



ODOT's response to DEIS next steps:

US 97 is a vital transportation route of statewide importance, extending north-south through Oregon from the Columbia River Gorge to the California border. It is a critical link in moving goods and people through Central Oregon. For many, it's a commuter route and connects communities throughout Central Oregon to regional services.

It is our responsibility at ODOT to ensure this highway safely serves the public in its many roles, well into the future. The section of US 97 on the north end of Bend is anticipated to become a constraint to mobility with increasing levels of congestion, as traffic volumes continue to go grow into the future. The purpose of the *North Corridor Project* is to identify a long term solution that will accommodate growing demands on this section of US 97 consistent with the rest of the corridor.

The Project's Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), and the Public Hearing held in August, are results of our on-going commitment to include and evaluate as many perspectives and public input as possible. It provides an evaluation of potential alternatives and the anticipated impacts and possible mitigation associated with each.

This is also why we are very appreciative of each person who has commented on the DEIS. We recognize this can be a very difficult and trying process, but we are confident the involvement will yield the most reasonable and appropriate outcome. To respect this input, we will be very careful and thorough in reviewing and evaluating all comments, and providing responsible follow-up.

Once our review of comments is completed, we will address them appropriately, including further analysis of the alternatives presented in the Draft EIS. We will continue to involve the City of Bend, Deschutes County, and stakeholders to identify a recommended "Preferred Alternative." We recognize the significance of this decision, and will take a reasonable amount of time needed to ensure we make the best possible decisions as we prepare the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS).

We will also continue to recognize and emphasize the many remaining steps, such as land use plan processes, we will need to undertake before we reach a Final EIS. Along the way we will continue to work with individuals and groups to address their concerns. It's anticipated that we will present the Final Environmental Impact Statement in 8-12 months.