

## ***How would the project impact the Dwyer Area?***

The general visual environment around the Dwyer Area parcel is characterized by a forested setting intermixed with houses and roads, with utilities along US 26. No houses are directly adjacent to the part of the Dwyer Area parcel that would be disturbed and Wildwood Recreation Site is opposite the area and directly across US 26. The proposed project area is most visible from the US 26 with little visibility from houses in the general area due to the screening provided by the trees and brush in the northern end of the A. J. Dwyer parcel. Whether traveling east or west on US 26, the proposed project area is only visible in the peripheral view for a few seconds. Except while exiting their driveways, the proposed project area would not be visible to residents living along the south side of US 26.

The Dwyer Area abuts US 26 for approximately 0.27-miles. The area immediately adjacent to the highway would be cleared of trees and vegetation, which includes most of the larger trees in the Dwyer Area parcel. The width of the strip would vary from 25 to 50 feet. Approximately 65 trees over 24 inches in diameter at breast height (dbh) would be removed, including an estimated 22 older and larger trees that are greater than 40 inches dbh. The diverse group of lichens and vascular plants in the northern portion of the Dwyer Area parcel would not be disturbed as a result of the proposed project. See page 53 for a photograph of the existing condition and photographic simulation of the proposed condition for the Dwyer Area.

There would be some visual disturbance over several months during the construction period. Following the completion of the project, the general character of the parcel would continue to be dominated by a forested setting, however, the area would appear more open with younger and smaller trees. Given that a forested setting would be maintained and would change over time as new plantings mature, and the short amount of time the parcel is in view while traveling US 26, the proposed project is expected to be in compliance with management objectives associated with the Dwyer

Area and the Mt. Hood Corridor. See Appendix B for BLM's statement concerning compliance with management objectives.

## ***What are the short term and construction impacts?***

The Build Alternative would result in short-term (1 to 2 years) construction-related impacts to visual resources in the project area. These impacts would include the presence of machinery, staging areas, other required structures or equipment, and activities that would temporarily limit or obstruct views, or in some way damage features identified as contributing to the landscape's visual character. Construction-related impacts to visual resources would include the temporary construction debris located in the corridor. Short-term impacts to the study area would also include removal of mature trees, natural vegetative landscaping and re-vegetation.

## ***What are the cumulative impacts?***

Cumulative impacts are those that result from the incremental impact of the proposed project when added to other past, present, and reasonably future actions. The cumulative impact of changes in the area could include some additional loss of the larger, older trees in the area. Over time, logging, highway widening and development have caused removal of trees, cumulatively reducing the number of large old trees in the area. At the same time, trees have been planted and re-established, and the forests have grown to include younger trees as well. The BLM has no current plans for additional development of the recreation area or the Dwyer Area. There are no other projects expected that would affect the Dwyer Area. Houses could be constructed on the residentially zoned plats north and south of the project area. See the Land Use Section for land uses in the project area.

## *What would be done to mitigate visual impacts?*

Mitigation measures would reduce the amount of visual change to the project area and reduce the effects on viewer sensitivity caused by project elements. Potential mitigation measures are identified through analysis of the potential visual impacts of alternatives relative to the scale, contrast, dominance, and fitness or compatibility with the character of the study area. For example, visual impacts would result from manipulation of existing topography, that is, new cut and fill slopes along the highway; removal of vegetation and mature trees; introduction of new, or changes to existing visual elements, such as guardrails, stormwater swales, signs and other local landmarks; and changes in access points to the highway such as intersections and driveways.

To address the types of visual impacts identified in the study area, the goals for mitigation of the visual impacts created by the proposed project include the following:

- Buffer, reduce the loss of, or re-establish the visual character of the existing area, specifically the enclosed, forested feeling that is memorable to many viewers;
- Replace or reduce the loss of elements that buffer resident viewers from negative views of the highway;
- Prevent obstructions to valuable visual features.
- Install guardrails that are compatible with the forested area.

The goals would be addressed as much as is appropriate to reduce impacts in each landscape unit. Potential measures would either reduce the extent of impacts, or improve the visual character of impacted locations.

## *Is additional mitigation required for the Dwyer Area?*

No. The proposed project meets the visual resource management objectives for the Bureau of Land Management; the area would retain the appearance of a forested setting. Additional mitigation measures are not recommended. ODOT coordinated with BLM on the visual analysis and findings. See BLM Correspondence in Appendix B.

