

SECTION 5

Public Involvement

This section documents ODOT's efforts to encourage public involvement in the I-5: Delta Park to Lombard project since January 2006. The EA documents public involvement efforts through December 2005.

Hearings Panel

After the release of the EA, ODOT formed an interagency and bi-state Hearings Panel to receive testimony at the public hearing and to make the final recommendation of a preferred alternative for ODOT. The Hearings Panel consisted of the following members:

- ODOT Deputy Region 1 Manager: Charlie Sciscione
- ODOT Technical Services Manager/Chief Engineer: Cathy Nelson
- City of Portland Commissioner: Sam Adams
- Director of Portland Office of Transportation: Sue Keil
- Metro Councilor: Rex Burkholder
- Mayor, City of Vancouver, Washington: Royce Pollard

This panel presided over the Delta Park Hearing on January 24, 2006, and recommended the preferred alternative described in Section 2.

Public Hearing

ODOT conducted a public hearing for the project on January 24, 2006. The Hearings Panel described above received testimony at the hearing. The public hearing was held at the Oregon Association of Minority Entrepreneurs, 4134 N. Vancouver Ave, Portland. From 3:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., ODOT held an open house for interested persons to talk with staff and provide an opportunity to learn more about the project. From 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., ODOT offered citizens the opportunity to give oral and written testimony to the Hearings Panel. In addition, ODOT provided a court reporter for those individuals wishing to provide their oral testimony in a private setting.

Eighteen individuals testified orally at the hearing, and nine individuals provided either a letter or a prepared statement in addition to testifying orally.

Community Enhancements Fund

After the June 20, 2005, general public meeting described in the EA, ODOT distributed a link to the project Web site. The link was sent to the mailing list for the I-5 Transportation and Trade Partnership (the Partnership). The Web site contained information concerning the community enhancement fund initiative and the upcoming community enhancement

project solicitation process. Individuals on the mailing list were encouraged to talk with others in the community and determine whether they may want to submit a project.

By September 2005, ODOT had finalized the membership of the Community Enhancement Board, shown in Table 5-1. The board is broadly representative of interests in the North Portland neighborhoods.

TABLE 5-1
Delta Park Community Enhancement Board

John Benson	Piedmont Neighborhood Association
Rex Burkholder	Metro
Corkey Collier	Columbia Slough Watershed Council
Jonath Colon-Montesi	Montesi and Associates
Chris Duffy	Arbor Lodge Neighborhood Association
Keith Edwards	Environmental Justice Work Group
Warren Jimenez	Commissioner Adams Office
Kris Long	Environmental Justice Work Group
Everette Rice	Office of Multicultural Health
Lawrence Russell	Environmental Justice Work Group
Doretta Schrock	Kenton Neighborhood Association
Connie Sherrard	Vancouver Housing Authority
Maria Solano	Former Environmental Justice Work Group
Jeri Sundvall	Environmental Justice Work Group and Environmental Justice Action Group
Matt Svymbersky	Kenton Neighborhood Association
Michelle Tworoger	Environmental Justice Work Group
Tzer Vue	Environmental Justice Work Group
DeBorah Williams	Housing Authority of Portland—Evening Trades Apprenticeship Preparation Program

ODOT held the first Community Enhancement Board meeting on September 16, 2005. The board finalized the application and project selection criteria in this meeting. ODOT conducted a Networking and Application Writing Workshop on November 3, 2005, with applications for community enhancement projects due January 13, 2006. ODOT received 13 applications for community enhancement projects through this process. Three projects did not pass ODOT and FHWA screening criteria, resulting in ten remaining projects. The three projects that did not pass were not eligible for state or federal funding.

On February 28, 2006, ODOT conducted a workshop to determine preliminary advisory board ranking of projects. On March 30, 2006, the advisory board provided their preliminary project funding recommendations, as shown in Table 5-2.

TABLE 5-2
 Preliminary Project Funding Recommendations

Project	Preliminary Amount	Funding Recommended for:
Neighborhood Tree Planting	\$65,000	Neighborhood tree plantings in the Kenton, Arbor Lodge, Overlook, Piedmont, Humboldt, and Boise neighborhoods between N. Albina Avenue and Interstate Avenue
Portland Boulevard Bicycle Lanes	\$90,000	Bicycle facility improvements on Portland Boulevard between Vancouver Avenue and Montana Avenue
Bryant Street Pedestrian Overpass	\$50,000	Preliminary engineering to identify potential solutions for improving the safety of the overpass for pedestrians
I-5 Killingsworth overcrossing Improvements	\$200,000	Widening sidewalks, installing lighting, and providing overpass screening on Killingsworth over I-5
Columbia Slough Trail	\$460,000	Extension of the Columbia Slough Trail between Denver Avenue and Martin Luther King Boulevard
Downtown Kenton	\$75,000	A traffic circle and other traffic calming on Denver Avenue in Kenton
Peninsula Park Crosswalk	\$60,000	Crosswalk improvements on Portland Boulevard at Kerby Street to provide safer pedestrian access to Peninsula Park.

