

U.S. 26: Wildwood-Wemme Environmental Assessment

PUBLIC MEETING SUMMARY

February 23, 2006

The third public meeting for the U.S. 26: Wildwood-Wemme Environmental Assessment project was held on Thursday, February 23, 2006 from 4:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the Mount Hood Village – Evergreen Room. 33 people signed in for the meeting. The open house was publicized through a postcard mailing that was distributed to a list of 736 nearby landowners, key community stakeholders, and interested parties. This outreach was supplemented by a U.S. Postal Service carrier route mailing as well as a media release distribution.

The purpose of the meeting was to obtain participant feedback on the recommended design alternative (Widen to the North) to solve the current safety problems of the section of roadway between Wildwood and Wemme. The open house featured large maps of the design alternative, visual simulations portraying before and after views of the project, and preliminary findings of the environmental studies.

Participants were asked to view the displays, talk to staff, and then fill out a comment form and provide their input. 15 comment forms were submitted. The comments are listed below.

Overview

Overall, meeting participants were positive about the proposed alternative (Widen to the North) and expressed desires to see the project constructed as soon as possible. Comments provided at the meeting tended to focus on specific concerns such as water runoff, drainage, pedestrian connectivity (trails), and traffic enforcement (speeding).

Do you have any comments or concerns that you would like to share with us tonight?

1. I am a member of the Congregation of Evergreen P.C.A. that holds worship services at Hoodland Chapel. My concern is the loss of church property that would occur if the highway widening goes to the north. This would reduce the space for parking in the church yard, and would increase the road noise we feel that interferes with our worship services. I understand the need for increased safety that would take place with widening the highway. I would prefer that the widening occur to the south (Alternative 3) or to the north and south equally (Alternative 4).

2. Possibly eliminate Lataurelle St. Possible one way loop Wildwood St. access. Widen Lataurelle significantly (if kept). Pedestrians (safety) are not sufficiently considered in Lataurelle area.
3. Hopefully there will be a connecting trail feature close to the highway.
4. Concern when taking down the trees. How long will this take? Will you be working weekends? The time you begin (day time) and the time you stop. Will speed limit still be 45 after completion? Who gets the lumber? Will it go to the project? Will there be reflectors on the road? Rails? Is there a certain time of year the trees can be removed? (Environmental concerns, birds, etc). Will you have updates during the project to keep residents informed (maybe at the post office)? Will we have a number to call for concerns during the construction?
5. Ridged speed limit-45 mph for 4 miles. Revised: in open areas, 55 mph, then in congestion 35mph a ¼ of mile on each side of Welches stoplight. Hwy 26 going west beyond RV Village should be 65 mph (people go 65-70 anyway). If revised as above people wouldn't be inclined to speed. Enforce what speeds are set, e.g. photo cameras. Bridges: Alder Creek and Wildcreek: rough on each side of bridges.
6. Great presentation! Tis not your concern, though one of mine would be the increase in speed and the lack of police to monitor - many folks cross in the corridor - maybe a camera like they have in town. I hope whoever ODOT gives the bid to hires some locals - would be good.
7. I am a Welches resident and see a great need to develop a trail system that allows for safe movement with walkers, joggers, bikers (most importantly), skaters and skateboarders. Trails slightly separate from the main road should be considered in the project - perhaps on the north side. Also, what steps will be taken to make US 26 a safer road to cross for pedestrians? Cross walks? Periodically perhaps? Finally, would the 45 speed limit be enforced constantly in the new stretch? Thank you.
8. Road 9 issue: Bad entry to Road 9 from the east. I'm going to get hit from the rear because I have to slow down to 10 mph to town. The traffic is going approximately 55+ mph. Is it possible for a lane on the shoulder or round out turn? Entry from west is fine, thanks.
9. Please check profile of mainline between Park (BLM) and Mt. Air Drive. Possible vertical crest sight distance issue (east bound 26 turning onto Mt. Air).
10. The Pillars at Wildwood should be preserved and moved back. Solid reconstruction (concrete with stone veneer would be fine). Concrete barrier/berm should be removed. As soon as the construction corridor is defined, the Barlow

Trail Association and the Villages at Mt. Hood will want to flag a set back pedestrian path.

11. I think that this project is a great improvement and will help our community in a positive way.
12. Plan looks good with little or no impact to private property, very satisfied with closure of west end of Wemme Trail. We attempted to address that issue when widening was done in 1987.
13. We really appreciate the closing of the west end of Wemme Trail; we tried to have this done during the CFASH Day's of the last project. The only concern I have would be the water runoff into the man-made wetland if front of our property. This was dry land on both sides of the highway prior to the 87 berm installation to satisfy CFASH. You will need to continue the drainage ditch from the east end of the existing berm to the culvert crossing 26 from north to south.
14. We believe it is necessary to improve the Highway. Due to the continued increase in traffic and accidents. The proposal looks very reasonable, it is always a shame to loose trees, but if replanting is a priority eventually the scars will disappear. Safety is the key issue of concern.
15. The Highway 26 additional widening project as currently presented is in proportion as the original widening plan. The center median should have been constructed as planned with the four lane addition. Alleged lawsuits and trees are not as important as people's lives. We need the center lane ASAP. The highway widening has brought higher traffic speeds and more unsafe highway conditions. We need more enforcement. Continuous left lane driving and non-use of turn signals are violations too! If Highway 26 is a safety corridor then judging from drivers' habits this idea is a failure. We need drain ditches and culverts on the south side of 26 from the Whistle Stop past Lataurelle.

Verbal Comments Heard During the Meeting

These comments were provided by ODOT staff members after the meeting:

- Drainage – This one has been on the residents' minds from the beginning and is second in importance only to their desires for the left turn lane.
- I heard again about the drainage problem along Mountain Air Drive where the residents claim that the street gets washed out to one degree or another at least once a year. 1996 was the worst and what we saw in the last rainy period was probably more typical of what may happen on a more regular basis.
- I heard from a couple of folks that the storm water from the highway goes down Lataurelle Ave. and down their driveways.

- One fellow said that when the barrier/berms were installed we created an artificial system that created the wetlands. He says that he maintains a ditch from the west end of the wetland, on the north, to the highway ditch so that his property does not get flooded. He requested a ditch along the highway where it was before the barrier/berms so that he can quit maintaining the ditch that protects his property from the overflow.
- On the south side I heard about the drainage issues where the storm water seems to concentrate at the driveways and run down them washing out the gravel. They request that we upgrade the ditches and install culverts at the driveways.
- Requests for reflectors on the guardrail radiuses at the side streets were made so that they can see the side roads at night.
- There were requests that we let the Residents have the trees for fire wood. (Wayne explained what will happen with the trees.)
- Questions were asked about why we are not building a pedestrian path and if the project would prevent a path in the future.
- It was noted that there are two waterlines crossing the highway that were not shown on the plans. They happen to be non-locatable lines.
- One person asked where the sewer line was because they would like to connect to it. (If there is one it doesn't appear on the basemap.)