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FVI Project Development Team Meeting #11 Draft Meeting Minutes

January 5, 2006, 9 a.m. to 12:00 a.m.

Jackson County Road and Parks Auditorium

PDT Members Present: Jerry Marmon (Environmental PM), Brian Sheadel (Roadway), Christina Fera-Thomas (TPAU), Jim Wear (City of Phoenix), Jeannell Wyntergreen (City of Phoenix), Dale Petrasek (Jackson County Roads), Dan Moore (RVCOG)

ODOT Present: Debbie Timms (Project Leader), Peter Schuytema (TPAU), David Pyles (Land Use), Gary Leaming (Public Relations), John Raasch (EPM), Ray Lapke (Traffic)

Non-ODOT Present: Nick Fortey (FHWA), Vicki Guarino (RVCOG), Craig Anderson (Rogue Valley Transportation District), Nancy Reynolds (URS), Bill Leber, Clark Rudy, 4 other members of the general public

1. AGENDA AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Project Development Team (PDT) last met in October 2005. The group approved the September minutes with a change to page 4, paragraph 5, 1st sentence: change “when” to “if”.

2. UPDATE ON PROJECT DEVELOPMENT TEAM ACTION

At the last PDT meeting, we looked at two build alternatives and presented the CAC recommendations to refine the two alternatives. This PDT meeting will focus on review of the two refined build alternatives (CAC Table 1 SPUI and Lowry SPUI), and determining which alternative concepts to forward into the Environmental Assessment (EA).

3. REVIEW OF CAC JANUARY 4 MEETING

Vicki Guarino provided a brief overview of last night’s CAC meeting (January 4). The CAC made recommendations on which alternatives to advance into the EA. The CAC voted unanimously to recommend forwarding the CAC Table 1 SPUI. Five CAC members voted to forward the Lowry SPUI into the EA, two voted to drop it, and two chose to abstain from voting on the Lowry SPUI. There was a lengthy roundtable discussion about the two alternatives. In general, the CAC seemed to feel that the Lowry SPUI, with Brian’s design refinements, now works better than previously.

The CAC had the following major comments regarding the alternatives:

- They had concerns that the east side businesses and residences would be more isolated from the west side of town with the Table 1 SPUI.
- They had bicycle and pedestrian concerns due to cutting off Fern Valley Road with the Table 1 SPUI.

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- They felt there could be some potential delays in emergency vehicle response with the additional distance associated with the Table 1 SPUI east side connection to N. Phoenix Road, but they felt that both of the alternatives were probably pretty similar.
- It is important to ensure truck traffic is separated from the residential neighborhood traffic as much as possible.
- The school district is concerned about mixing truck and bus traffic; they would like the PDT to do everything possible to separate buses and trucks.
- There was concern on the west side regarding OR 99 improvements—and the resultant rerouting of traffic.
- Ray's Market representative said he felt that the existing businesses are being sacrificed for Home Depot and potential future development. But also, he indicated that he wasn't sure there was a way around this impact.
- They would like to maintain connectivity by constructing a local road under the freeway for the Table 1 SPUI on the east side. (This would access on the west side of Home Depot.)

4. REVIEW BUILD ALTERNATIVES

Brian Sheadel presented the two refined build alternatives. The alternatives have essentially the same general design as before, but now the appropriate geometric curves have been put on the maps, so more detailed designs are emerging.

Traffic analysis for the refined designs indicates that for both alternatives, the lanes and volumes will be essentially the same at the interchange, and will be within acceptable ranges for the 2030 year design life.

Lowry SPUI

The main elements of this alternative that are different from the Table 1 SPUI are:

- The location of the interchange is slightly to the south of the existing interchange.
- Fern Valley Road is maintained as the through route from the east side to Bolz.

