



Memorandum

Date: February 10, 2010

To: Rex Holloway, ODOT

From: Andrew Spreadborough, COIC

Project: US 97 Bend North Corridor Solutions

Subject: Summary of comments from January 28, 2010, meeting with the Hunnell United Neighborhood Association - "Ask ODOT" Meeting

Overview

This memorandum summarizes the meeting with the Hunnell United Neighborhood Association. The meeting was held from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM on Thursday, January 28, 2010, at the ODOT Region 4 Headquarters Conference Room, Bend.

Participants:

See attached sign-in sheet

ODOT/COIC Staff:

Bob Bryant, ODOT
Jon Heacock, ODOT
Rick Williams, ODOT
Rex Holloway, ODOT
Andrew Spreadborough, COIC

Meeting Discussion Points

Bob Bryant provided an overview of the project:

- Highway 97 is a corridor of statewide significance; it is the only north to south border-to-border route in the state, other than I-5. The Oregon Transportation Commission recognized the highway as of statewide importance, and has classified it as an "expressway".
- There has been a lot of recent investment in this corridor. Examples: Parkway construction, Redmond re-route. Both improvements were due to growth in the area and due to the importance of corridor for mobility.
- Passing lanes are being built out as a means to increase capacity on corridor. Grade separation and interchanges are also methods to address capacity.
- Mobility standards are a method to address level of service; the importance of maintaining local and through-trip mobility.
- ODOT has become more aggressive in managing access on the highway over past few years – for reasons of safety and mobility. Example: Closing Wimp Way access north of Terrebonne. Not popular, but important to enhance safety as traffic volumes grow over time.
- Due to funding limitations at the time of construction, ODOT was not able to extend the Parkway north or south to the UGB. The level of development in place at that time was not enough to justify added costs.
- Traffic volumes have grown over time, and ODOT is working on needed improvements. Funding has been secured for the Murphy Road area on the south end.
- There is significant crash history, particularly on the north end where there are many turn movements.
- We need to address this challenge – we want to look long term and include a statewide perspective.

- Discussed the need for support and buyoff from local jurisdictions who need to adopt projects into their local Transportation System Plans (TSP). This is why ODOT works so closely with local partners, including City of Bend and Deschutes County.
- Impacts on the local system are an important factor when proposing the use of federal and state money. If impacts are necessary, then we need to mitigate those impacts.
- Acknowledged impacts to the local street system is likely the primary area of concern for this group. We will address this today.

Project background/history:

- Worked up until last summer on solutions to address the problems on the highway and local streets within the project area.
- Projecting significant traffic growth in the area. A number of intersections are projected to fail within the 20 year planning horizon.
- The result of this initial work was the identification of big solutions which are far beyond any realistic funding.
- In effort to bring the alternatives into line with funding, the project Steering Team asked the design team to scale back and develop alternatives that are more “affordable” and reasonable.
- These scaled back alternatives were developed over past few months. We still have the big solution alternatives, but are now focusing on the down scaled alternatives.
- ODOT’s perspective is that there is a lot of merit in forwarding the downscaled alternatives for further study. We are putting together a recommendation to the Steering Team to reduce the number of alternatives to carry into environmental study process.
- Bob Bryant’s position is that the east alternatives have more merit; the ability to phase over time is important – provides some benefit as we build and secure funding. East has remained in the forefront.
- He acknowledged the reason we are here - the downscaled DS -1 alternative has a route through the Hunnell neighborhood. The City has expressed interest in ensuring connection to Juniper Ridge from Highway 97 or 3rd Street to this future job center. East DS-1 serves this need.
- This is not the only alternative, and ODOT is cognizant of concerns of the Hunnell group. Current project stage – we are looking at avoiding or mitigating impacts, including environmental, cultural, historic, and impacts on the built environment.

Q: Does ODOT have a system of criteria to score and compare alternatives?

A: Yes and no – we have goals and screening criteria, but it is not black and white. There are a lot of factors that are difficult to put into screening criteria. Input by many people is important.

Q: Then how can you compare the factors in an objective way, if you are lacking set criteria. Are you just expressing your point of view?

A: We may be expressing a point of view, but it is an educated one that reflects input from many interested parties. It is based on a review of impacts, and the attempt to minimize or mitigate impacts.

Q: How can ODOT maintain credibility when questions about Rogers Road on December 10 were dismissed as “speculative”?

A: Because of meetings like this. We are working to gather input. We acknowledge that we may not yet have all these answers. This is a dynamic project where a lot of ideas are looked at. We are not at the end of the project.

Q: Is this the same plan proposed by Kittelson and associates 4-5 years ago - a bypass from Highway 20 to Highway 97 via Rogers Road?