## *What is the mitigation for long-term impacts of Widen to the North Alternative?*

**Mitigation for tree and vegetation removal:** The Widen to the North Alternative would change the visual environment by removing approximately 100 mature trees, many of which are visually prominent (See page 50). Because many of the prominent trees are immediately adjacent to the highway, adding a new center turn lane would require removing these trees. The project would avoid removing as many trees as possible, reduce impacts to trees where possible, and plant new trees to mitigate these impacts.

Mitigation measures that would minimize the removal of some of the mature trees and other elements of the natural environment would include the investigation of the following design solutions to reduce the number of trees impacted by the project. This mitigation includes three options for the fill area in Landscape Unit 2. See Table 3-8.

- **Mitigation Option A:** Design fill sections with a 1.5:1 slope (instead of 3:1), with a 10-foot clear area at the toe of the slope. This would reduce the footprint of the project and require removal of fewer trees. The most prominent trees, which are adjacent to the existing guardrail, would still be removed.

Table 3-8 Visual Impacts of the Build Alternative in Visual Assessment Unit 2 With Various Potential Mitigation Options			
	Character (Level of change)	Total Trees Lost <sup>1</sup>	Prominent Trees Lost
Build Alternative (with 3:1 slope)	Moderate	72	22
Mitigation Design (with 1.5:1 slope)	Moderate	56	22
Mitigation Design (with Gabion walls)	Low - Moderate	39	21
<sup>1</sup> Includes only trees greater than 24" diameter, which appear on the project survey.			

- Mitigation Option B:** Install gabion-style retaining walls, with a 15-foot clear area at the base of the wall. This would further reduce the footprint of the project (beyond Option A above) and would require removal of fewer trees. All but one of the most prominent trees, which are adjacent to the existing guardrail, would still be removed.



**Gabion** is defined as a corrosion resistant wire container filled with stone used for structural purposes. Gabions can be fastened together and used for retaining walls, revetments, slope protection, channel linings and other structures.

- Mitigation Option C:** While a 3:1 slope design would require removal of many trees, new small trees and other native vegetation can be re-planted in the area. The design of the 3:1 slope area would include plantings of trees and vegetation that would grow over time.

### Mitigation for Changes to Visual Character and Landmarks

- Design replacement guardrails to blend with the natural environment as much as possible, while meeting safety requirements.
- Match the scale and character of the existing area and natural environment as much as practicable. During final design, a landscape architect would work with the roadway designers to achieve this end.
- Protect and relocate visual landmarks (the Mountain Air Park pillars at the intersection of Mountain Air Drive and the intersection with US 26 and the Dwyer Area sign) to a suitable location. See Appendix D for more information about the Mountain Air Park pillars.



### Mitigation for Changes to Views

- Use plant materials that are native to the area for all revegetation.
- Design landscaping and signage within the right of way strategically to protect key views.

### 3.10 Land Use

#### *What are the existing land uses in the project area?*

The proposed project involves a 1.26-mile section of US 26 between the villages of Wildwood and Wemme. Both Clackamas County and the BLM have land use authority in the area. This is a relatively flat, straight stretch of highway that provides the primary access from the Portland metropolitan area to Mt. Hood area recreational facilities. The project is located in a rural area of residential development. It is outside any Urban Growth Boundary and has limited public facilities and services. Existing land uses include both primary and vacation residences, outdoor recreational facilities, resorts, and limited commercial facilities. Development capacity in the vicinity is minimal, both because of land use regulations and because of limited public facilities and services, including sewers.

#### *What are the impacts to land use?*

Land use impacts would not occur with the No Build Alternative. The Widen to the North Alternative would add a center turn lane to the existing four-lane highway and consolidate accesses for the purpose of improving safety. The project requires no additional land acquisition, therefore, impacts to land use would be minimal. With the exception of some potential access changes, all construction would occur within the existing ODOT right of way. The access management strategy for the project would change a small number of accesses, but would not deprive any property of access to the highway where there currently is access. Where access changes are proposed, adequate mitigation strategies would be implemented to reduce negative impacts.

