

Beltline Highway Facility Plan Open House #2

Summary

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Overview

The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) held an open house from 5:30-7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 16, 2010 to gather input on the range of concepts developed for the Beltline Facility Plan. The open house was held at the Irving Grange. All open house materials and a comment form were also available on the ODOT web site, www.beltlineplan.com. The comment form was available online through March 26, 2010.

The purpose of the open house was to share project information including schedule, existing conditions, and future travel demand. Ten concepts to improve the Beltline Highway were presented, and input was gathered on which concepts community members would like the project team to study further.

The open house was advertised through newspaper ads, television news stations, a postcard mailing to residents adjacent to the corridor, a press release in the Register-Guard newspaper, and announcements through the affected neighborhood association newsletters. One hundred and nineteen people signed in at the open house, 43 people filled out a comment form, and no one completed an online comment form. In addition, one person provided comments via email.

The meeting was designed as a drop-in open house where members of the public had the opportunity to discuss the project with staff members, review displays, and complete a comment form. The following displays were provided:

- Project background boards including the study area, project schedule, physical constraints of the area and facility plan purpose;
- The concept development process, a graphic depicting the range of concepts, and ten concepts with an informational board describing the pros and cons of each;
- Results of the evaluation of each of the concepts, and a display where attendees could “vote” on the three concepts that they liked the most.

In response to a recent decision by the governor, the Beltline Highway is being renamed in honor of Randy Pape. The Beltline Facility Plan is not addressing a potential name change; however, many attendees came to the meeting to discuss the name change. Those comments

are included in this summary, but do not affect the improvement concepts being discussed for the Facility Plan.

Summary of comments

This and the following comments are summaries of conversations, comments received on the flip charts, written comment forms, and emails to project staff. A full record of the comment forms, online survey responses, and emails submitted are attached as an appendix to this memo.

Participants at the open house had a chance to write their comments regarding the project in general. There was a flip chart with markers to allow people to comment. The comments from the flip chart are included in the summary.

Evaluation Criteria

The written and online comment form asked which evaluation criteria was the most important to respondents. The evaluation criteria categories are listed as most important to least important as indicated by responses on the written comment forms:

Mobility, reliability, and connectivity (17)

Safety (13)

Cost effectiveness (6)

Environmental impacts (5)

Community livability and economic vitality (3)

Concepts to Study Further

The written and online comment form and an open house display asked attendees to indicate how interested they were in which of the ten concepts should be studied further. Participants could select from “Definitely”, “Maybe”, “Don’t study” and “No opinion”.

The Local Bridge concept received the most “Definitely study” votes, followed by the Auxiliary Lane and Improve Existing concepts. The Split Diamond and Collector-Distributor concepts also received support.

For concepts that should not be studied further, Low Build 1 and Low Build 2 received the most votes, followed by the Ramp Braid concept. The following table shows the tabulations from the comment forms and the display voting board, with the concepts that received the most votes in both the “Definitely study” and “Don’t study” highlighted.

Of the ten concepts presented, which do you think should be studied more in the future?										
	TDM/TSM Measures	Low build 1	Low build 2	Low build 3	Improve existing	Local arterial bridge	Auxiliary lane	Split diamond	Collector-distributor	Ramp braid
Definitely	8	2	2	11	21	21	24	13	22	7
Maybe	9	4	7	7	7	11	5	8	7	5
Don't study	5	14	11	7	4	2	5	8	5	13
No opinion	1	4	4	2	0	0	1	0	1	3

Concerns with Concepts

Many of those who commented were concerned about cost. Several people wanted construction money to be used efficiently, and wanted a comprehensive enough solution so more money would not have to be spent at a later date. Other comments included concerns about the high cost of most of the concepts as there is no money allotted for construction at this time.

One person was concerned that a flyover from northbound Delta Highway to westbound Beltline Highway was not being considered. Two other attendees suggested that temporary improvements were not a good idea; big improvements that would handle traffic for the next 30-40 years are needed. Another person wanted the bridges built now without any further impact studies. One commenter was interested in the project considering a river crossing north or south of Coburg from I-5 to River Road and Highway 99.

One comment on the TDM/TSM concept suggested measures should be implemented now to help alleviate traffic problem until an appropriate alternative is selected. (This facility plan will consider short term improvements that will include TDM/TSM measures at the end of the process).

For the Low Build concepts, attendees were concerned that not expanding the Willamette River bridge would not address the issues on Beltline Highway. Additionally, four people noted that the Low Build options do not fix the problems and do not add any capacity for future growth. Another person did not want to see the River Avenue on-ramp to Beltline Highway closed – reporting that it was difficult to make a left at the light on River Road to get onto the highway, and that a number of users would be at a disadvantage. Two commenters noted that closing Ruby Avenue in Low Build concepts would add more traffic onto River Road.

One comment on the Auxiliary Lane concept noted that sand and gravel trucks would be slow using the overcrossing at River Avenue/Division Avenue.

One person found the Split Diamond confusing and suggested that adding metered ramps would be more cost effective.

