US 26: Access to Springwater Community Interchange Area Management Plan

Interested Parties Meeting #1 Summary
February 12, 2009
Hogan Cedars Elementary, Media Room
7:00 – 8:45 PM
1700 Fleming Ave.
Gresham, OR 97080

The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) and the City of Gresham hosted the first Interested Parties meeting for the Springwater Interchange Area Management Plan (IAMP) on February 12, 2009, at Hogan Cedars Elementary. The goal of the first meeting was to obtain feedback from participants about any issues or concerns about the alternatives and also to obtain feedback on the process for evaluating the alternatives. ODOT sent meeting invitations to property owners in the vicinity of the proposed interchange, arterial, and collector as well as to individuals and organizations interested in the area, including neighborhood associations, environmental and economic development organizations, real estate brokers, bicycle advocates, and individuals who participated in developing the Springwater Plan. Additionally, ODOT sent a press release to regional and local newspapers announcing the meeting. Approximately 35 people attended the meeting.

This meeting was the first in a series of three Interested Parties meetings. The purpose of the Interested Parties meetings is to give property owners and others interested in the Springwater area detailed information about the Springwater IAMP and also solicit feedback on key project decisions.

This meeting summary begins with a list of the key feedback received at the meeting. This list includes the overall themes expressed by the participants. Next, the summary includes a more detailed account of the meeting participant's comments and concerns. Finally, there is a summary of comments received on the exit questionnaires.

Themes

Key themes from the first Interested Parties meeting included:

- The majority of the feedback received at the Interested Parties meeting focused on the intent and timing of the Springwater Community Plan. Many property owners were unaware of the outcomes of the Springwater Community Plan and how the Springwater Community Plan affects their property. For example, some participants did not know that their property would be rezoned as industrial when

annexed into the City of Gresham. Others did not know that the Springwater Community Plan included a recommended interchange in the Springwater area. Several participants had questions about when their property would be annexed and the process for ODOT acquiring their property.

- Many participants stressed the importance of increasing safety in the interchange area, particularly near 267th Ave.
- During the meeting, participants did not provide feedback on the evaluation criteria. Four of the thirty-five attendees commented on the alternatives using the comment form and none of the participants who submitted a comment form commented on the evaluation criteria.
- A few participants suggested that the interchange, or just an overcrossing, should be located either to the north or south of the proposed location. One person suggested Callister and another person suggested Stone Road.

Summary of Feedback

Below is a summary of the feedback participants provided at the meeting.

Safety

- Many participants stressed the importance of increasing safety in the interchange area, particularly near 267th Ave. Some participants suggested putting a signalized intersection on US 26 at 267th Ave., Hillyard, or Stone Rd. as a low cost measure to improve safety. In response to this suggestion, John Wolf and Amy Gibbons explained that ODOT has standards for US 26 that prohibit a light at this location. Specifically, state regulations require that ODOT maintain the designation of US 26 between Gresham and Sandy as an expressway. In addition, John Wolf explained because of the highways rural roadside characteristics and high speeds, this location would likely be a safety hazard.
- As a different approach to increasing safety in the Springwater area, one person suggested that 267th Ave. should dead-end at US 26 and a signalized intersection added at US 26 and Stone Rd. The same person suggested that the expressway designation of US 26 begin after Stone Rd.

Cost and Safety Comparison

- One meeting participant asked how the three alternatives compare with regards to cost and safety. John Wolf said that the cost of Alternatives A and C2 would be comparable and that Alternative B would cost more. John said that Alternative B could potentially be safer than the other two alternatives because of the grade separation over Telford and the Springwater Trail, although there are no clear cut safety problems with Alternatives A and C2.