#### *Is the project consistent with plans and policies?*

The project is consistent with applicable plans and policies. The proposed project is consistent with the following policies and goals in the Clackamas

County Comprehensive Plan:

- Land use
- Transportation
- Functional classification --- Scenic road
- Bicycles and Pedestrians

It is also consistent with the following Oregon Transportation Planning Rule and Transportation System Plans:

- Policy 1B: Land Use and Transportation
- Policy 1G: Major Improvements

The Wildwood – Wemme project is listed in the adopted Clackamas County Transportation System Plan in the rural section of the 20-year Capital Improvement Needs. It is listed as follows in Table V-1 of the Transportation System Plan: "(85) Hwy 26 and E Wildwood – Installation of continuous two-way center turn lane from MP 38.75-40.01. In addition, listed as part of (85) are safety concerns at the intersection of Hwy 26 and Gumjuwac Rd. (MP 39.62)."

Furthermore, the project's purpose of improving safety and reducing the number of direct accesses to US 26 and providing wider shoulder-bike lanes is fully consistent with stated policies and goals in the adopted Clackamas County Comprehensive Plan, as well as the Oregon Transportation Plan.

Because this project is included in the adopted Clackamas County Comprehensive Plan it is consistent with Statewide Planning Goals; no Goal exceptions would be required. Although the project would pass through designated forest land (the BLM property which extends north of US 26), potentially causing a conflict with Goal 4, Forest Lands, the zoning specifically permits road widening within an existing right of way.

Land use and environmental permits for the construction would be acquired as needed. See Chapter 5 of this document for probable permit needs and planning actions.

## ***What would be done to minimize negative land use impacts?***

- Prior notice of construction activity, lane closures, and possible congestion would be given to residents and businesses.
- Signage would be used to indicate temporary lane closures.
- If private improvements (such as mailboxes) located within the right of way need to be removed for project construction, ODOT would work with property owners to determine a removal or relocation strategy.
- ODOT would coordinate with service providers to ensure that emergency and law enforcement vehicles have adequate access to all properties.
- ODOT would work with residents and property owners to determine access consolidation strategies.

### **3.11 Socioeconomic Resources**

## ***What are the existing social and economic conditions in the project area?***

The project area covers a 1.26-mile section of rural, four-lane highway, US 26, between the Portland-Vancouver metropolitan area and recreational areas near Mt. Hood in northwest Oregon. Five businesses and 23 homes exist within 200 feet of this section of US 26, and are separated from the highway and each other by vegetation.

Homes near the proposed project are primarily single-family residences. Almost 80 percent of vacant homes are identified as seasonal, recreational, or occasional use homes. Census 2000 data indicate that over 50 residents live within approximately 200 feet of the proposed project, and that the Mt. Hood Village Census Designated Place (CDP), within which the project is located, does not contain a disproportionate number of minority, low-income, elderly, or institutionalized residents when compared to Clackamas County as a whole.

Businesses within approximately 200 feet of the proposed project include Mt. Hood Village (restaurant and lodging), the Whistle Stop Tavern and Tattoo Parlor, and the Mountain Air Motel. The Hoodland Church and portions of the BLM Wildwood Recreation Site are also located within 200 feet of the proposed project. Mt. Hood Village operates a small restaurant and a temporary lodging facility. These businesses are spread out along this section of US 26. No established business district exists within the project area. The Mountain Express Public Transit Service provides bus service along US 26 between Sandy and Rhododendron five times per weekday.

## ***How would the project affect social and economic resources in the area?***

### **No Build Alternative**

Social and economic impacts would not occur with the No Build Alternative. Usual maintenance activities would continue on US 26, and related jobs and spending would continue to benefit the economy. Less than adequate safety conditions along this section of US 26 would persist. The high number of accidents in the project area could perpetuate the elevated demand for emergency services, and would continue to intermittently impede access by local residents, freight carriers, and tourists traveling this route. The No Build Alternative could slow future development in the long run due to less than adequate safety conditions. The No Build Alternative would not result in disproportionate impacts upon minority, low-income, elderly, or institutionalized populations, nor would this alternative result in changes to regional or local travel patterns, or access closures or consolidations. Construction impacts, noise, and changes to the visual environment would not occur.

### **Widen to the North Alternative**

**Economic Impacts:** No business displacements or relocations would occur. No business access closures would occur, although some access consolidation would be necessary. No right-of-way acquisition would be necessary.