Concerns with the Ramp Braid option were that it was “overbuilding” and that the time and expense of the option should be enough to remove the concept for further consideration,

since the other concepts have better benefits with less cost and construction time. Other commenters were concerned that there was a high environmental impact associated with this concept, and that it could be confusing for users on the highway.

One person questioned the need for a new bridge over the river and suggested upgrading the existing bridge to handle traffic.

Another commenter wrote that all the larger concepts tear up more land for automobiles, potentially destroying it for pedestrians and bicycles.

One person was concerned with a light on Delta Highway for northbound traffic coming from eastbound Beltline Highway. The concern was the operation of the stop lights and vehicle backups on the highway.

Concepts to Study More

No Build

One person wrote that the no build option was fully funded.

TDM/TSM Measures

Three attendees commented that TDM/TSM measures should be implemented now citing the low cost and immediate improvements. One person suggested that transportation and livability should focus on modes other than automobiles.

Low Build

One person commented that low build 2 and 3 address traffic issues.

Improve Existing

One attendee noted that the improve existing concept could be implemented sooner and would be cost effective, less disruptive, would avoid over building. This concept could leave funding available for additional bike/pedestrian improvements.

Arterial Bridge

Six people commented that they would like the project team to study the arterial bridge further. They liked the local connection option that the bridge would provide and having an alternate route to the existing Willamette River bridges. Other commenters liked the ability to add bicycle and pedestrian facilities and transit to the arterial bridge. One person suggested adding a signal at Green Acres for westbound and northbound Delta traffic.

Split Diamond

Two people liked the split diamond concept, but one person had concerns with the overall cost.

Auxiliary Lane

One person liked the idea of the auxiliary lane concept.

Increasing Lanes over the River

Four commenters did not pick a specific concept to study further, but mentioned that they would like more lanes across the river. One person wrote that the bridge is a dangerous bottleneck, and safety improvements should be added, another thought that reducing the

amount of merging traffic would improve the Beltline Highway. A few other commenters were interested in replacing and widening the existing Willamette River bridges to increase safety and improve congestion.

Other suggestions

One person felt that none of the concepts as presented were by themselves the best solution. The suggestion was to redesign the concept plans by integrating the best ideas from each, and suggested focusing on the area on Beltline Highway between Coburg, River Road, and the Delta Highway interchange. This person supported an additional bridge over the river in north Eugene and stop lights to regulate traffic flow onto Beltline Highway.

One person was interested in phasing the lower cost alternatives (TDM measures such as ramp metering, etc) with more effective, longer term build options that address problems of congestion and mobility, but the concepts need to be explored further with more detail. The most effective build concepts would rebuild the existing bridge over Delta Highway at Goodpasture Island Road, and looking at extending a bridge across the river at the Valley River Center.

One person suggested that any of the higher-build options would address the traffic issue on Beltline Highway, noting that anything less than doubling the lanes of traffic from River Road to Delta Highway would not significantly improve congestion. Another person suggested that on ramps from Delta Highway to westbound Beltline Highway need to be improved, and the River Avenue to eastbound Beltline ramps needed to be extended. A third person suggested adding lanes in each direction at the Delta Highway Interchange.

Another person suggested making traffic “local”, moving within a limited region, making driving more enjoyable and enhancing a sense of community or neighborhood.

General Comments

A few people suggested other improvements to address congestion on the Beltline Highway. These are below:

- Do not close on ramp River Avenue – stripe the roadway and add signage like Delta Highway. Everyone treats it as a merge.
- Build an I-5 connection north or south of Coburg across the river to River Road. Pick up traffic from Highway 99. This will be important after the jail and hospital buildings are constructed to relieve traffic on the Beltline Highway.
- Stack Bridges over the river one east, one west
- Build a bridge from Chambers to Valley River area. Traffic from town could use that route and the NW expressway to get to Santa Clara, reducing traffic on River Road and less traffic on the Beltline and Delta Highways. No Roundabouts.
- Designate the center lanes of bridge as “Minimum 45 mph” allowing traffic to flow better.

- Extend the eastbound merging lane striping further east on River Avenue. Improve yield signage at River Avenue on ramp with stripes and signs

Other comments were concerned with maintaining the river trail and bike path, whichever concept is chosen. One person noted that pedestrian safety at River Road and Silver Lane was important because of the high school. Another attendee was concerned that the planning is being done without construction funding.

One commenter was concerned about possible double lefts/rights at Santa Clara Avenue and River Road, especially impacts to the PHMG Santa Clara Clinic. Improved mobility along Beltline is important for freight, emergency vehicle access and general economic vitality.

An attendee wrote that the open house was a good event, and appreciated the presentation of different options. The concept evaluations were very helpful in working through the decision making process.

One person wanted to focus on methods to reduce traffic instead of building more roads, including reduce population, increase bike/pedestrian transportation, attractive user-friendly areas, and increase transit ridership.

Build it now

Four people wanted improvements to begin immediately, and did not want to wait for the planning process. Most cited the existing need.

Renaming

Eight people commented that they did not agree with the effort to rename the Beltline Highway the Randy Pape Beltway. Most people thought that state funds could be used in other ways.