

US 97 Bend North Corridor Project – Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC)
Meeting Minutes
11/9/11

CAC Members in attendance:

Michel Bayard	Linda Perelli Wright	Mike Lovely
Wayne Schnur	Neil Bryant	Tim Larocco
Jeff Speder	Dan Gilder	

ODOT & COIC Staff in attendance:

Jon Heacock, ODOT	Amy Pfeiffer, ODOT	Rex Holloway, ODOT
Andrew Spreadborough, COIC		

Others in Attendance: Bob Bryant, ODOT; David Ditz, True Adams Company; Ann Marie Colucci, Patrick Real Property Services; Toby Bayard, HUNS.

Welcome, Meeting Overview, and Introductions

Michel Bayard opened the meeting, and introductions were made. Michel requested a list of those who have submitted comments through the DEIS public comment process. He said he will likely ask for the comments themselves. Rex Holloway asked if the request is on behalf of the CAC. Michel replied that the request is on behalf of himself as the CAC chair as well as on behalf of others. Jon Heacock asked if Michel planned to distribute the information widely. Michel replied affirmatively. Rex noted that a public records request will be needed; Michel indicated that he would submit the request.

Michel Bayard asked if ODOT has been in contact with businesses south of Empire Avenue. Rex Holloway said that a few businesses responded to information sent out – the Sugarloaf Hotel and a few others in that area. They were interested in hearing how the project would affect them. Amy Pfeiffer said that several businesses in the Sherman Road area submitted comments.

Neil Bryant asked about the relationship between the DEIS process and proposed revisions to the Transportation Planning Rule (TPR) and state mobility standards. If the mobility standards change or if the highway classification changes, does the DEIS change? Jon Heacock said that comments were submitted asking these or similar questions. Official responses to these comments are under discussion. Jon noted that he is not aware of any proposed changes to the Highway 97 expressway designation. Bob Bryant added that the ODOT team has not yet vetted that question, and they are unsure if the TPR and mobility standard revisions would impact this project. If the mobility standards change it would affect the technical analysis, and we could go back and determine how the standards affect the project. Timing would be a more significant issue – if you are waiting to exceed a standard before implementing a project, then that timeline could change. But it is likely the project would not change much as a result to changing mobility standards.

Bob Bryant said that several comments submitted were related to questioning what happens if project funding does not come available for the build alternatives. He said that ODOT would look at approaches that could be implemented without the full funding. Changing the mobility standards affects how congestion is measured. By allowing more development through changes to the TPR, there will likely be more congestion /demand on system. The question is what we do in the period before funding becomes available.

Bob Bryant said that ODOT was directed to go back and look at how highways are classified along with local governments. If expressway standards are no longer a priority, there is a process to change the designation. Amy Pfeiffer noted that the mobility standards are not used as a screen in the selection of a preferred alternative, but the analysis will be updated to reflect new standards. Jon Heacock said that the November 11 COACT meeting will include discussion of the proposed revisions to the TPR and mobility standards. Andrew Spreadborough provided information on the COACT meeting and workshop, and noted that both are open to the public.

Summary of DEIS Public Comments

Amy Pfeiffer distributed a handout summarizing the number of comments received and categorized the comments by topics. Official comments received included 187 comments from individuals or businesses, and seven comments from public agencies. A total of 881 pages of comments were received, along with additional supporting documentation.

Michel Bayard asked for clarification on the 163 comments on the topic of “traffic”. Amy said that that the number reflects distinct commenters; some of the comments were very extensive. Jon Heacock said that the nature of comments included questions about the effect of Juniper Ridge on the traffic analysis, and changes to the project due to TPR impacts. Some comments noted inconsistencies in the analysis, and some cleanup is necessary in response to those comments. Some submitted questions related to the impacts of the economic downturn on the project and/or validity of the analysis.

Neil Bryant asked for a definition of “historic resources” comments. Amy said that resources in the project area that are listed in the national historic inventory include the canals, the railroad, the Nels Anderson house, and the Bowery Road bridge. These comments focused on the question of if we should be impacting these historic resources. Most were in regard to Nels Anderson house.

Amy Pfeiffer distributed a handout that summarized key themes in the comments, and reviewed the themes:

Comments regarding potential changes in the need for the Project:

- Would changing the expressway designation, modifying the mobility standards (TPR changes), help the future conditions of US97
- Traffic and growth projections have decreased making information used for analysis inaccurate or over-stating the problem
- Don't see the need for the project given economic condition

Comments on using the Existing Corridor:

- Concerns that impacts of the build alternative are too great for the value received
- Should the Existing Corridor be reconsidered as a viable corridor considering the significant changes in the economy, modifications to the TPR and mobility standards.

