

**US 97 Bend North Corridor Project – Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC)
Meeting Minutes
10/14/2009**

CAC Members in attendance:

Wayne Schnur
Tim Larocco
Jeff Speder

Neil Bryant
Kim Curley

Mike Lovely
Linda Perelli Wright

ODOT & COIC Staff in attendance:

Rex Holloway, ODOT

Andrew Spreadborough, COIC

Welcome, Meeting Overview and Introductions

Rex opened the meeting and reviewed the agenda. He said that Jeanne Newton will no longer serve on the CAC, and he asked for help from CAC members in identifying a replacement from the Mt. View neighborhood.

Work on the current set of alternatives over the summer (East 1, 2 and 3, and West 1)

Rex discussed the modeling work that was done on the alternatives over the summer. The East alternatives worked fairly well, and the West had some challenges. The West alternative draws a lot of traffic to the state system. He said that the nature of the modeling work was to ensure that additional lanes or ramps that would change the footprint are not needed. The modeling showed no need for significant changes to the footprint.

Rex discussed the technical environmental analyses that are under way. He said that a pedestrian archeology survey of the project area was to be conducted. He said that no digging or site analysis was to be done – this was a visual survey. The consultants also checked with the State Historic Preservation Office for historic structures in the area. The noise studies have not yet begun. Some of the biological studies – plants and animals – have been completed. Once the specific alignment is selected, the consultants may need to go out again for more detailed analysis. He said that the rest of the technical analysis work is on hold until the project team finishes the analysis of options to downsize the project.

Kim Curley asked if the goal was to have the report completed by mid-August. Rex said that they wanted to get traffic analysis done by then. Most of the modeling work has been completed, but because of issues raised by CAC, City, and the SIMA Corporation – the project team finished the modeling, but put the rest of the analyses on hold.

Pause in the analysis of the current set of alternatives

Rex said that based on comments received and ODOT concerns with cost (questions about how realistic funding availability would be over next 20 years), it has been decided to pause the project. The Steering Team met early September, went over comment letters from the City, the CAC and SIMA Corporation and modeling outcomes, and recommended (with ODOT concurrence) to see if the project could be downsized. The Steering Team agreed that ODOT and the Agency Coordination committee (composed of City, County, DLCD, the Bend MPO, and ODOT) will see if the alternatives can be reduced in scope and cost. ODOT expanded group to include other key stakeholders.

ODOT held workshops on Monday and today to discuss downsizing. Kim asked if the meetings were open to public. Rex said that the meetings were by invitation due to limited space. He said that they wanted representation from the CAC, so they selected a few folks representing a variety of interests. Other stakeholders also participated, including businesses and emergency services providers. Wayne Schnur said that the meeting participants were good cross section of representative groups, and that everybody participating was open, candid and positive.

Mike Lovely asked who attended the workshops. Rex said that the meetings included City, County, Jeremy Green representing SIMA, Wayne Schnur, Linda Perelli Wright, and Jeff Speder from the CAC, Juniper Ridge interests, Wal-Mart, emergency service providers, and ODOT staff. 31 people participated. Participants engaged in one of three groups – they looked at the East, West and existing corridors to determine if downsizing or enhancements could be made and still meet the project purpose. The three groups met Monday, and were given a set of questions, along with blank maps. ODOT staff took the map concepts from each group and developed detailed maps, cost estimates, and conducted a cursory review from traffic analysis. These analyses were presented to the full group this morning.

Linda reviewed the West downsized concept. She said that the group took an approach of identifying the most critical movements. She said that the Highway 20/97 connection was key. She talked about Empire area, and noted that they could take all of the funding to fix just that intersection. The group agreed that it would not be beneficial to put large amounts of money there because it would not make a difference; any improvements could draw more traffic to the Empire area. The group thought about ideas to relieve the Empire congestion without spending funding on a new interchange. One suggestion is to direct east/southbound Highway 20 traffic south on 3rd Street, rather than allowing traffic to go through Empire to access Highway 97 southbound. She said that the traffic folks thought that would improve the operation of the Empire area. She showed the Highway 97 and Highway 20 connections on the map, and noted that there would be a connection from Highway 20 to Highway 97 south, but not from 3rd Street to Highway 97 via Empire. She showed the parallel segment of Highway 20 and Highway 97, and said that Highway 97 would be elevated within this area. She showed the location of signal lights on Highway 20 at Robal and at Cooley. Kim asked about costs to construct the elevated highway segments. Linda said that the costs would not be as much as constructed structures, since they will be composed of earthen material.