As part of its recommendation for the preferred alternative, the Hearings Panel recommended providing \$1,000,000 for the community enhancement fund.

ODOT will review the cost estimates for these projects, and will return to the advisory board later in 2006 if there are issues raised by the final cost estimates.

Citizen's Advisory Committee and Environmental Justice Work Group

ODOT held a June 8, 2006, meeting with the Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC) and Environmental Justice Work Group (EJWG) to celebrate the work contributed by citizens interested in the project, and invited the Community Enhancement Board to attend this meeting.

Public Outreach Activities and Tools

ODOT worked closely with the CAC and EJWG to develop the project. Members represented a wide range of interests in the corridor. The CAC was composed of neighborhood, business, and other community representatives. The EJWG was a bi-state committee composed of representatives of low-income and minority communities in the I-5 Partnership transportation corridors in Oregon and Washington. Establishment of the EJWG was recommended in the *I-5 Partnership Strategic Plan*.

In collaboration with the EJWG, ODOT identified specific strategies for building project awareness among minority and low-income populations, and for encouraging their participation in the decisionmaking process.

In addition to working with the CAC and EJWG, ODOT and the City of Portland formed an ad-hoc group to focus on alternatives of concern to the Kenton neighborhood. This group, called the Denver Connector Ad Hoc Group, met between December 2003 and June 2004 to gain a better understanding of the transportation and land use implications of the alternatives that focused on improved connections via Denver Avenue. ODOT used a variety of public outreach tools to provide ongoing involvement for a wide range of stakeholders. Participants included residents and neighborhood groups, regional and local governments, environmental advocates, state and federal regulatory agencies, the trucking industry, the business community, environmental justice advocates, utilities, property owners, and cemetery advocates.

Table 5-3 summarizes key issues raised during the public involvement process and ODOT's response.

TABLE 5-3
 Key Issues Raised During the Public Involvement Process

Issue	Response
<p>Southbound Truck Access to I-5—Minimize impact on trucks when the southbound entrance ramp at Columbia Blvd. is reconstructed from an add-lane configuration to a traditional merge-lane configuration.</p> <p><i>Issue was raised by trucking and freight movement advocates.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extended the new merge lane at the Columbia Blvd. southbound entrance ramp as far as possible. Reduced the grades at the entrance ramp to allow trucks a greater ability to gain speed to enter the freeway. The grade of the current entrance ramp is 7 percent; the new grade of the entrance ramp under all alternatives is 5 percent.
<p>Columbia Blvd. Interchange—Develop interchange alternatives at Columbia Blvd. in concert with the I-5 freeway widening.</p> <p><i>Issue was raised by neighborhood and freight movement advocates.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Added interchange alternatives for the Columbia Blvd. area to the project.
<p>Biological Resources and Columbia Slough—Minimize damage to riparian areas, impacts on habitat in the Slough, impacts on archeological sites, and impacts on the proposed Columbia Slough Trail.</p> <p>Minimize project impact on wildlife and wildlife habitat.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised the design of Alternative 1 to reduce the number of new river crossings from three to two. This would have minimized impacts to riparian areas and reduced disruption to the Slough habitat and wildlife from new piers. The orientation of the new river crossings was