Many comments on the impacts of the alternatives to Hunnel neighborhoods and rural lands:

- Local arterial segments the neighborhood and rural values (primarily on East DS 1): scenic, tranquil, walking, slow speed facilities, wildlife, etc.
- Local arterial adds higher traffic roadway that is not compatible with the area.
- County does not maintain any new roadways
- Juniper Ridge development will direct more traffic into neighborhood

Many Comments questioning the ability to fund a large project.

- Concerns with long term availability of funding
- It is not responsible to develop a project without knowing if/when funding will occur.
- Impacted Properties/businesses are not able to plan/move forward
- A first phase needs to be identified

Many comments on access and connectivity.

- Impacts to Existing Commercial/Retail shopping area's: proposed access is not adequate to provide needed access to retail areas adjacent to existing US97
- Out of Direction Travel for East DS2
- No north interchange for East DS2
- Lack of connection to Juniper Ridge
- Inadequate local freight routes
- Inadequate bike and pedestrian routes
- Access to Swalley canal

Comments on environmental resources

- impacts to 4f Property at Nels Anderson
- wildlife impacts

Comments on impacts to individual properties, Swalley Canal, and other neighborhoods

Comments on traffic information

Comments on design information

Linda Perelli Wright asked for clarification on the 23 comments related to “preferred alternative”. Amy replied that these comments were related to considerations in selecting a preferred alternative, and many recommended waiting to select a preferred alternative until some future event or milestone.

Review of Next Steps in DEIS Process

Jon Heacock discussed next steps in moving the DEIS process forward:

1. Complete the NEPA process by developing a Long Term Preferred Alternative for the East Corridor
2. Consider a separate, but parallel path, working with the “Trip 97” planning process, to determine if there is a low cost “enhanced no-build” option for the existing US97 corridor.

Jon said that there were a lot of comments submitted relating to the uncertainty of funding. The “no build” option is not a good choice, so what do you fall back on if funding is not there? He summarized efforts to look at the existing corridor, and analyzing improvements that could enhance the corridor (i.e. looking at access and connectivity, TDM measures). This would not provide a long term/20 year solution to the project need, but could be viable to bridge the gap until a long term solution could be implemented.

Neil Bryant asked if lanes could be added to the existing corridor. Bob Bryant said that an alternative that adds lanes to the existing corridor was considered earlier in the process, and we could revisit that alternative. Consideration of improvements to the existing corridor would be considered an interim solution, and would address the question of what should be done if funding for the preferred alternative is not available. This should not be seen as a solution that competes with a build alternative, and it would not achieve the goals of project.

Michel Bayard asked how property owners in the project area can plan for the future, if the project is on hold for 20 years due to lack of funding. Some people would be stuck with property that they can't do

anything with. Bob Bryant agreed that it is a question we need to answer. The process for building projects is that first you plan, then you secure funding. In past experiences the funding has never been in place before the plan is complete.

Amy Pfeiffer and Jon Heacock reviewed the “next steps” handout document. Comments that will be addressed/analyzed:

Value/Need for the project

- Validate information on the No-Build condition
- Review the traffic modeling and growth assumptions with the MPO
- Better articulate the economic condition and the need for the project long term – i.e. - the slow down in the economy is a short term slow down still need long term solution to support future economic growth.
- TPR rule changes, Trip 97, TDM, TSM, alternate mobility standards etc just buy us more time before we build something but they don’t solve the long term problem.
- Better articulate the value of transportation to economic viability

Take another look at the Existing Corridor

- Articulate why Existing DS-1 is not a long term solution to the problem.
- Better document and validate all the reasons why Existing DS-1 was dismissed in addition to traffic operations.
- Review the Existing Corridor- take another look.
- Look at the Traffic System Management, Traffic Demand Management, alternate modes.

Reduce impacts to rural neighborhoods

- Design Charrettes to reduce impacts for both East DS-1 and East DS-2
- Design and traffic analysis to develop the alternatives before a preferred alternative is selected.

Amy said that methods to reduce impacts could include enhancing trail systems, looking at different alignments/tweak in alignment to look how it affects a neighborhood. East DS 2 comments were more related to how the local road system will operate through project area.