The refined design includes the following elements:

- Fern Valley Road has been realigned to the north of the existing road.
- The existing Fern Valley Road is maintained as a local access.
- A signal is likely at the Home Depot access onto N. Phoenix Road.
- The alignment of N. Phoenix Road is driven by the need to skirt the edge of the hill. The road needs to accommodate a change in speed from 55 mph to 45 mph. Realigned N. Phoenix Road reconnects to the existing N. Phoenix Road (at the north end of the project) near Arrowhead Ranch.
- The on- and off-ramps are now substantially longer than before due to the need to have two lanes to handle the traffic. The northbound ramp onto the freeway is much longer than before. The exit ramps are shorter than the northbound ramp, but now consist of 2 lanes off of the freeway that are therefore longer than shown before.
- There are free right turns on all four quadrants.
- The structure would be 250 to 300 feet long.
- Petro would be accessed by old Fern Valley Road; the median would be removed.

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- A new access from Breckenridge Road north to the new Fern Valley Road alignment is being added in response to a request from the CAC.
- The distance between the old Fern Valley Road intersection with S. Phoenix and the new Fern Valley Road intersection with N. Phoenix is about 230 feet.
- Although the CAC had considerable discussion regarding having a 4th leg to the old Fern Valley Road/S. Phoenix Road intersection, there would be too much queuing so the intersection would not work well. Left turns from the truck stop would back up on Fern Valley Road west of S. Phoenix.
- Pear Tree Lane would have to be reconfigured because of the freeway off-ramps.
- Fern Valley Road would have through and shared through/left turn lanes.
- The first access on the west side is a right-in/right-out at the Stores at Exit 34. This would provide access to Coleman Creek Estates. Access to the freeway from the Stores at 34 would be by going to OR 99. Out-of-direct travel would be required.
- Several properties adjacent to OR 99 on the east side will lose direct access to OR 99.
- Fern Valley Road connects to OR 99 at Bolz, where there will be a large cross-section to accommodate the storage needed for Bolz. There would be dual right and left-turn lanes, and a big cross-section. The outside red lines indicate the back of sidewalk.
- One access would be allowed on the east side between Bolz and Cheryl (right-in/right-out). There would be a raised median in this area.
- There will be a signalized intersection at Cheryl. Because there is a full intersection, the queue on Cheryl will go beyond Ray's access. Therefore, Ray's access to Cheryl will require a backage road (the exact location has not yet been identified).
- Ray's access to OR 99 is a right-in/right-out at two locations. Northbound OR 99 traffic would only be able to access Ray's at the backage Road off of Cheryl. Trucks would have to use that backage road.
- The OR 99 alignment has been moved slightly to the east so all impacts will occur on the east. The reason this decision was made was that the buildings on the east side were already impacted—even if the alignment was located both on the west and east side; therefore, this alignment substantially reduced impacts overall.
- North of Cheryl, the new OR 99 would taper back into the existing roadway. A structure will likely be needed at Coleman Creek (it is currently substandard, and is a fish passage barrier).
- South of Bolz, east of OR 99, right turns from OR 99 will be impacted. A combined new access location will be needed. The access road location shown on the current map will need to be changed because of the steep topography. (A new development is planned in this area.)
- The new Bear Creek crossing (associated with the new Bolz alignment) will be on structure, and will be somewhat similar in size to the existing Bear Creek Bridge. However, the new bridge will be 32' wide, plus sidewalks.

Dan Moore asked if there is a lane requirement for four lanes at the north end of N. Phoenix Road. Peter indicated that there will eventually be a need for four lanes, but it would not be done with this project.

Jeannell Wyntergreen asked what year the traffic projections were based on. Christina Fera-Thomas indicated it was year 2030.

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Brian indicated that construction of a road under the SPUI to connect old Fern Valley Road to the Home Depot area would be difficult to construct because of the higher grade levels required to meet standards. This connection would be problematic with the Lowry SPUI. Jerry Marmon said, however, that we would consider the connectivity option under the SPUI with both build alternatives because of the CAC request.

Nick Fortey asked what the distance would be from the ramp to the Stores at 24 access. Brian said it would be about 750' to 800'.

