I-5: N. Ashland Interchange – Green Springs Project
Aesthetics Advisory Committee (AAC)

Meeting #6 Summary

August 19, 2009
Noon – 1:30 p.m.

Attending:

AAC – Kate Jackson, Katharine Flanagan, and John Rinaldi (absent: Michael Dawkins, Jennifer Longshore, Jonathon Warren, Tom Giordano, David Young and Jerome White)

Project Team – Alex Cousins (JLA Public Involvement), John Galbraith (Galbraith & Associates), Tiina Beaver (Galbraith & Associates), Gary Leaming (ODOT), Tim Fletcher (ODOT), Karen Tatman (Quincy Engineering), and Jeff Olson (Quincy Engineering)

City of Ashland – Ann Seltzer, Maria Harris

Welcome and agenda review

Alex welcomed everyone to the sixth and final meeting of the AAC. The goal for today's meeting is to review the revised bridge renderings for Exits 14 and 19 and reach consensus on a few final design details, namely the lighting and sidewalk treatment at Exit 14 and steel beam treatment at Exit 19. Alex noted that he expected a higher turnout based on the RSVPs. With only three AAC members in attendance, we don't have the benefit of the entire committee's input. Alex thanked those who were able to come.

Revised Aesthetic Designs for Exits 14 and 19

Tiina Beaver with Galbraith & Associates walked everyone through the revised renderings for both of the exits. There were five display boards that detailed updates to the designs last shown to the AAC at Meeting # 5 in April and at the Open House in May.

Exit 14: Minor changes have been made to most of the elements except the center medallion on the superstructure. Most of the changes are due to safety or technical issues. The end pylons are now 2 inches shorter. The pylons no longer extend beyond the edge of the inside rail but are now flush with the rail (this is for ADA reasons associated with the sidewalk). The corbels extend further out from the side of the bridge so that the fence doesn't interfere with the light poles. The support columns have been reduced in size by 2 feet parallel to the road (they are now 4' x 6' instead of 4' x 8'). The bent caps (the element at the top of the colums upon which the concrete girders rest) are now extruded 6 inches from the side of the bridge rather than being flush. And there will be concrete rails (jersey barrier) instead of metal guardrails protecting the bridge columns. The changes are modest and still in keeping with the vision of the AAC.

Exit 19: More minor changes, similar to Exit 14. Concrete rail has to be incorporated into the end pylons as a safety feature since there is no sidewalk in front of it. Karen passed around a line drawing to show what that would look like. The columns are now 4' x 4' square. The striations have more spacing. Also, the safety barrels depicted in the renderings of both exits will give way to concrete barriers. As mentioned previously via email to the committee, the girders are steel now rather than concrete. The surface of the steel beams will be smooth. The question is how to treat the surface of the steel beams – as is (corten), or painted to match the concrete? The renderings show how it would look either way.

Gary noted that leaving the steel unpainted will match the fencing and guardrail. There would be less ongoing maintenance needs as well with the corten steel surface. ODOT has a preference for this since it is a maintenance issue.

Alex asked the committee members for their thoughts. This item is later on the agenda, but it makes sense to discuss Exit 19 now. There was some concern that with unpainted steel beams the bridge at Exit 19 won't match the bridge at Exit 14. The color will be different. Jeff Olson with Quincy noted that a section of the superstructure at Exit 14 could likewise be painted brown to match the corten steel at Exit 19 if the committee preferred.

The AAC discussed the issue and all felt that the darker steel color looks heavier and is not in keeping with the aesthetic discussions that have already taken place. The steel beam looks dark and lessens the effect of matching the landscape that the AAC was striving for. Would powder coating work here? No, the beams would have to be painted to match the color of the concrete. How long lasting would the paint be? That depends. The issue is that over time the paint would collect exhaust/grime from passing cars. ODOT maintenance has limited funding and may not be able to power wash the bridge as often as the community would like. The members felt that it was difficult to say how the bridge will really look since these drawings are two dimensional on paper. And the effect of exhaust grime should affect the bridge equally, not just on the steel beams. After further discussion the group decided that **the AAC will recommend to ODOT that the steel beams should be painted to match the color of the concrete rather than be left as untreated corten steel.**

The next discussion item was the retaining wall on the SE interchange quadrant (I-5 northbound off-ramp) at Exit 19. The walls support the bridge at its ends and they needed to be lengthened and straightened to avoid construction problems in the future when the bridge is widened to 5 lanes. Where the wall previously showed an angle point, the wall needs to be straight. The bridge design at Exit 19 accounts for future bridge widening, future widening of southbound I-5, and either a future I-5 northbound lane or a future northbound loop on ramp. The angled wall is no longer a possibility. The wall height will vary with the top of the wall elevation changing gradually (slope downward) rather than stair-stepped downward. This conforms to the AAC's earlier request to not have stair-stepping.