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<p><i>Issues were raised by natural resource regulators and advocates, by the CAC, and by community and neighborhood advocates.</i></p>	<p>changed to perpendicular to the Columbia Slough in order to minimize the potential riparian area impacts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed two alternatives (Alternatives 2 and 3) that create no new crossings of the Columbia Slough and instead rely on improving the existing infrastructure. These alternatives minimize impacts to riparian areas and overall disruption to the Slough habitat and wildlife from new piers. Committed to mitigation measures that will restore and replace lost habitat resulting from the project. In some cases, mitigation measures will enhance or expand available habitat. Recommended Revised Alternative 2, which has the least environmental impacts. Designed the Columbia Slough Trail to fit with alternatives that have new crossings of the Slough.
<p>Truck Access Through Kenton—Seek Columbia Blvd. interchange alternatives that may reduce truck traffic through the Kenton neighborhood.</p> <p><i>Issue was raised by Kenton neighborhood advocates.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreed to examine ways to improve access between I-5 and Columbia Blvd. as a part of the Environmental Assessment. Agreed that all alternatives would seek to provide an alternate way for vehicles, including trucks, to access I-5 rather than continued reliance on Argyle.
<p>Business Impacts—Work to preserve industrial jobs in the adjacent project area, with a special emphasis on businesses that would be difficult to re-locate within the City.</p> <p><i>Issue was raised by business representatives and community members.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Added an alternative to minimize business impacts (both property and traffic impacts). Redesigned an alternative to allow continued access to a key industrial area immediately west of I-5.
<p>Residential Impacts— Avoid displacing residents as a result of the project. When I-5 was constructed in the 1960s, many homes and residents were displaced. Urban renewal activities near the I-5 corridor added to the community disruption.</p> <p><i>Issue was raised by community and neighborhood advocates, the CAC, and the EJWG.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designed the proposed freeway widening to avoid residential displacements. While the project can likely be constructed without displacing residents, an offer to purchase will be made to two homeowners because of the level of impact from the construction and placement of the new soundwall close to these homes. A third home may need to be purchased if ODOT is not able to provide a driveway access to the property. Communicated information about the Uniform Relocation Assistance Act. The Act ensures that the rights of homeowners are protected by proper notification and payment of fair market price. Other benefits may be available on a case-by-case basis.

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 Key Issues Raised During the Public Involvement Process

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<p>Cemetery Impacts—Minimize impacts to the Columbian Cemetery in the adjacent project area.</p> <p><i>Issue was raised by Columbian Cemetery advocates and the State Office of Historical Preservation.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designed all alternatives to avoid any direct property impact on the Columbian Cemetery.
<p>Air Quality Impacts—Minimize air quality impacts, particularly in residential areas. People are disproportionately exposed to air pollutants and air toxics as a result of the proximity of industrial facilities in the Columbia Corridor, in Northwest Portland, and on Swan Island; the presence of I-5 through North and Northeast Portland; and a high level of diesel trucks on arterial roads leading to and from I-5 and the industrial areas. Concerns were raised about the incidence of asthma among residents in north and northeast Portland and the impact of the highway project on this condition.</p> <p><i>This issue was raised by environmental justice advocates, the EJWG, neighborhood advocates, and general community members.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducted an evaluation of potential air quality impacts using the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's MOBILE 6.2 model for criteria pollutants and air toxics. Broadened the scope of the air quality analysis to evaluate potential air quality impacts both in the project area and approximately 3 to 4 miles north and south of the project area. Proposed construction mitigation measures to minimize the potential impacts from diesel engines on construction equipment (use of low-sulfur fuel and requiring the use of tailpipe retrofit devices to reduce diesel particulate emissions). Proposed construction mitigation measures to minimize dust. Committed to exploring other environmentally friendly construction practices to reduce air quality impacts resulting from construction.
<p>Environmental Justice—Take environmental justice issues into account and encourage the involvement of minority and low-income populations.</p> <p><i>This issue was raised by Environmental Justice advocates.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted public outreach and involvement tools to minority and low-income populations. Tools have included: neighborhood canvassing, translated public involvement notices, translators at public meetings, and advertising in minority papers. ODOT selected Revised Alternative 2.
<p>Noise Impacts — Address neighborhood concerns about additional noise from the project.</p> <p><i>This issue was raised by neighborhood advocates, general community members, the CAC, and the EJWG.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluated the noise impacts of the project and proposed to reconstruct the existing soundwall on the west side of the freeway.
<p>Traffic Impacts—Address two overall traffic concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The project may increase traffic on neighborhood streets - More freeway backups in the neighborhood section of I-5 will occur, resulting in an impact on residents accessing the freeway and increased air pollution in the neighborhoods downstream of the immediate project area. <p>ALSCO was concerned about the speed of vehicles and access onto new roads with Alternatives 3 and 4.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluated traffic impacts on neighborhood streets and the downstream freeway operations.

