

# US 97 Bend North Corridor Project - Focus Group Meeting

## Meeting Summary

1/21/2009

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### **4:30 to 5:00 – Open House**

Participants reviewed maps and interacted with ODOT staff.

### **5:00 Welcome, Meeting Overview**

Rick Williams opened the meeting and introduced ODOT and COIC staff. He provided background on the project:

- Project Steering Team chose to continue study of the West Alternative, asked the design team to look at increasing access to Cascade Village mall area
- West E alternative was developed, which performs better than West A; ODOT will recommend that West E be carried forward for detailed analysis along with East A
- Significant challenges on West E remain; the City, County and ODOT prefer the East alternative
- Also will be looking at options for interchange location on the north end of the project area
- Provided information on next week's Steering Team meeting

### **Explanation of West Alternatives**

Mike Morris discussed the goals of the West Alternatives:

- Access to the Cascade Village mall area
- Options to alleviate congestion on Empire Avenue via a northern interchange; consistent with the City's NE Bend Transportation Study

Mike Morris reviewed the West Alternatives by demonstrating on maps how traffic would flow and where connections and interchanges would be located.

### **WS West**

Alternative developed and submitted by Wilbur Smith, consultant.

QUESTION: How does it work for emergency service providers (sheriff, fire dept.); how would they get on or over Highways 20 and 97?

RESPONSE: Access will need to be designed; would likely be specialized access for emergency service providers. This level of design work has not been done yet.

QUESTION: How will drivers access to Cooley Road from 3<sup>rd</sup> Street?

RESPONSE: Demonstrated access on the map; noted that details can be altered.

### **West D**

A "hybrid" alternative that provides connections between Highways 20 and 97 as well as local access.

QUESTION: Does this alternative close the current Highway 97 interchange with Highway 20?

RESPONSE: The current interchange would be closed. Demonstrated location of new 97/20 interchange.

QUESTION: We have not heard earlier in this process that an interchange connection between Highways 20 and 97 was a goal of this project.

RESPONSE: The West alternatives bring Highways 20 and 97 into close proximity, which requires an interchange location. The 20/97 interchange is not a purpose of this project, but it is an objective.

QUESTION: Demonstrate on the map the route a driver would take from Redmond to Trader Joe's.

RESPONSE: Demonstrated the route on the map.

QUESTION: Where did the goal of addressing the congestion on Empire Avenue come from?

RESPONSE: The City of Bend plans to connect Empire Avenue to NE 27<sup>th</sup> Street. Based on the anticipated traffic increases as well as population growth, this will result in a highly congested area.

### **West C**

This alternative eliminates the interchange at Empire and builds out a full movement interchange at 3<sup>rd</sup> Street.

### **West E**

This alternative provides a split diamond interchange at 3<sup>rd</sup> Street and Empire. Advantage – provides access to Highway 97 at both Empire and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street.

QUESTION: Noted that the preliminary costs estimate on this alternative is higher than the other West alternatives. Is cost a major factor in making a decision? If West E is more expensive than East A, does East A then have an advantage?

RESPONSE: Cost is one factor among many. Not all factors are equal. Stressed that cost estimates are very high level at this point.

QUESTION: Several traffic signals are closely spaced on West E; there are fewer signals on West C. Does this suggest that traffic will move faster on West C?

RESPONSE: Different configurations have different advantages. The concern on West C is that traffic can stack at the signal intersection on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street. However, the level of detail to make this determination is not there yet.

QUESTION: It seems like the cost of the West C interchange will be marginally less than West E. Is that correct?

RESPONSE: Depends on a several factors, including right-of-way cost. The size of the structure will be larger on C, though E will require two structures. Would estimate the interchange on West E to be 10-15% higher in costs than West C.

QUESTION: Priority #1 on this project is to reduce congestion in the Cooley Road area of Highway 97, which contains local traffic combined with through-traffic. No mention was made of the potential build-out of Empire Avenue to 27<sup>th</sup> Street. I respect the efforts to accommodate the City, but this was not in the

original plan. Seems West C, in light of the project goals, is less expensive and more desirable. West E seems to focus on the City's Empire problem.