Linda said that there would be a partial interchange on the north end of the project area, located south of cemetery, which would result in less impact. Valuable property near Highway 20/ and Robal would be protected. She said slip ramps would not be included because of too much traffic results in failure. She estimated that the overall cost for the downsized West alternative would be \$180 to \$220 million (as opposed to \$350 million for the full West alternative). She said that the emergency services providers would have access to the Highway system via Britta, as well as via Empire heading south. Some improvements can be done in phases, but the new Highway 97 segment would need to be done in a single phase. Neil Bryant asked if the City opposes this option due to concerns about Juniper Ridge access. Rex said that their interests are fairly long term, and this alternative would allow for the development of an interchange farther to the north. He said that there would still need to be improvements at Cooley Road, though the improvements would not be necessary for the alternative to function. The City projects the need for a northern access is 20 years out.

Wayne asked if a center barrier is planned, and if so, would the barrier affect the Environmental Justice properties. Linda said that a median strip would be built over a certain distance, according to engineers. Jeff said that the engineers wanted the barrier to extend 1 mile north from the ramps. The group discussed frontage roads and the difficulty in connecting them to the City system. Kim Curley noted the

difficulties with east-west movements for bicycles and pedestrians. Linda said that Rick Root thought that the elevated highway sections presented opportunities for bicycle and pedestrian corridors. Rex said that Robal Road may be an appropriate corridor to accommodate bikes and pedestrians.

Jeff Speder presented the Existing corridor concepts. He said that the idea on the Existing alternative was to not introduce another facility. He said their challenge was meeting the project Purpose and Need, and so they needed to identify ways to make the existing Highway 97 function better. On Existing Alternative #1, they worked to eliminate the traffic lights on Highway 97, in part by placing a single point interchange at Cooley Road. The exit- and on-ramps converge at a single point on a roadway above Highway 97. He said that the drawback on this type of interchange- is that due to spacing, Cooley Road would need to go over the Highway and the railroad. To meet the railroad clearance requirements, a very large and long structure would be needed. Mike Lovely said that Cooley Road can go under the Highway and railroad easier than over. Neil noted that Lowes would lose their access to Highway 97 with the construction of the interchange. Neighborhoods would lose access as well. Jeff said that the interchange creates barriers to north-south mobility in the local network as well. Wayne said that there would be an overpass at Robal Road, with a roundabout on the west side of the mall area to accommodate traffic moving north from the Nels Anderson area to Cooley Road via Robal Road. Given the traffic demands, a multiple lane roundabout would be needed.

Rex said that the Sisters loop ramp would remain, Highway 20 would be unchanged, and the Parkway would be unchanged. Improvements would be focused at Robal and Cooley Roads. The estimated cost would be \$140 million for this alternative. Access issues and out-of-the-way travel concerns would remain for the Environmental Justice communities. There may be only right in, right out access.

Jeff discussed the Existing Alternative #2. He said that on this alternative, Cooley Road goes under Highway 97 with no connections at Cooley and 97. He said that the same configuration would be found at Robal Road, though it would go over Highway 97. He said that the roundabout would be placed at the same location as Existing #1, with a connection to Hunnell road. Neil asked how traffic traveling on Highway 97 north would access the mall area. Jeff said that a Robal Road loop ramp would be used, or the Hunnell road access could be used. Neil said that 4 lanes would be needed to access the mall area.