TABLE 5-3
 Key Issues Raised During the Public Involvement Process

Issue	Response
<p><i>This issue was raised by neighborhood advocates, Kenton Neighborhood Association, and the CAC.</i></p> <p>Community Enhancements—The <i>I-5 Partnership Strategic Plan</i> included a recommendation for the establishment of a community enhancement fund “for use in the impacted areas in the I-5 Corridor in Oregon and Washington. Such a fund would be in addition to any impact mitigation costs identified through an environmental impact statement and would be modeled conceptually after the ‘1% for Arts’ program, the I-405 Mitigation Fund and the St. John’s Landfill Mitigation Fund.” See the Appendix to this Recommendation Document for the Community Enhancement Advisory Board’s preliminary recommendations for community enhancement.</p> <p><i>This issue was raised by the Environmental Justice Action Group, neighborhood advocates, general community members, the CAC, and the EJWG.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Solicited community feedback about potential community enhancements during the process of developing alternatives. Solicited community feedback on a set of draft community enhancements for the project during spring 2005. Made the final determination of community enhancements with input from the public, people interested in environmental justice, the Bi-State Coordinating Committee, the EJWG, the Federal Highway Administration, and the Oregon Transportation Commission. Committed to community enhancements, within ODOT’s legal ability, using transportation funds. This decision was made as part of the EA development process.
<p>Remove through traffic and trucks from Argyle Way—Develop alternatives that would provide the opportunity to remove truck and other freeway-bound traffic from Argyle Way, and do so in a manner that would not preclude development along Argyle Way as envisioned in the Kenton Downtown Plan.</p> <p><i>This issue was raised by the Denver Connector Ad Hoc Group, the Kenton Neighborhood Association, general community members, and the CAC.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designed the Argyle on the Hill alternative with input from the Denver Connector Ad Hoc Group. Other alternatives that could achieve the same objectives (Alternatives 3 and 4) were developed and eventually selected for study.

Issues Raised by the Trucking Industry

Members of the trucking industry were concerned about impacts to large trucks merging onto the freeway from the southbound Columbia Boulevard on-ramp as a result of converting the add lane to a merge lane. Some members requested that ODOT provide a dedicated truck lane on the southbound on-ramp so that trucks may attain a higher rate of speed as they enter the freeway. Others requested changing the ramp signal timing, as well as investigating the physical location of the ramp meter on the ramp.

In response to trucking industry concerns, ODOT has provided a merge lane that is 50 percent longer than standard and has flattened the grade on the redesigned southbound Columbia Boulevard on-ramp from 7 percent to 5 percent, which is helpful to trucks gaining speed.

ODOT will continue investigating the best means of providing for freight trucks at the southbound Columbia Boulevard on-ramp.

Members of the trucking industry were concerned that the turning radius of the northbound Columbia off-ramp to the eastbound leg of the Columbia off-ramp of Alternative 1 was so

sharp that trucks would be forced to stop while making the turn. ODOT did not select Alternative 1 as the preferred alternative.

Issues Raised by the Citizen's Advisory Committee and Environmental Justice Work Group

As stated earlier in this section, ODOT has worked closely with the CAC and EJWG. Members represented a wide range of interests in the corridor. The CAC was composed of neighborhood, business, and other community representatives. The EJWG was a bi-state committee composed of representatives of low-income and minority communities in the I-5 Partnership transportation corridors in Oregon and Washington. Establishment of an EJWG was recommended in the *I-5 Partnership Strategic Plan* (ODOT and WSDOT, 2002).

In collaboration with the EJWG, ODOT established a number of specific strategies to build awareness of the project among minorities and people with low incomes, and to encourage their participation in the decisionmaking process.

As a result of the outreach, ODOT has heard the following specific concerns and has responded as described below.

Air Quality

Air quality was the most prevalent concern voiced during public outreach. Concerns were raised in community meetings and by the EJWG. A chief concern raised is that citizens in the project area are already disproportionately exposed to air pollutants and air toxics as a result of the following influences:

- Proximity of industrial facilities in the Columbia Corridor, in Northwest Portland, and on Swan Island.
- Presence of I-5 through North and Northeast Portland.
- High level of diesel trucks on arterial roads leading to and from I-5 and the industrial areas.

Concerns were also raised about the incidence of asthma among residents in North and Northeast Portland and the impact of the highway project on this condition.

ODOT responded by:

- Conducting an evaluation of the potential air quality impacts using EPA's MOBILE 6.2 model for criteria pollutants and air toxics.
- Broadening the scope of the air quality analysis to evaluate potential air quality impacts both in the project area and approximately 3 to 4 miles north and south of the project area.
- Proposing construction mitigation measures to minimize the potential impacts from diesel engines on construction equipment (using low-sulfur fuel and requiring the use of tailpipe retrofit devices to reduce diesel particulate emissions).