RESPONSE: This project needs to be consistent with the City's adopted plans, which include the build out of Empire to 27<sup>th</sup> Street. The original West A option had operational impacts on Empire/US 97 interchange area. The new West options (especially West C) reduce the congestion on Empire. The main reason that West E is recommended is that the overall highway operations (State and City) are best on this alternative.

QUESTION: Explain the differences at Cooley Road between West E and West C.

RESPONSE: Reviewed on maps the different alignments. Noted that the need for grade separation at Cooley road, though noted that the location could be moved to avoid structures. Demonstrated the "cross section" map for West E.

QUESTION: There are a number of roads and bridges that need to be built. How would this alternative be phased?

RESPONSE: Phases are built in stand-alone segments that provide value. This is difficult on the West alternatives. Demonstrated the Cooley Road intersection phase. Would likely have to build the entire western segment as a phase to get value.

QUESTION: Are we already at the place where emergency providers cannot take Cooley Road over the rail crossings?

RESPONSE (from an emergency services provider): Rail crossings are already considered when responding to an emergency.

QUESTION: The West E map shows that the design concept at the Old Bend-Redmond Highway is "pending" – can you explain?

RESPONSE: With the proximity to the Highway 20/97 interchange, will need to address problems at the Old Bend-Redmond Highway. It is located within the interchange "access management" boundary. There are several options for configuring this intersection.

QUESTION: Will there be a connection at Mountain View Drive?

RESPONSE: No.

QUESTION: It appears that traffic will become congested on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street.

RESPONSE: You could be right – this is a concern with the West alternatives. But it would be an improvement because you would have two road corridors versus only one now.

QUESTION: Between West E and East A, which provides the best performance for local traffic in the project area?

RESPONSE: West E and East A are similar operationally, with the noticeable difference of West E having capacity issues on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street from Nels Anderson to Cooley and East A having capacity issues on Empire and the intersection of Empire/3<sup>rd</sup> Street.

QUESTION: Should local trips be a consideration of ODOT?

RESPONSE: It is a consideration, especially in regards to removing local trips from the state highway system.

### **East A**

The East A alternative was summarized.

QUESTION: The East Alternative appears to have challenges at Empire as well.

RESPONSE: East A does not address Empire Avenue congestion as well as West E.

QUESTION: What will be recommended to the Steering Team?

RESPONSE: It will be recommended that two alternatives – West E and East A – be forwarded into the DEIS process.

QUESTION: Are you going to recommend north end options to the Steering Team?

RESPONSE: Not yet – all options for the north end will be studied further. There is no need to eliminate options yet.

QUESTION: Of the two alternatives – West E and East A – which best facilitates through-traffic.

RESPONSE: They are close. West E performs best of the West alternatives in this regard. It is similar to the East A on through-traffic.

### **North End Options**

Attendees reviewed north end option maps and interacted individually with ODOT staff. COIC took comments individually from participants.

### **Participant Comments**

COMMENT: I prefer north end option #2 – it works with both East and West alternatives. It provides good access to Juniper Ridge; the City can add ramps for a full interchange in the future. Can provide the mid-range interchange that the City is looking for.

COMMENT: Want to reduce impacts to the Cascade shopping area. Don't eliminate access from the residential area on the east side of the railroad tracks to Cascade Village. Likes the 3<sup>rd</sup> Street local road concept. OK with eliminating the Empire interchange.

COMMENT: Support the East A alternative.

COMMENT: Concerned that there is not yet enough detail on the alternatives – for instance on how Highway 20 access in the Scenic Drive area will be handled. Specifically on the West alternatives – which could result in a loss of access.

COMMENT: Support the East A alternative.

COMMENT: Frustrated that it has taken three years to get to this point and we are not close to a solution.

COMMENT: Reduce vehicular miles traveled – do not make local traffic accessing the Cascade mall area drive out of the way or take a convoluted route to reach their destination.

COMMENT: Consider pedestrian and bike access to the mall area.

COMMENT: Encourage improving the Cooley Road interchange and other problem interchanges, rather than building a new Highway 97 alignment. The existing Highway 97 can be improved without building a new highway. This would be less expensive to build.

COMMENT: Wanted more information on the NE Transportation Study. Need more detail, particularly on the Empire Avenue extension plans.

COMMENT: Need more design detail before we can provide more comments or feedback.

**Adjourn**

Meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.