Dan asked if these plans incorporate planting strips. Debbie Timms said that there is an ODOT directive that landscaping will be an agreement between ODOT and the local jurisdiction. While landscaping is incorporated, ODOT will not maintain it.

Jeannell asked if the city would have to pay for plantings and irrigation. Debbie indicated that this would be done through agreement between ODOT and the city.

Nick asked about the v/c standards for OR 99. Christina said that in both alternatives, the v/c would be somewhat high on Bolz, but would be within acceptable v/c standards for 2030. Nick also asked whether this is an Urban Business Area (UBA) designation. Brian said that it is designed to 30 mph.

Jeannell said that, for the record, the 2030 projections do not take into account the growth that will likely really occur.

Dan asked if the cross-section on OR 99 includes bikelanes. Brian said it included a 6-foot shoulder. Dan also asked whether bus pullouts were part of the design. Jim Wear said that the alignment would do away with all bus stops on OR 99 on the east side in the impacted area. Brian said that pullouts were not incorporated at this time, but would be considered later in the process.

Brian said that U-turns may be possible in some areas because of the size of the medians. When more width is available in the median, U-turns are sometimes possible—it depends on whether the radius will work.

Vicki said that the CAC had some concerns about the southbound on-ramps coming close to the buildings at the Stores at 24, but Brian indicated that this impact could be avoided by the use of retaining walls.

Dan asked if there is an ODOT policy that will require a jurisdictional exchange on OR 99 between Cheryl and Bolz. Debbie said that could be considered in some areas. It is likely that portions of N. Phoenix would be under ODOT jurisdiction. OR 99 through the city will likely still remain ODOT at the current time. Jim said that the city is taking jurisdiction of the couplet in association with this project. Brian said that one advantage of the city taking ownership of part of OR 99 is that the city could then have reduced design standards. However, the more accesses that are allowed on OR 99, the sooner the system will fail. Debbie said that usually cities don't want to take over the streets because of the expense.

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Dave Pyles asked if both alternatives move forward as recommended by the CAC, will other options be possible. Jerry said that there would be changes that could occur (especially after the public hearing), but there will probably not be other alternatives developed because we've already looked extensively at potential alternatives.

Nick said that we have certain design standards that we have to meet, but that sometimes a lower level of performance can be accepted to reduce impacts and that mitigation could then be considered (e.g., accepting a lower level of performance). We would then consider the impacts of that lower v/c ratio. Brian said that the current design is the bare minimum to meet v/c standards. Peter said that, for example, there are already long queues at Bolz, and if this isn't corrected (the dual right and left turns at Bolz), queues would back up of the couplet.

A question was asked about whether alternate mobility standards would be allowed, as identified in the Oregon Highway Plan; therefore, look at alternatives that would result in higher v/c ratios. However, the Highway Design Manual (based on AASHTO) standards have not normally allowed design standard changes. Dave indicated that where mobility standards were lowered, they would be part of the Interchange Area Management Plan (IAMP). Peter said that, typically, a new facility reflects current design standards.

CAC Table 1 SPUI

The main elements of this alternative that are different from the Table 1 SPUI are:

- The location of the interchange is slightly to the north of the existing interchange.
- N. Phoenix Road is the primary through movement east of I-5.

The refined design includes the following elements:

- The Table 1 SPUI configuration would essentially be the same interchange as the Lowry SPUI.
- The southbound off-ramp would be slightly closer to the Factory Store buildings than with the Lowry SPUI.
- Pear Tree Lane would be unaffected by this alternative; it could be retained as a frontage road.
- This alternative has the best opportunity to make a connection from Fern Valley Road under the SPUI to the Home Depot area. The reason for this access would be to have connectivity and an optional route in case of emergency. The one problem with this connections under the Table 1 SPUI is that the northbound on-ramp sits on top of the existing N. Phoenix—so some slight alignment adjustments would be needed to accommodate retaining the roadway.
- There would not be a need for a signal at Fern Valley Road on the east side with this alternative.
- Potential access to properties north of Fern Valley Road on the east side would need to be located away from the interchange.
- The connection back to N. Phoenix Road at the north end would be similar to the Lowry SPUI.
- Bear Lake Estates access would be located through a jughandle that accesses under the SPUI. This is one of the major differences from the Lowry alternative. There is room for the jughandle to be placed with this alternative. Fairly direct access to the northwest and southwest quadrants of the interchange would therefore be retained.