The AAC discussed the effect of the retaining wall. There will be little landscaping at Exit 19 and little opportunity to conceal the curved wall. **Ultimately, the group agreed that the retaining wall is necessary and the visual impact to Exit 19 is minimal.**

Tim noted that the jersey barriers should be colored to match the bridge color. The center bridge piers will be protected by concrete barrier fronted by a metal beam curved guardrail in the median. Karen commented that this is standard treatment for ODOT bridge columns within a freeway median.

AAC Feedback on Exit 14

After reviewing the updated designs for Exit 14, Alex asked the committee members for their input on the following outstanding issues:

Light poles & fixtures – Karen provided a handout showing what the light poles and luminaires will look like. **The AAC confirmed the selection of the Eurotique style light poles and fixtures.** They will be sole-sourced to the manufacturer so the result will be exactly as shown in the handout. Banner supports will be provided on the light poles too. The poles will all be colored to match (light poles and signal poles). AAC would prefer that the signal poles match the light poles in color and general appearance. It was specifically mentioned that Ashland doesn't want the larger signal supports featured at the new South Medford interchange.

Sidewalk surface treatment – Alex noted that this is the one issue that received a split vote when the AAC last discussed it. There were 5 votes in favor of textured sidewalk treatment and 4 votes for the use of imprinted words/phrases in the concrete. If the AAC prefers, a new, hybrid sidewalk alternative could be introduced – combining the textured sidewalk surface with spaces for quotations at intervals. If the AAC would rather not have to choose the theme and actual quotations, the Public Arts Commission is willing to take on this task on behalf of the committee. Alex has had a preliminary conversation with Jennifer Longshore, who supported the idea if the AAC agrees. The decisions would need to be made by Nov. 1, 2009.

The group then discussed the idea. There were come concerns that there wasn't much time to develop the theme and quotes. It was noted that the PAC usually goes out for a juried process on such projects. It is a lot to take on in 2.5 months. There was also concern that by adding quotes there might be too much artwork on the bridge, and that the banners and spaces for future artwork along the bridge railing were there for that. **Ultimately, the group decided not to include any words in the concrete, but to choose a textured surface instead.**

The AAC reviewed the sidewalk surface options that had previously been provided. The fan pattern would give the sidewalk a cobblestone effect. Karen confirmed that any stamped impressions would be ADA compliant for pedestrian safety. The committee felt that any pattern should not be too strong a focal point or detract from the structure. They also want to maintain same color as the bridge. Tim noted that ODOT will need to use colored concrete rather than stained or painted concrete so that the sidewalk wears well

and won't fade in heavy traffic areas. **The AAC selected the fan-shaped cobblestone pattern in concrete colored to match the rest of the bridge concrete as the sidewalk surface treatment.**

Concrete color – Now the committee needs to pick a color for the concrete and determine how it is to be applied (staining or painting). Tiina provided 11 concrete samples of various earth tones for the AAC's consideration. The group immediately eliminated the pinks and greys, choosing instead between 4 variations of warmer, earthtone colors. **There was a unanimous choice of "Palomino" (Davis Colors #5447) as the concrete color** (Palomino is a light tan color with a mustard hue). It was felt that this color will best match the surrounding landscape.