The proposed project would improve safety conditions and mobility along the section of US 26 between Wildwood and Wemme, and would therefore contribute to a higher quality of life. A higher quality of life could result in increases in property values, the potential for new development, and attraction of new business and residents in the long run. New development or additional population that is indirectly attributable to the proposed project could result in indirect economic impacts in the long run, such as additional jobs, income, spending, retail sales, and property tax revenue.

Improved safety would, in general, support a stronger local and regional economy and consistent tourism flow. The area would remain accessible from the Portland-Vancouver metropolitan area and Mt. Hood. Although operations at highway-related businesses in the project area would generally remain similar to existing conditions because US 26 traffic volumes would not change, patronage of these businesses could increase slightly because left turns off of US 26 would be easier to make. The project would not result in a change to established businesses districts because no formal business district exists along this section of US 26.

**Social impacts:** No residential displacements or relocations would occur. No residential access closures would occur, although some access consolidation would be necessary. The improvement in quality of life associated with the proposed project could indirectly result in the attraction of new business and residents in the long run.

Community cohesion would not change as a result of the project because (1) the US 26 alignment would be similar to existing conditions, (2) the layout and boundaries of the community would not change, and (3) no displacements would occur. The proposed project would result in an increased feeling of safety in the neighborhood because the number of times vehicles would need to slow or stop behind turning vehicles would decrease. The proposed project would not adversely affect the character and livability of the neighborhood. No specific social group would be benefited or harmed disproportionately, although full-time residents would experience more of the safety benefits

compared to seasonal residents, due to their full-time status.

Public services providers (law enforcement, fire protection, and emergency responders) would experience minor benefits attributable to the project, such as easier left turns, and a reduction in calls for service over time because traffic accidents would decrease. The project would not affect bus service. In the long run, demand for public services and community facilities could increase if development occurs faster than under the No Build Alternative. Travel patterns would not change under the Widen to the North Alternative. Although transportation choices offered in the area would not change, shoulders would be safer for bicyclists because they would be widened from 6 feet to 8 feet. The informal pedestrian trails on the north side of US 26 would be impacted slightly, but would continue to be usable. The proposed project would not preclude future designated trails.

### ***Would the project disproportionately affect minority groups or low income populations?***

The proposed project would not result in environmental justice issues. The project area population is not disproportionately minority or low-income, compared to Clackamas County; nor are there populations of the elderly or institutionalized. Visual impacts attributable to the proposed project would be low to moderate. Noise and air impacts would be negligible because traffic volumes would remain the same, and construction impacts would be temporary. Safety and mobility improvements resulting from the Widen to the North Alternative would benefit local residents and businesses, as well as regional users of US 26. Public involvement activities undertaken as part of this project and contributing to meeting requirements of environmental justice regulations are discussed in Chapter 6, Public Involvement Section.

**“Environmental Justice** is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. EPA has this goal for all communities and persons across this Nation. It will be achieved when everyone enjoys the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards and equal access to the decision-making process to have a healthy environment in which to live, learn, and work.” --- Environmental Protection Agency.

### ***What are the construction impacts to the community for the Widen to the North Alternative?***

Construction would likely occur in summer 2008, with portions of the work performed in 2007. The proposed project would cost approximately \$5.96 million to build, and would result in temporary direct economic benefits in the region and local area, such as jobs, income, and spending related to construction. Indirect economic benefits would occur due to increases in household spending and supplier spending, and would lag behind the construction period by several months.

Residents and businesses could experience disruptions associated with construction, including noise and dust, lane closures, and congestion. These impacts would be short-term and temporary. ODOT would give prior notice of temporary lane closures and possible congestion to residents and businesses. No business or residence would be without access at any time during construction.

The daily presence of construction workers would result in increased demand for goods and services at local commercial establishments, leading to minor increased sales for local businesses. Levels of service at public service providers would be adequate to serve the temporary daily influx of construction workers. The proposed project would not likely result in the permanent movement of workers and their families to the project area.

### ***What are the social and economic cumulative impacts?***

Projects that could occur near the site of the proposed project include highway improvement projects (paving), the reopening of a quarry, a new recreational trail, and new rural development projects. Cumulative impacts of the proposed project together with these other projects would include temporary disruptions associated with construction such as noise, lane closures and congestion; and long-term increases in jobs, income, population, traffic, and demand for services. Only the US 26 paving projects would likely occur concurrently with the proposed project. Construction impacts would be moderate during this time period, and the presence of construction workers at the sites during the day could stress the area slightly and temporarily. Mitigation measures for construction would reduce proposed project impacts to a negligible level and would also therefore reduce cumulative impacts.

