

Beltline Highway Facility Plan Open House #1 Summary

PREPARED FOR: Savannah Crawford, ODOT

PREPARED BY: Terra Lingley, CH2M HILL
Kristin Hull, CH2M HILL

DATE: September 10, 2009

Overview

The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) held an open house from 4:30-7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, July 31, 2009. The open house was held at the North Eugene High School. 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 August 7, 2009.

The purpose of the open house was to share project information including schedule, existing conditions, and future travel demand. The project's evaluation criteria were presented, and input was gathered on how the individual criteria matter to community members. Community input was also gathered on potential solutions for the Beltline Highway.

The open houses were 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. Fifty people signed in at the open house. In addition, 21 people completed an online survey and others provided comments via email or phone.

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, complete a comment form, and comment on the evaluation criteria and possible families of solutions. The following displays were provided:

- Project background boards including the study area, project schedule, current and future traffic conditions, safety issues, physical constraints of the area and facility plan purpose;
- Three study area interchange maps and a short description of problems previously identified; and
- Potential concepts to address the interchange deficiencies, and other solution possibilities.

Summary of comments

This and the following comments are summaries of conversations, comments received on the flip charts, written comment forms, online comment forms, phone conversations and

emails to project staff. A full record of the comment forms, online survey responses, and emails submitted are attached at the end of this memo.

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

Evaluation criteria

Open House attendees were asked to indicate the evaluation criteria category that was most important to them. The evaluation criteria categories are listed from most important to least important as indicated by responses at the open house:

Safety (8)

Environmental Impacts (8)

Mobility, reliability, and connectivity (5)

Community Livability and Economic Vitality (5)

Cost Effectiveness (0)

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 online and written comment forms:

Safety (11)

Mobility, reliability, and connectivity (9)

Environmental Impacts (3)

Community Livability and Economic Vitality (2)

Cost Effectiveness (1)

General comments

Several comments were mentioned by multiple people at the open house:

- The highway is congested.
- Local traffic uses the highway because there not local routes across the river and the highway is faster than local streets to get downtown.
- Homes along the highway are impacted by noise that has increased as the roadway has become more congested.

Other comments mentioned were maintaining the open space and making it safer for pedestrians and cyclists to move about town, especially on River Road.

A few people were concerned about building a system for current demand that would not address future demand, citing external costs of automobiles and a shift in the way people will get around 20 years in the future.

Many respondents cited the need to look at ways to move people off the Beltline Highway in single-occupancy vehicles, either through providing off-highway connections, increased transit opportunities and other traffic demand management strategies including increasing the bicycle and pedestrian opportunities within the corridor.

Potential Improvements – Comments regarding bridges over the Willamette River

Many people were concerned about another Willamette River crossing due to the impacts to the adjacent neighborhoods, noting that a similar bridge concept was taken out of the TransPlan for because of neighborhood impacts and opposition. Other people commented that a new bridge or bridges were needed because the current bridge is a congested bottleneck and it does not accommodate for all modes including bikes. Many people also cited limited river crossings in the area.

There were comments both supporting an additional bridge (or bridges) over the Willamette River and comments opposing a bridge. Attendees provided a variety of suggestions about a location for a bridge

One person commented that the bridge is the major choke point on the Beltline Highway, and any solution must address the bridge issue.

Two attendees suggested extending Delta Highway to the north as a high-speed facility, and building a new bridge that connects into Wilkes Drive, which would serve the growing North Eugene population. Other suggestions for additional bridges included a bridge between Valley River Center and Beltline Highway that would feed onto Goodpasture Island Road and one north of the McKenzie River connecting Highway 99 and Coburg Road.

Other attendees suggested building a local bridge (or two local bridges) alongside Beltline Highway to serve local travel across the river.

Some attendees were opposed to the idea of a new bridge, especially a bridge that would cross from River Road to Valley River Center due to the impacts to the River Road Neighborhood. Many people were particularly concerned about a bridge near Razor Park, a location outside of the Beltline Highway Facility Plan study area.

One commenter suggested construction of a wall between westbound and eastbound Beltline Highway on the bridge to reduce delays associated with people watching accidents in the other direction.

