alternatives, consider developing a separate at-grade bike/ped facility between Highway 97 and 3rd Street north of Empire.
- Concern with accommodating bike/ped facility grade separation by building tunnels, due to lighting issues, teens/youth hanging out, maintenance of tunnels.
- East alternatives are more complicated for bike/ped mobility. The West alternative is designed better for bike/ped mobility. 3rd Street will function better for bike/ped use on the West compared to the East.
- Interest in the design of entrance/exits to and from 3rd Street; widening and striping of bike routes.
- Question: who owns the right-of-way between Jamison and 3rd Street from Empire heading north? Answer: ODOT and city. Discussion of this corridor as a location for a bike/ped facility.

- Consider partnering with community groups/organizations to develop bike/ped solutions. Partners can assist by applying for grant funding to support the development of bike/ped facilities.
- Discussion of Senator Wyden's recreation trail initiative and proposed bike routes to connect all of the Central Oregon cities. Need to support Central Oregon as a biking destination.
- Two bicycle racing events in Central Oregon are estimated to add \$12 million in consumer spending to the local economy. Maintaining the region's profile as a biking community is important to the economy.
- Need to improve the bike lanes on Highway 20 between Tumalo and Plainview. The current bike lanes are unsafe.
- Consider improved bike lane striping/stenciling on Highway 20 heading northwest in project area. Consider similar striping as currently on Highway 20 on east side of Bend.
- Question: how should focus group participants participate in the project? Answer: Continued focus group meetings as the project moves forward; participation in the Citizen Advisory Committee; inclusion on the newsletter mailing list; participation in open house meetings; submission of comments within meetings and/or via the project web site.
- Who oversees ODOT after project design and NEPA process are complete to ensure all agreed-upon project elements are built? Answer: ODOT inspectors monitor construction companies to ensure the project is built according to plans. Some small details are changed during the project construction, but any major changes that affect the NEPA process outcome would need to go back to the Federal Highway Administration for review and approval.
- Discussed reauthorization of the federal highway bill, and potential implications on funding levels. Anticipating more funding for bike and ped mobility, can bike/ped crossings be designed for the future? Then, should funding become available, the project will be positioned to access funding to implement crossings or other bike/ped improvements.

Next Meeting

To be determined.