Permanent cumulative socioeconomic impacts could include increased traffic volumes and population; safety improvements; and increases in jobs, income, and spending. Long-term increases in population and related increases in demand for services would likely be consistent with current trends, and improved safety conditions on US 26 would accompany higher traffic volumes.

### ***What would be done to mitigate impacts to social and economic resources?***

Socioeconomic impacts as defined under NEPA arise due to physical occurrences, such as change in business patronage, disruption due to traffic detours, and access changes. Therefore, mitigation measures for traffic would not only mitigate traffic impacts, but also socioeconomic impacts. Similarly, mitigation measures for noise, visual, and other physical impacts would also mitigate socioeconomic impacts. In addition to mitigation measures listed for traffic, noise, and visual impacts, the following mitigation measures would lessen socioeconomic impacts.

- ODOT would provide prior notice of construction activity, and possible congestion to residents and businesses.
- Signage will clearly indicate changes.
- Hours of construction will be limited to daytime and evening.
- ODOT will work with service providers to develop and implement procedures so that access to the project area by emergency and law enforcement vehicles is never blocked.

### 3.12 Traffic

#### *How is US 26 classified?*

According to the 1999 Oregon Highway Plan, US 26 (Mt. Hood Highway) is a Statewide Highway, designated Freight Route and part of the National Highway System. It is functionally classified as a Rural Principal Arterial in the ODOT Highway Design Manual.

The existing 6-foot shoulders are available for bicycle travel. Pedestrians currently use the existing local

A **Statewide Highway** provides connections to major cities, regions of the state, and other states.

A **Freight Route** serves to balance the need for movement of goods with other uses of the highway system, and to recognize the importance of maintaining efficient through movement on major truck freight routes.

streets, roadway shoulders and pedestrian trails parallel to the highway, including Wemme Trail Road (dirt and gravel) and an unofficial pedestrian trail located on the north side of the highway between E. Wildwood Avenue and the Hoodland Church.

#### *What are the existing traffic conditions in the project area?*

In the project area, US 26 carries approximately 12,100 vehicles daily (year 2004) on four travel lanes. Trucks account for ten percent of the traffic.

The study area on US 26 is bounded by Camino Rio Drive in the west and E. Arrah Wanna Boulevard

in the east and includes the following eight intersections:

- US 26 @ Camino Rio Drive (also called E. Cascade Drive at Mt. Hood Village Inn)
- US 26 @ E. Wemme Trail Road (west end)
- US 26 @ Mountain Air Drive
- US 26 @ E. Wemme Trail Road (east end)
- US 26 @ Wildwood Recreational Site
- US 26 @ E. Latarelle Avenue
- US 26 @ E. Wildwood Avenue
- US 26 @ E. Arrah Wanna Boulevard

Turning movement counts were collected at these intersections in June 2005. Under 2005 existing conditions, all intersections operate acceptably with low volume-to-capacity (v/c) ratios for the minor street approaches.

#### *What is the crash history for the project area?*

An analysis of the reported accidents on US 26 in the project section between mile post (MP) 38.75 and M.P. 40.01 was performed for the five-year period from 2000 through 2004. Table 3-9 provides a summary of the accidents by type and severity.

As shown in Table 3-9, there were a total of thirteen reported crashes. Most of the crashes were rear-end and fixed-object collisions. Three of the four rear-end crashes involved vehicles waiting to turn left from the highway and getting rear-ended by vehicles traveling in the same direction. The other rear-end collision occurred in the westbound direction between E. Latarelle Avenue and E. Wildwood Avenue. Two of the three fixed-object crashes involved motorists who were fatigued and fell asleep at the wheel. One of these two crashes resulted in a vehicle hitting a tree and the other resulted in a vehicle running off the road and into a ditch. The third fixed-object crash involved a driver who lost control of the vehicle while attempting a maneuver to avoid hitting an object on the roadway.

There were also one turning, one head-on and two sideswipe crashes. Most of the reported crashes that occurred in the project section were attributed to the lack of a left turn refuge on the highway.