One commenter asked if the bridge could be widened on the existing piers. Other comments also suggested widening the existing bridge.

River Avenue/Division Avenue interchange suggested improvements

The River Avenue/Division Avenue interchange, close to Delta Sand and Gravel, is used frequently by large trucks. Some attendees advocated closing the westbound exit to Division Avenue and others suggested closing the interchange all together.

A few people suggested adding auxiliary lanes or exclusive local lanes (e.g. frontage road) on Beltline Highway near the River/Division Avenue interchange. Others suggested a

flyover ramp from Delta Highway north to Beltline Highway westbound similar to the I-5/Beltline interchange.

One person suggested eliminating the entrance to the Beltline Highway at River Avenue, while another suggested banning large trucks from entering the highway at this location during the peak travel times.

Delta Highway interchange suggested improvements

Commenter's suggested re-designing the cloverleaf ramps from Delta Highway to Beltline Highway or closing some ramps altogether, and adding lanes to the Beltline Highway to reduce the merging problem.

Others suggested that providing a double left turn lane from Delta to Beltline would ease congestion.

Participants also suggested adding an auxiliary lanes or collector distributor roadways between Delta Highway and River Road.

River Road interchange suggested improvements

One commenter suggested that a bicycle/pedestrian lane should be added along River Road because of the existing dangerous crossing.

Multiple respondents suggested dedicating a lane on the entrance ramp at River Road for traffic only traveling as far either the Delta Highway or Coburg Road.

One respondent noted that the River Road interchange was fine, and others suggested providing additional local access near the River Road interchange by adding a right turn lane at the River Road, or providing a one lane, one-way bridge over Beltline for car and bicycle traffic at Beaver Street carrying traffic southbound from Hunsaker Lane to River Avenue would reduce pressure on the River Road interchange. A three-way stop at Beaver Street and River Avenue and an improved River Avenue on-ramp could handle the traffic flow.

Concerns about the highway concepts

Two people mentioned that they were against roundabouts and traffic circles in the project area, and on the Delta and Beltline highways specifically, though these were not concepts presented during the open house.

What would improve safety and congestion on Beltline Highway?

When asked about how to improve safety and congestion the Beltline Highway, several respondents said that widening the Beltline Highway would improve both safety and congestion, especially over the river. Other respondents focused on the need for a new bridge or bridges over the Willamette River.

Some people suggested improvements related to merging, including installing a concrete divider on the merge land from River Road eastbound to limit merging, placing signage to alert drivers of the merge, putting a meter at selected or all entrances throughout the study

area, and limiting the number of cars allowed on the highway through gates at the ramps or by windshield stickers.

One person suggested doing nothing to the highway, assuming that the congestion will get worse, and then drivers will choose other methods of making their trip or change the time that they make their trips on the Beltline Highway. Another suggested locating commercial services within neighborhoods would lessen the demand for Beltline Highway, along with HOV and/or transit lane on the facility.

General Comments

- We need intersections with stoplights on the Beltline Highway. End the freeway and use stoplights to route us through this congested area. Resume the freeway east of Coburg Road and west of River Road.
- The current circumstance is unacceptable. Movement of goods, services, and freight don't have adequate mobility and thereby hampers regional economic vitality. Congestion results in not only environmental impacts, but compromises safe passage for emergency access west to east, and south to north.
- Please consider and utilize traffic analysis and commercial needs assessment recently completed through ODOT funded Razor MUC planning process. Consider Economic development funding sources to attract additional commercial services to lower River Road, reducing local and regional burden on Beltline
- Didn't see info for cars getting on and off at various intersections--like River Road, Coburg Road--which are the more popular destinations. Also may need more consideration of impact fees--if you build it, they will come and then the roads become congested. New developments must pay for this.
- Need videos or presentations that give credence and visibility to the Beltline Highway problems identified. Is there a hidden agenda? Like increased access to Valley River's malls?
- I cannot accept the basic assumptions in the document "Do travel forecasts reflect changes in gas prices?" I do not agree that "Demand...for personal mobility will remain strong" nor that "Growth" is just "delayed".