A: We are not looking at connections to Highway 20 via Rogers Road.

Comment: If you are going to close access from Butler Market to mall area, then a lot of traffic will be introduced into the Hunnell neighborhood - including vehicles connecting to Highway 20.

A: Traffic will increase in neighborhoods due to growth – including the buildout of local system.

Q: Are all costs feasible? Should we only focus on the reasonable cost alternatives?

A: Not all costs are feasible, particularly for the full alternatives. We should focus on a smaller number of alternatives that are affordable. Will talk about them tonight – including the DS East alternative.

Comment: When this process started growth in area was large (including the mall area and projected growth in Juniper Ridge). Now we are not so sure about Juniper Ridge. We do not know what the mobility standards will be in 10 or 20 years. We want to see alternatives that can be built in chunks to address mobility standard issues.

Q: The advantage to the east alternatives is that the City or County owns a lot of the land. Do you have right-of-way secured? Are right-of-way costs considered?

A: We do not have much right-of-way, so the costs are included.

Q: Is the reason for the East alternative to meet a City requirement for access to Juniper Ridge? Is ODOT committed to meet City's criteria, or can Juniper Ridge considerations be set aside to look at other alternatives?

A: We are not wed to a specific means to provide access to Juniper Ridge. We will look at a range of options for how 3rd Street connects back into US 97.

Q: So the City is not the "tail that wags the dog"?

A: No, but they are an important stakeholder.

Q: Clarify how you distinguish between 3rd Street and Highway 97?

A: Bob described how Highway 97 became separated from 3rd Street when the Parkway was developed, how this separation will continue into the project area, and how it will be reconnected back into Highway 97.

Jon Heacock reviewed the downscaled alternatives:

East DS-1

- Showed location of the new highway alignment along the railroad.
- Discussed stakeholders work to begin the design of this alternative.
- Discussed potential northern interchange locations.
- Showed how the frontage road will accommodate north-south trips.
- Showed connections to US 97.
- Discussed Empire Avenue area improvements.
- Cost: \$200 million estimate, compared to \$350 million on the full East alternative.

Q: Do any alternatives include moving railroad tracks to the east?

A: We looked at it briefly, but it is not feasible primarily due to residential development to the east.

Q: Why can't the frontage road/3rd Street stay to the east of Highway 97?

A: Still need the 3rd Street in its existing alignment to meet the capacity needs. Discussed the benefits of disbursing traffic along a number of routes. Discussed the fact that one or two routes will fail, so we are looking at developing a local network with multiple routes to meet the demand.

Q: What are the implications for Rogers Road? The Oregon Transportation Commission has asked for a Highway 20 connection – where is the route?

A: A Highway 20 connection is not part of this project. We understand the OTC position, but we are not developing it as part of this project.

Q: How does this alternative provide Empire Avenue access from Highway 97 heading south?

A: No changes. Drivers will need to exit at the north interchange or Butler Market Road.

West DS-1

- Demonstrated southern interchange location.
- Discussed access control challenges, particularly in mobile home neighborhoods.
- Demonstrated Highway 20 and US 97 connection.
- Discussed western alignment of new highway segment.
- Cost: similar to east DS-1.

Q: Will you be closing access at Mt. View Drive?

A: Yes. We want to avoid this intersection.

Comment: Need to pave Scenic Drive then.

Q: Can the City and County be pressured to improve their local road network?

A: The City and County will expect ODOT to improve those roads if improvements are needed for this project.

Q: Does this meet the City's requirements for Juniper Ridge?

A: Yes; this alternative does not preclude development in Juniper Ridge.

Q: Can the East DS-1 be modified to incorporate this northern interchange location/alignment?

A; Yes, this is one of the options that will be looked at on all of the alternatives.

Q: How does 3rd Street connect to Highway 97?

A: Demonstrated the limited access interchange. One way on and one way off.

Existing DS-1

- Discussed the full service interchange at Cooley Road.
- Highway 97 does not operate well on this alternative; nor does the local system work well.
- Overpass at Robal Road.
- Backage road on the east.
- Highway 97 would be access protected in project area.

Q: What is the new concept that will be recommended to the Steering Team?

A: The new concept adds the interchange locations from Alternative East 3 into the East DS-1 alignment.

Q: What are the Rogers Road impacts?

A: There would be no connection from Rogers Road directly to Highway 97; the local street network would be used to connect to Highway 97.

Q: To what extent are these agreements driven by Juniper Ridge?

A: The only thing we have looked at tonight to serve Juniper Ridge is the D-1 northern interchange alignment that creates an opportunity to connect into Juniper Ridge.

Q: What is the current status of the ODOT MOU with Juniper Ridge?