- Proposing other construction mitigation measures to minimize dust [see *I-5: Delta Park (Victory Boulevard to Lombard Section) Air Quality Technical Report* (ODOT, 2005) for a specific list of measures].
- Committing to exploring other environmentally friendly construction practices to reduce air quality impacts from construction.
- Recommending a community enhancement project to increase air quality monitoring in the I-5 corridor.¹

Residential Displacements

Concern has been expressed about project-related displacement of residents. When I-5 was constructed in the 1960s, many homes and residents were displaced. Urban renewal activities near the I-5 corridor added to the community disruption.

ODOT responded by:

- Designing the proposed freeway widening to avoid residential displacements. While the project can likely be constructed without displacing residents, an offer to purchase will be made to two homeowners owing to the level of impact from the construction and placement of the new soundwall close to these homes. A third home may need to be purchased if ODOT is not able to provide a driveway access to the property.
- Making available the Uniform Relocation Assistance Act, which ensures that the rights of homeowners are protected by proper notification and payment of fair market price. Other benefits may be available on a case-by-case basis.

Noise Impacts

Concerns were expressed about additional noise for neighborhoods from the project.

ODOT responded by:

- Evaluating the noise impacts of the project and proposing to reconstruct the existing soundwall on the west side of the freeway.

Traffic Impacts

Two overall traffic concerns were raised:

- Concern that the project may increase traffic on neighborhood streets
- Concern that there will be more freeway backups in the neighborhood section of I-5, resulting in an impact on residents accessing the freeway and increased air pollution in the neighborhoods downstream of the immediate project area.

ODOT responded by:

- Evaluating the traffic impacts on neighborhood streets and the downstream freeway operations.

¹ This project did not make the Community Enhancement Board's list of projects recommended for preliminary funding.

Impacts on Biological Resources

Concerns were expressed about the impact of the project on wildlife and wildlife habitat.

ODOT responded by:

- Revising the design of Alternative 1 to reduce the number of new river crossings from three new crossings to two new crossings. This would have minimized impacts to riparian areas and reduced disruption to the Slough habitat and wildlife from new piers. The orientation of the new river crossings was also changed to cross perpendicular to the Columbia Slough in order to minimize the potential riparian area impacts.
- Developing two alternatives (Alternatives 2 and 3) that create no new crossings of the Columbia Slough and instead rely on improvements to the existing infrastructure. These alternatives minimize impacts to riparian areas and overall disruption to the Slough habitat and wildlife from new bridges.
- Committing to mitigation measures that will restore and replace lost habitat resulting from the project. In some cases, mitigation measures will enhance or expand available habitat.

Community Enhancements

The *I-5 Partnership Strategic Plan* included a recommendation for the establishment of a community enhancement fund “for use in the impacted areas in the I-5 Corridor in Oregon and Washington. Such a fund would be in addition to any impact mitigation costs identified through an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement and would be modeled conceptually after the ‘1% for Arts’ program, the I-405 Mitigation Fund and the St. John’s Landfill Mitigation Fund.”

ODOT responded by:

- Soliciting community feedback about potential community enhancements during the process of developing alternatives.
- Soliciting community feedback on a set of draft community enhancements for the project during spring 2005.
- Making the final determination of community enhancements with input from the public, people interested in environmental justice, the Bi-State Coordinating Committee, the EJWG, FHWA, and the Oregon Transportation Commission.
- Committing to follow through with community enhancements, within legal ability, decided as a part of the EA process.

Denver Connector Ad Hoc Group

In addition to working with the CAC and EJWG, ODOT and the City of Portland formed an ad-hoc group to concentrate on alternatives of concern to the Kenton neighborhood. This group, called the Denver Connector Ad Hoc Group, met between December 2003 and June 2004 to gain a better understanding of the transportation and land use implications of the alternatives that focused on improved connections via Denver Avenue.

The primary concerns of the Denver Connector Ad Hoc Group were to develop alternatives that would provide the opportunity to remove truck and other freeway-bound traffic from Argyle Way, and to do so in a manner that would not preclude development along Argyle Way as envisioned in the Kenton Downtown Plan. ODOT formed this group in response to concern about Alternative 2 (Argyle by the Hill). The purpose of the group was to see if this alternative could be designed in a manner that would not preclude the desired development on Argyle Way. The Argyle on the Hill alternative was designed with input from this group. Other alternatives that could achieve the same objectives (Alternatives 3 and 4) were developed and eventually selected for study.