

US 97 Bend North Corridor Project – Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC)
Meeting Minutes
12/10/2008

CAC Members in attendance:

Mike Schmidt	Michel Bayard	Brett Anderson
Jeanne Newton (via Conference Call)	Tim Larocco	Kim Curley
Wayne Schnur	Linda Perelli Wright	Dan Gilder
Mike Lovely	Neil Bryant	Bill Smith

ODOT & COIC Staff in attendance:

Rick Williams, ODOT	Amy Pfeiffer, ODOT	Mike Morris, ODOT
Jon Heacock, ODOT	Gary Farnsworth, ODOT	Kelly Elzner, COIC

Public in attendance:

Ann Marie Colucci

Welcome, Meeting Overview and Introductions

Rick Williams provided an overview of the topics to be addressed during the meeting. He explained that the material presented tonight has been generated based on the direction from the last Steering Team meeting. Their request was to go back and review the alternatives to determine the best options to provide more highway access to the commercial areas. Additionally, ODOT has been working on the north end options and in doing that, both the Steering Team and the City of Bend have requested consideration of a full access northern interchange. Rick also mentioned that ODOT has been working on completing the documentation on Alternative Existing A. There was a public meeting held in November, which resulted in a commitment to hold a larger focus group meeting that would include all those interested in the north end options. The meeting will be held in January 2009.

Rick explained that the goal for tonight is to present what ODOT has been working on and hopefully receive specific feedback on whether or not the information is understandable, complete, and if there are any gaps that should be addressed. Amy Pfeiffer distributed a handout with information on Alternative Existing A. She explained that the handout was a draft. The goal of the handout is to try and capture why Existing A was not a reasonable alternative. Amy requested that the group review and make comment by the first week in January 2009.

North End Options; East and West Alternatives

Amy Pfeiffer explained that in reviewing the north end options and interchange locations some definite constraints were identified. She referred to the map and pointed out that there are properties that are considered “environmental justice” (EJ) communities, and that the cemetery location also constrains the corridor. Amy reviewed the matrix of criteria that was used in reviewing the north end options with the intent of minimizing impacts. The criteria used included:

- minimizing the impact to the businesses
- minimizing the impact to the environmental justice communities
- minimizing the impact to the cemetery
- looking at the proposed UGB boundary
- assure that it would not preclude future connectivity of an interchange to the entire grid system
- will accommodate any future service interchange in the north area

- minimizing the impact to rural residential land.

Jon Heacock said that at the October CAC meeting the group had discussed potential interchange locations that minimized the impact on EJ properties. Since that meeting, the City completed preliminary work on their Northeast Transportation Study and the City is considering development of a new major North-South arterial between 18th and 27th Streets that would extend the local grid system and create a beltway concept by connecting to 3rd Street via a potential service interchange on US97. As a result ODOT was asked to review the North End Options with the consideration of “not precluding” connectivity to 3rd Street via a service interchange. A CAC member asked if the City’s interest is in developing access into Juniper Ridge. Gary Farnsworth answered that there will have to be additional arterial local system built before that could occur. Jon further explained in detail the various North End Options that ODOT considered in an effort to address the “not preclude” question.

Maps were provided illustrating each separate option:

West – North End Options 1a, 1b, 2a, 2b, 3, 4, and 5

East – North End Options 1a, 1b, 2a, 2b, 3a, and 4

The various options were reviewed and discussions centered around constraints (cemetery, residential impacts, Environmental Justice (EJ) & non-EJ, businesses, etc.) and what it meant to “not preclude” a future service interchange that connected 3rd Street to the local street system to the east. Jon then explained that with all of the above options, in order for a service interchange to connect 3rd Street to a future N-S arterial, 3rd Street would need to be located west of US 97 and connect across at the southern interchange location. Wayne Schnur asked if ODOT, after having run through all of the various scenarios, felt they could go back to the City and inform them that the full interchange is just not feasible. Could they then move further south with the north interchange? Jon answered that that is a possibility.

The CAC discussed the possibility of purchasing the cemetery property. They discussed the limited availability of relocation land within Central Oregon zoned for this type of use. Additionally, the cemetery property would be extremely expensive. And, there would be a public relations challenge associated with moving the cemetery. However, the cemetery owners have not said that they are unwilling to discuss this from a business standpoint.

Mike Schmidt asked the group if they would prefer to see the northern interchange farther to the south or farther to the north. He commented that it is important to keep in mind the traffic flow coming out of the mall and out of Juniper Ridge. A recent study that he read shows that two out of every three persons traveling in this area will not reside in Bend.

Neil Bryant commented that the farther the partial interchange can be moved to the south the better it would be for the businesses in the Cascade Village mall area. He said that even with the new information being presented tonight regarding the full interchange idea he believes that his client and the businesses in the area would prefer the interchange to be farther south. He added that his client prefers the interchange to be located farther to the west. Ann Marie Colucci said that her clients would like to see the interchange to the south, so the southern-most option is preferred, especially considering the UBG expansion that is likely to include the land around that area.

Mike Schmidt summarized the group’s desire to keep the northern interchange location as far south as possible, whether it is a full interchange or a limited interchange. Further, the group prefers the interchange be designed so that future needs can be accommodated.