Rex said that all of the existing corridor alternatives would include system management (metering, etc) as well as Transportation Demand Management (TDM) measures. Wayne recommended looking at the concept of directional ramps at Cooley on Existing 2. The cost for Existing #2 is \$80 to \$100 million. The City's Cooley Road mid-term solution cost is \$40-60 million. The midterm option breaks out left hand turns at Cooley, though it adds a signal light. Rex demonstrated the free flow traffic aspects. Neil asked how many trips the mid-term solution provides for Juniper Ridge. Rex said he didn't know for sure but it probably would only reduce congestion from 6-8 years on US 97.

Rex summarized the East downsized alternative, which provides a new Highway 97 facility along the railroad. He said that improvements at Empire were eliminated for same reason as West – the costs are too high and improvements would draw more traffic. The cost for the downsized East would be under \$200 million.

Rex said that ODOT will do some traffic analysis modeling on the alternatives to see the value of these improvements. He said that they will be bringing the concepts to the Steering Team on Thursday, November 5. Modeling will not be done on the existing corridor – just east and west. He said that they would like to get the downsized alternative into the \$150 to \$200 million range, though it is possible that the Steering Team would like to see costs reduced further. Neil asked if the Oregon Transportation

Commission has commented or has a position on the project. Rex said that the City is on the OTC agenda in November (update: this was moved to the December 16 OTC agenda). He said that they have heard from City in the workshop just completed that the need for a northern interchange is still 20 years out, and that they need to do system management and TDM. The City understand the need to build out the local system, including a Cooley Road to Deschutes Market Road connection and the 27th Street to Empire corridor, as a way to draw traffic off of the state highway system.

Kim Curley said that Commute Options is working with the City and Juniper Ridge to set up a Transportation Management Area (TMA) at Juniper Ridge. The intent of the TMA is to implement practices that can reduce trips and that do not cost \$200 million. She said that TMA and other measures have not been a discussion point often enough in these meetings. Rex said that a proposal on what needs to be put into place would be a first step. Neil suggested that Nick Arnis from the City of Bend provide an update on the City's plans for the local system at the next CAC meeting. Rex said that he thinks the City will be presenting in more detail to the OTC in November (December), and that they have been doing a lot of modeling on local road system. He said that there is an interest in exploring further with the City options for improving the local system as a means to benefit the highway system.

October 12 and 14 workshop results

Rex referred to the flipchart page from the October 14 design workshop that showed participants preference "dots" for the various ideas. The participants had been asked to place a dot on the downsized alternative that seemed most promising based on value. The dot vote results were that the East alternative was heavily favored, while the west and existing had less support.

Rex asked the CAC if any of the downsized alternatives look promising. Neil Bryant said that he still favors the West alternative. He said that it protects the Hunnell area and other neighborhoods, and provides reasonable access to the mall area.

Jeff Speder said that the East option northern interchange is not as important. He said that there is more value in providing improved links to local roads - Robal to OB Riley Road, for instance. He said that there would be a lot of costs including right-of-way associated with placing an interchange at that location. He said that the City would still need to build a \$10 million bridge to provide access to Juniper Ridge. Linda Perelli Wright said that she was not sure if the alternative would work without an interchange. Jeff suggested moving the interchange farther south, aligned like the west alternative. Rex said that he will run that by the engineers.

Where do we go from here?

Rex said that the next CAC standing meeting date is November 11, which is Veteran's Day. He suggested November 19 for the next meeting. Neil suggested inviting Nick Arnis to that meeting to present on what the City presented to the OTC.

Rex expressed a concern voiced by Mike Schmidt that ODOT was not keeping the CAC up to speed or giving information in a timely manner. Mike Lovely said that this was his concern, and mentioned the design workshop as an example of a meeting he was not aware of until after the fact. Rex said that he should have sent the word on the meeting earlier, and should have clarified space constraints. He said there was no intent to circumvent the process, and that he only wanted to ensure representatives of the CAC participated. ODOT will work to do a better job of getting information out a little sooner. Rex will also suggest to Mike Schmidt that Mike send out quick updates after Steering Team meetings to the CAC members.