Amy said that ODOT is looking for people to participate in the design process, and to help make the alternatives function better. David Ditz asked how this work would fit into the DEIS schedule. Amy replied that impacts would be analyzed. If there are significant changes based on this design work, then a supplemental DEIS process would disclose impacts. Jon said that people interested in serving within this design process should contact Amy.

Funding and phasing

- Identify the first phase of East DS1 and East DS2 into the EIS, along with likely costs. That would meet goals – reducing congestion, improve safety. Since alternatives are the same south of Cooley road, can move forward on that immediately.
- Design, traffic analysis, and environmental studies on the phase
- Include the impacts and benefits of the first phase in FEIS for the preferred alternative
- Identify funding source for first phase and develop long term funding strategy for remainder of the project.

Access and connectivity

- Potential Design Charrettes to address the design and access issues on East DS-1 and East DS-2
- Meet with the city and county on the local road networks
- Work on the bike ped plan for the alternatives and determine where there is the best benefit for the investment. Based on comments, important to look at now.
- Clarify what is in local planned network for Juniper Ridge. City indicated interest in seeing a connection from JR to project. Drafting response. Not convinced we want to add a connection until we are sure it is likely to be built, in comp plan for instance. Don't have an answer yet. That connection was not in analysis, though connection not precluded.
- Swalley Canal access

Wayne Schnur said that Eric King and Nick Arnis have expressed interest in having the Juniper Ridge connection. Jon Heacock said that if this connection is likely to be built within 20 years, then it should be considered in the document. However, the connection is not anticipated to be a component of our project. David Ditz said that the City's TSP does not include the Juniper Ridge connection due to UGB issues. Bob Bryant said that when analyzing solution, we must use only what is in the local plan. Likely improvements are incorporated. Juniper Ridge roads are not included in the TSP. Jon said that there could be confusion on this because impacts of Juniper Ridge development were analyzed early in the process. This work was done in response to a specific question, but the impacts were not analyzed in relation to specific alternatives.

Dan Gilder asked if it would be the City's responsibility to provide access over the railroad tracks in developing the connection to Juniper Ridge. Jon said that it is unclear who would be responsible for this improvement. Bob noted that it is possible that circumstances could change from the point when the process ends and implementation. He said that in the case of the Bend Parkway project, the Wilson Avenue interchange was changed to grade separation after the planning period due to changes in conditions – in this case, development at the Old Mill. .

Amy discussed the four design working groups that will be formed:

- A group will look at build alternatives to ID design tweaks in response to comments.
- A group will look at existing corridor
- A group will look at phasing and funding
- A group will look at opportunities to coordinate with TRIP 97, and ID measures to preserve the corridor. This will be a system-wide approach, incorporating least cost planning concepts.

Neil Bryant asked for more information regarding TRIP 97. Jon said that TRIP 97 is a project funded by ODOT and the cities of Bend, Redmond, La Pine, and Madras with the purpose of looking at the Highway 97 corridor to see how to handle congestion in ways other than volume-to-capacity. They are looking at corridor trip time, and taking a broader look at corridor and how investments are prioritized. Bob Bryant said that utilizing corridor travel time would lead to an alternative mobility standard. He said that another TRIP 97 scope element will be to ID funding mechanisms to fund improvements to accommodate the increased demand or affects of development resulting from the alternate mobility standards. This is an 18-month process; consultant procurement is under way currently. Michel Bayard asked how TRIP 97 work will be integrated into the DEIS. Jon replied that discussions on this question have begun recently.

Next Steps/Action Items

Rex said that it will take approximately 3-4 months to finish our work on responding to comments. There is likely no need for a CAC meeting until work groups are established. January may be a good time to convene the CAC.

Neil asked about the project Steering Team timeline and process. Jon said that the upcoming Steering Team meeting will likely focus on the same sort of discussion. Michel asked if Steering Team meeting minutes are posted on the project website. Jon replied that they are posted. Neil asked about the role that the Bend MPO Plays on the project. Jon said that the Bend MPO provided the model that was used for analysis. They also have a role regarding funding, due to the requirement that improvements be included within the BMPO regional plan.

David Ditz asked if TRIP 97 takes 18 months to complete their process, will ODOT make a call on preferred alternative before that time. Bob Bryant said that this is a valid question that they need to consider. He said that TRIP 97 is not likely to lead to a different or new alternative, but he said we don't know if we need an outcome to that effort before getting support for a preferred alternative. This is an important question that would be a good topic for additional discuss in January.

Next meeting will be January 11, 2012 (tentative meeting date).

Meeting adjourned at 7:02 pm.