Springwater Community Plan

- Janet Young, the City of Gresham Economic Development Manager, presented an overview of the Springwater Community Plan, providing meeting participants with a background of why the City of Gresham and ODOT is planning an interchange in the Springwater area. She noted that in 2002, Metro brought the 1,200 acre Springwater area into the City of Gresham urban growth boundary. The intent of the Springwater expansion was to bring land capable of supporting industrial land uses into the City to correct the current jobs and housing imbalance in the City.
- A few participants asked when their property would be annexed into the City of Gresham. Janet Young responded that the timing of annexation is uncertain, but largely depends on property owners' willingness to be annexed into the City and when market conditions are favorable to industrial development. She also said that no City-initiated annexation process is planned.
- One participant expressed concern over what property owners could do with their property before they are annexed. Janet Young said that the Springwater properties would continue to have Multnomah County zoning until annexed into the City of Gresham.
- A participant asked if the interchange would be constructed before industrial development occurs in the Springwater area. Janet Young responded that safe access is important before any significant industrial development would occur. She said that safe access could be achieved through phasing the interchange. At the next meeting, ODOT will present the results of traffic modeling, which will provide an idea of how long a phased approach would meet traffic demand.
- One person asked if land zoned as industrial provides more or less tax revenue than land zoned as residential. Janet Young responded that industrial land generally provides more tax revenue land than residential, although there are exceptions. For example, high value residential land with correspondingly high value homes may generate more tax revenue than low value industrial land.
- One participant asked if the City of Gresham has any plans for rezoning the Springwater area. Janet Young answered that the City does not and will zone the land as described in the Springwater Community Plan when it is annexed to the City.

Funding

- Amy Gibbons explained that ODOT has committed $5 million to the Springwater interchange. While this would not cover the entire cost of constructing an interchange, it could be used to help fund planning and engineering or some phased construction.
- One person asked ODOT to consider development patterns when allocating funding for the interchange.

Right-of-way Acquisition

- A few participants asked when ODOT would acquire their properties for right-of-way. Amy Gibbons said that the Springwater IAMP is a long-term plan and exact timing of acquiring right-of-way and constructing the interchange is unknown. Amy added that depending on market conditions, the interchange could be as far out as 20 years.
- Some participants also asked for more information on ODOT's process for acquiring right-of-way. A link to this information can be found on the Springwater IAMP project website.

Environmental

- One participant asked about ODOT's procedures for putting roads in environmentally sensitive areas. Amy Gibbons said that ODOT has to follow the same rules that property owners do and in many cases more stringent rules since federal dollars are usually involved. She said that ODOT's first priority is to avoid environmentally sensitive areas. If this is not feasible, ODOT will try to minimize impacts. When avoidance and minimization are not options, ODOT will mitigate for impacts.
- One person asked if ODOT will consider impacts to tributaries other than Johnson Creek while developing the Springwater IAMP. Amy Gibbons responded yes.

Interchange Location

- One attendee said that multiple interchange locations along US 26 were studied as part of the Springwater Community Plan, and questioned why the location presented tonight is the only location option shown. John Wolf answered that the location shown tonight meets ODOT spacing standards on US 26 whereas other locations do not. ODOT requires that there be a distance of 2 miles between interchanges.
- One person asked if ODOT considered putting an overcrossing at Stone Road. Amy Gibbons said that putting an interchange at Stone Road would require ODOT to build a substantial portion of the facility outside of the urban growth boundary, and state laws make it very difficult for ODOT to build urban transportation facilities outside of urban growth boundaries.
- Another person suggested putting an overcrossing at Callister. John Wolf pointed out that the northern collector road would cross over US 26 near the current location of Callister.
- A meeting participant expressed concern about the amount of out of direction travel that would be created once the interchange is constructed and access along US 26 is limited to right-in and right-out only. Access will be a topic at the next Interested Parties meeting.
- One person expressed concern about potential noise impacts of the interchange alternatives.

US 26 and I-84 Connection

- Two people stated that adequate truck access from the Springwater area to I-84 is needed for the Springwater industrial area to be successful.
- One attendee asked if all of the interchange alternatives accommodate a connection between I-84 and US 26. John Wolf said that ODOT will present the results of the traffic modeling data at the second Interested Parties meeting. Preliminary data indicates that a five lane bridge at the interchange would adequately accommodate forecasted traffic volumes.

Comment Form Feedback

ODOT provided all meeting participants with a comment form to record their thoughts on the alternatives and evaluation criteria. Of the four respondents, two people preferred Alternative B, one person preferred Alternative C2, and the fourth person liked all three alternatives equally. None of the four respondents favored Alternative A. The two respondents who preferred Alternative B said that it would best accommodate future truck and vehicular traffic and would take advantage of the existing elevation. The respondent who preferred Alternative C2 did not state why it was preferred. The person who favored all three equally stated that all three would require some of his property for right-of-way, and therefore did not have a preference.

In addition to the comments on the interchange alternatives, one person said that an interchange at Stone Road would be better than the proposed location. Another person said that the interchange should increase safety in the area.