
H. B. Van Duzer Forest Corridor – Steel Bridge Road

ORE 18/ORE 22
Polk County

Executive Summary

Of the

Environmental Assessment and
Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation

Oregon Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

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Executive Summary of the Environmental Assessment

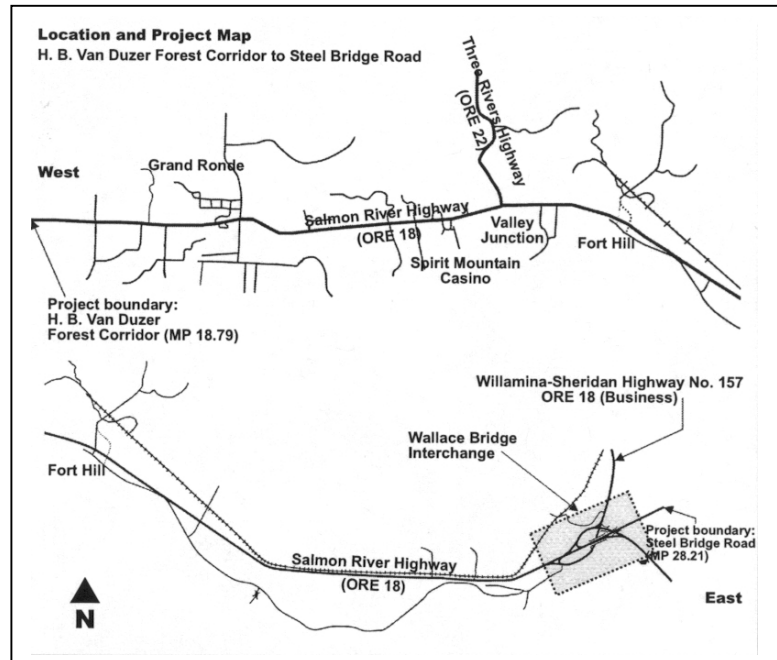
H. B. Van Duzer Forest Corridor—Steel Bridge Road, ORE 18/ORE 22, Polk County

This executive summary provides a brief encapsulation of the information contained in the H.B. Van Duzer Forest Corridor – Steel Bridge Road environmental assessment.

The environmental assessment contains descriptions and analyses of the broad, general locations and impacts of the projects proposed to improve approximately 9 miles of ORE 18 and ORE 22 between the H. B. Van Duzer Forest Corridor (MP 18.79) and Steel Bridge Road (MP 28.21). These projects comprise the Build Alternative. It also describes the impacts of the No Build Alternative. In addition, it describes the various alternatives considered but not advanced studied by a Steering Committee, a Technical Advisory Committee, and interested citizens. The recommendations of these groups became the Build Alternative. The decision to be made is whether the location of the proposed improvements to ORE 18 is supported or if a no-build alternative is preferred.

Three rural communities are located in the project area – Grand Ronde, Valley Junction, and Fort Hill. The purpose of the project is to decrease congestion and improve safety. This segment of ORE 18/22 serves local, commuter, commercial and recreational traffic between the metropolitan areas of Portland and Salem and the central Oregon coast. In addition, the Spirit Mountain Casino and Resort, a major tourist destination, is located on ORE 18 near Grand Ronde.

The Build Alternative includes the following proposed projects: widen the highway to four lanes, including three bridges over the South Yamhill River; install non-traversable medians; construct interchanges at Grand Ronde and the Casino/Valley Junction area; realign the Fort Hill intersection; consolidate and close private approach roads; and construct local service roads. These projects would be built in phases.



The No Build Alternative would leave the highway segment as is without coordinated plans for improvement. Required maintenance projects would occur and other improvements to this segment of ORE 18 would continue as individual projects. At this time two projects identified in the *Statewide Transportation Improvement Program* are scheduled for 2003 or 2004. These are the realignment of the Fort Hill intersection and the addition of an eastbound passing lane between Fort Hill and Wallace Bridge. A local service road between Fort Hill and Wallace Bridge is currently proposed.

Impacts to the socioeconomic environment that would occur if the Build Alternative were implemented include the displacement of approximately 7 to 8 residences, 3 to 4 businesses, 4 to 5 community facilities, and portions of 8 utilities. Approximately 40 hectares (99 acres) would be acquired for right-of-way. Of these 40 hectares, approximately 5 are zoned residential, 8-9 are commercial, 14-15 are farm/forest and farm/forest overlay, 9 are exclusive farm use, and 2 are heavy industrial. Indirect effects could result from changes in access to ORE 18 and cumulative effects could result from pressures to increase development in the area.

Natural resources that would be impacted if the Build Alternative were implemented include wetlands, water quality, wildlife habitat, threatened and endangered fish and plant species.

Efforts to avoid many of the wetlands in the area reduced the impacts. Nevertheless, of approximately 42 hectares (104 acres) of wetlands within the project area, approximately 3 to 4 hectares (9 to 10 acres) would be impacted if the Build Alternative were implemented. Both the Division of State Lands and the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers will regulate most, if not all of these wetlands and would require compensatory mitigation for the unavoidable wetland impacts.

Impacts to water quality of the South Yamhill River, due to the highway improvements, would be negligible. Construction impacts would be limited in duration and magnitude and would be minimized by Best Management Practices and other mitigation measures. Operational impacts could, on occasion, contribute to the total minimum daily load for phosphorus. The South Yamhill River is listed on the Department of Environmental Quality 303(d) list for bacteria in the fall, for temperature in the summer, and has a minimum daily load set for phosphorus. The Build Alternative would include treatment for highway runoff for phosphorus.

Fish and wildlife habitat would be subjected to temporary and permanent impacts, depending on the distribution, abundance, mobility, habitat requirements and sensitivity of the species to disturbance. Of approximately 327 hectares (919 acres) of wildlife habitat in the project area, 62 hectares (153 acres) would be impacted by the Build Alternative.

The proposed actions of the Build Alternative may affect, and are likely to adversely affect, the Upper Willamette River evolutionary significant units of steelhead trout and chinook salmon and their habitat and Nelson's checker-mallow. These fish and plant species are federally listed as threatened species. ODOT has initiated consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Mitigation measures include following Best Management Practices and other specified actions to minimize and mitigate impacts to the species and their habitat.

Efforts were made to avoid historic properties in the corridor. However, improving and extending South Street in Grand Ronde would likely adversely effect the Grand Ronde Historic District. A Section 4(f) analysis is included in this environmental assessment. ODOT will prepare a determination of eligibility and a finding of effect report and other appropriate documents.

The Build Alternative would impact 7 sites containing potentially hazardous materials. Visual inspection and soil and groundwater testing is recommended for some of the named sites.

This environmental assessment describes the public involvement process that was implemented from the beginning of the corridor planning process. It also lists the agencies cooperating to study proposals and recommend solutions.

ODOT will initiate further analysis of impacts to the environment when the individual projects enter design stage, should the Build Alternative be implemented.

If you have any questions about this project please contact: Susan Whitney, ODOT Environmental Project Manager, at (503) 986-2822 or susan.a.whitney@odot.state.or.us.