Next the discussion turned to applying the color. The decision is whether to paint or stain the concrete. All other concrete surfaces except the sidewalk will need to be painted or stained. ODOT can't mix the color directly into the poured concrete of the superstructure, piers and abutments since the result won't be uniform in appearance. ODOT standard practice is to paint the concrete on bridges. Jeff pointed out that graffiti can be an issue with staining the concrete – it can be impossible to get out and those areas are usually painted over to address the problem anyway. The AAC conferred and decided it doesn't really matter since the bridge will have the same color regardless of the application. If it is a maintenance issue, go ahead and **paint it.** The sidewalk concrete will be colored with the color mixed directly into the concrete since the sidewalk has a wearing surface and painting or staining would wear off. Since the sidewalk concrete is poured by itself as the last concrete on the bridge, uniformity in color will be much easier to obtain.

Sidewalk lighting – The committee previously discussed possibly including aesthetic pedestrian lighting on the bridge railing (in addition to the overhead pedestrian lighting which will be supplied). This issue needs resolution. Karen noted that there are two options and neither is particularly cheap – in the $50,000 range. The options are to include "theater lights" (downwash, wall mounted lights inset into the concrete with louvered shades) or "rope lights" (LED style lights on a metal strip placed under a ledge running along the inside bridge rail). Karen stressed that the lights would provide minimal practical lighting value and would be for aesthetic, ambient purposes only. The overhead lighting is sufficient to light the sidewalk.

Gary noted that ongoing maintenance is the concern for ODOT, not the cost of installation which would be included in the project budget. The lights could be subject to vandalism. If this lighting is included, ODOT would want to amend the existing IGA with the city to add maintenance of the lights. Tim thought that the maintenance costs would be minimal – limited to the fixtures and bulbs. ODOT would maintain the housing, wiring, etc. The AAC discussed the issue. They liked the idea of providing additional ambiance for pedestrians. Discussion turned to whether the city would enter into an IGA and what the spacing of the fixtures would look like – how far apart should they be? They also discussed whether the result would be worth the installation and maintenance costs. The costs of these IGA's and amenities do add up for the city. The value is ambiance. **Ultimately, the committee decided to recommend including 12 theater-style lights on**

the bridge – 6 on each side and spaced equi-distant from each other and requested that the City work with ODOT to amend the IGA.

Resolution of colored bicycle lanes

The AAC also has previously discussed the issue of coloring the bike lanes separately from the roadway. The issue has been raised with ODOT and the State Traffic Engineer, who has just returned from a trip to Europe to see how bike/ped facilities are handled there. Treating bike lanes with color is currently not standard practice for the agency. Painting the asphalt surface also makes it slippery, which is a problem in rainy or wintery conditions. The team recommendation to the AAC is to not include colored bike lanes with this project now. ODOT would prefer that the State Traffic Engineer and Bike/Ped Coordinator develop a statewide standard and then apply that standard to this project later when a preferred treatment is resolved. Karen added that a contract change order could be applied to this project if a standard is developed that would indicate colored bike facilities are warranted at this location before our project is built. The AAC acknowledged that the design process is governed by ODOT regulations and the issue should be resolved there.

Next steps for the project schedule

Karen reviewed the project schedule. Design Acceptance reports were developed in May, followed by the final design process that took place over the summer. The first set of advance plans will be ready at Labor Day. From that, the draft construction contract will be prepared (around Christmas time). Final open houses will be held at the end of this year or early 2010. They will be held in conjunction with small group property owner briefings to explain the construction schedule and approach. The first contract will be small - to do the clearing only. As previously discussed, the existing plum trees will be saved at Exit 14. The team's landscape designer suggests that the City's arborist make a recommendation on which trees have the best chance of survival and be moved. Clearing will occur in April/May of 2010 and the main contractor starts work in July. Construction will take place over two and a half years. Landscaping will be contracted out separately. Small contracts will be used to support small businesses to the extent practicable.

Thank you to the committee

Alex acknowledged that this is the AAC's last official meeting. Everyone will be noticed of the open houses and are encouraged to stay involved. He thanked the group for their hard work, which has really paid off to the benefit of the City of Ashland, ODOT and this project. Alex handed out personalized certificates of appreciation. On behalf of ODOT, Gary also thanked the committee for their time and dedication. He noted that the bridges will be built to last a long time and that it's not every day that someone can say they helped design something so large and significant for their community.

Ann Seltzer thanked the AAC as well. She also acknowledged that ODOT put a lot of resources into this effort to work with the community to get the project designed well. She thanked ODOT, OBDP and the project team for their hard work and collaboration.

1:45 p.m. Adjourn