A: On hold, not completed.

Q: What agreement is in place today on Juniper Ridge?

A: The current standing with the City is that the State will oppose any urban development or re-zone that adds 50 peak hour trips or 300 trips in day. If look we at one project at a time, the impacts are negligible. So ODOT gave the OK to move forward on limited projects in Juniper Ridge such as Suterra. If another business came in with negligible impacts, they would be OK to move forward. However, if a large improvement is requested, we would need to look at it.

Q: What is the timeline for decision-making?

A: The technical analysis is next; approximately 6-9 months until the Draft EIS is published. A 45-day comment period and hearing will follow. The actual timeframe depends on the technical analysis. The next milestone after the Draft EIS is published is selecting a preferred alternative.

Approximate timeline:

- 9 months of data collection; develop better detail on alternatives and publish Draft EIS.
- 45-day comment period with a public hearing.
- 1.5 years minimum to complete the EIS process.
- Minimum of 24 months to get through the design process and acquire right of way.
- We estimate it will be 5 years or so before we can break ground.

Q: How many alternatives are you going to recommend to the Steering Team?

A: We will be recommending the East DS corridor.

Q: When will you be taking the recommendation to the Oregon Transportation Commission for a vote?

A: The OTC does not vote.

Q: How much notice will we have before we are notified that our property will be purchased?

A: At least a couple years, assuming the funding is secured to move into the construction phase. We do have the opportunity for early acquisition from landowners interested in selling.

Comment: We all know that as cities and infrastructure grow, someone loses due to these changes. I am curious about the timeline, and want to state that someone is going to be negatively impacted.

A: We are now in a timeline of uncertainty, and ODOT acknowledges the difficulty. Within the 2 year EIS process we will bring certainty into the process.

Q: Would it be feasible to limit vehicle size traffic on local roads to discourage trucks in residential neighborhoods?

A: Probably not, since the roads will be built to accommodate traffic. There are design measures that can be included to control traffic.

Q: Why do you have to cross Highway 97 from the west side of the Highway to connect with Juniper Ridge? Why is shouldn't Juniper Ridge access be developed by improvements to the local road network east of Highway 97?

A: Demonstrated on map proposed Juniper Ridge future build out and local road network connections.

Comment: I was a business owner when the Bend Parkway was built. It took 3 years from the time when I was notified to when my property acquired. I was given fair value for the property.

A: Most (approximately 97%) property acquisitions are settled in agreement. Only 3-4% go to court.

Q: Is the City in favor of East DS-1?

A: They were at one point. They do not want to preclude the ability in the future to develop a north interchange connection to Juniper Ridge. We are not sure if it will be included in this project, and will be discussing this with the City.

Q: Are there considerations for Wal-Mart in building out Hunnell?

A: No. The local road development is in the county's transportation plan. These improvements make sense for local traffic flow; Wal-Mart was not a primary consideration.

Q: What accommodations are there for public comments to be included in the official project record? What is the deadline for public input into this process?

A: You can always, at any time, provide comments or feedback. There has been a significant effort to date to include interested stakeholders. Even when we identify a single alternative, it is not a done deal. We will accept comments and be able to return to consider other alternatives or designs.

Q: When will the new East Corridor alternative (potential northern interchange south of the cemetery) concept be available?

A: We will work on designs over next few days.

Q: What is on the website (besides the three alternative maps) that describes the thinking, advantages and disadvantages for each alternative? The narrative is missing.

A: Agree that narrative of this sort is not available currently on the website. That will happen when we get into the detailed environmental study.

Comment: The website is not helpful; it does not provide the rationale for each alternative.

Q: Concerns about Bowery Lane improvements. If the interchange is located to the north, then traffic would use Highway 97 to a greater degree.

A: We recognize the impact, but from a traffic perspective we do not want to encourage the use of Highway 97 for local trips.

Q: What is the long term plan to build out the frontage road system between Bend and Redmond? Is it in a regional transportation plan?

A: We want to address access to Highway 97 all the way to Deschutes Market, and we do not want to preclude a frontage road system. We have a basic concept on how to develop a frontage road system.

Q: Which are the three alternatives that you feel are the top 3 contenders?

A: East DS-1, West DS-1, Existing DS-1. (Note: a fourth alternative, East DS-2, was added in response to stakeholder comments, and is one of the two ODOT recommended alternatives.)

Q: How will the "Environmental Justice" properties be impacted?

A: We must try to avoid impacts to Environmental Justice areas. If we cannot avoid impacts, then we must minimize or mitigate the impacts.

Q: Could a low income housing center be developed to accommodate the need to relocate the Environmental Justice community residents?

A: Yes, that could be an option for consideration.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 PM.