Kim Curley asked if traffic count numbers have been run to show which interchange locations best attract traffic. Jon Heacock answered that the southern service interchange locations would not attract traffic. If a full service interchange was built it would attract traffic to Highway 97, but it could also assist in off-loading some traffic.

Bill Smith said that while he has been attending these meetings and participating as a citizen he has noticed that this group and ODOT develop plans only to find out that the City is not happy with the plans presented, and therefore this group and ODOT are then compelled to put in additional time. He said that he would like to give top priority to the existing buildings and communities that are here rather than the City's plans for future development.

Jon Heacock thanked the CAC, and said that based on today's input the CAC's preference was for the southern service type of interchanges (East Option 3 and West Option 4). Amy Pfeiffer announced that in the next week or two ODOT will be posting the north end option maps on the internet.

Update on Development of West Alternatives

Amy Pfeiffer explained that the CAC and the Steering Team have stated that access to the mall area is very important, and that Alternative West A is not acceptable unless there is a way to provide additional access into the retail and business areas of Cooley, Robal and Nels Anderson. With that in mind, ODOT revisited West A and found that if direct access was provided to Highway 97 at Cooley Road, additional traffic is drawn to the Highway system and therefore does not work. She reminded the group that the purpose of this project is to reduce congestion, improve safety and improve traffic flow on Hwy. 97, and not to draw additional traffic onto Hwy 97.

Mike Morris reviewed several West alternative options that were developed in response to the City's Northeast Transportation Study, the Steering Team's request to look at additional access and in an effort to find an Empire Avenue solution.

Alternative WS West - was proposed by SIMA and adds a full service interchange at Cooley Rd/US97 and 3rd St/US97. Traffic information shows that this alternative adds congestion to Highway 97. There were a couple of other concerns with this option, including the proximity of the interchange ramp to existing streets on Cooley Road and Third Street. Mike Schmidt added that there is a lot of traffic entering the highway at Empire and exiting at Cooley, which is part of the problem. He asked why we have not considered adding an auxiliary lane that could accommodate this traffic flow. Mike Morris answered that in fact auxiliary lanes are being looked at being installed.

Alternative West "D" - option realigns Cooley and provides a partial service interchange; it does not provide a full access connection between Highway 20 and Highway 97. It provides connection between northbound Highway 97, westbound Highway 20, eastbound Highway 20, and southbound Highway 97. This option does not accommodate all the directional movements between highway 20 and Highway 97. The other issue is that it adds more traffic onto Highway 20 at Cooley Rd.

Alternative West "A-2B" takes the West A and provides a full access interchange, shifting 3rd Street to the west and bringing it across Highway 97 to eventually connect to the new north-south arterial.

Alternative West "C" - is similar to the West "A". The main difference is that it removes the interchange at Empire/US97 and instead places an interchange at US97/3rd Street. This alternative alleviates some of

the congestion issues at the Empire Avenue interchange and the Empire and 3rd Street intersection. However, it does come with a large development footprint.

Alternative West “E” - is similar to the West “A” option. The main difference is the development of a collector road on Empire Avenue that would take northbound Highway 97 traffic down a collector/distributor road that connects to 3rd Street. Alternative E alleviates much of the congestion issues at the Empire Avenue interchange and the Empire and 3rd Street intersection, and it is the best operationally for US97, US20 and the local system. The main negative on this option is the size of the development footprint.

Alternative East “B 2B” - provides additional access for traffic traveling northbound on Highway 97 and provides an off-ramp continuing west on US 20. This option provides a slip-ramp option over to 3rd Street. The main negative on this option is the impacts to 3rd St and the need to close local access points at Nels Anderson.

The group discussed the west options in detail. Mike Schmidt asked what the view would look like to the business owners in and around this area, suggesting that it may be concrete and barriers with ten to twelve lanes of highway instead of the mountains. He also asked if ODOT has put together a decision-making matrix to assist the CAC in identifying preferences. Mike commented that in his opinion, the east option makes the most sense, since it provides the greatest amount of easy access if the challenge at Empire can be solved.

Mike Schmidt asked if the project team has an option that they are favoring between the east and the west options. Jon Heacock answered that there is a west option that works really well as far as traffic operations, but the impacts and development footprint are fairly large.

Michel Bayard asked about the next steps. Jon Heacock replied that the project team and ODOT now have enough information. The question is how to best put it together to make the most sense for decision-making.

Neil Bryant said that this was a lot of information for the group and it might be best to give the CAC some time to digest it all before going any further. He asked if the plans and the maps could be posted to the website for further review and consideration.

The next steps include a Steering Team meeting in January and then a public forum to hopefully introduce the recommendation for DEIS. Kim Curley asked that a matrix be put together with basic criteria showing the impacts and footprints of the west and east options.

Update on EIS Schedule

This agenda item will be addressed at the next CAC meeting. The group agreed that the next CAC meeting will be held on January 14, 2009, at the normal meeting time of 5:15. It was suggested to extend the meeting to 7:30. Neil Bryant offered to provide pizza. The CAC requested that the maps and criteria be distributed in advance of the January 14th meeting so they could review and be better prepared for the meeting. Jon Heacock responded that a link on the FTP site will be provided to the CAC that will include the necessary documents.

Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.