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- Southbound OR 99 will have to use the jughandle to access properties.
- On the west side, old Fern Valley Road would be a cul-de-sac.
- Greenway connections would be the same as they are now.
- Bike and pedestrian access to OR 99 will be possible at the Fern Valley cul-de-sac.
- The OR 99 cross-section is essentially the same as with the Lowry SPUI.

Jim said that there were advantages to this design in terms of adding the connectivity, but that trucks coming out of Pear Tree, would likely often use that connection as a roundabout. Developments north of Home Depot will compound the traffic problem.

Jeannell said that the Table 1 and Lowry alternatives' v/c seem similar. Peter said they are similar, but the difference is that the CAC Table 1 SPUI can accommodate more trips associated with projected growth over a longer period of time. Basically, the v/c will not grow as fast with the CAC Table 1 SPUI compared with the Lowry SPUI. V/C's are considerably lower on the west side with CAC Table 1 compared with the Lowry SPUI.

Dave asked if there are opportunities to finesse the jughandle loops. However, Brian said that they are limited by the need to avoid riparian vegetation.

A member of the public asked if there would be the possibility of a left-turn lane on OR 99 to property access affected by the Fern Valley Road cul-de-sac. Brian said that the queue on OR 99 would be too long from both directions to accommodate a left-turn access. This left-turn would have to be done through three turning lanes.

The community has clearly indicated they want Luman Road access to Fern Valley Road, as well as full access for the Stores at 24. They would not support a right-in/right-out at that location. The CAC members were pleased with the addition of the jughandle.

Nick indicated some concern regarding clarity to the driver—how the driver will understand what to do to navigate the new road system. He felt it wasn't intuitive. Brian said that there is a difference in that some out-of-direction travel is required, but that this would be handled through a signing plan. More upfront work on this needs to be done, but once people get used to the design, it should not be a problem.

Christina said that v/c's would be lower and shorter queues would occur with this alternative. Peter said it is important that people not use Ray's for cut-through traffic due to safety concerns.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Bill Leber, part owner of the triangle commercial area affected by the Fern Valley cul-de-sac, said that the CAC Table 1 SPUI really makes it difficult to access the triangle. He sees the need and inevitability of the project, but will weigh in on the Lowry SPUI because of the reduced impacts to his property. Brian asked whether he would oppose the CAC Table 1 SPUI if we could put in a fourth leg at the OR 99 intersection. He said he could then support the Table 1 SPUI. There was further discussion on what might be allowed for access to this area near Coleman Creek. Peter said there may be a possibility of a left-turn bay near Coleman Creek; it just can't be located at the intersection. The greatest possibility seemed to be: a left-turn in and

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right-turn out near Coleman Creek, a left-turn out at the jughandle, and a right-turn in to the south of the intersection.

Clark Rudy, Petro, said that he agreed that the long-term growth was something that will require a change in the interchange. He supported the need to consider a connection from Fern Valley Road under the SPUI to Home Depot for circulation, allowing an escape route. He prefers the Lowry plan because it better addresses residential concerns regarding segregating cars and trucks, and better addresses the need to separate buses and trucks. He felt the CAC Table 1 SPUI devastates travel to the truck stop. It would increase the travel distance from 2,200 feet with the Lowry SPUI to 3,00 feet with the Table 1 SPUI. He felt this problem would be exacerbated as more intersections are added as the N. Phoenix area develops.

Craig Anderson asked how it was determined for this project to be done with an Environmental Assessment (EA) rather than an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). He felt the change in magnitude of impacts from the original scope would require an EIS. Jerry said that the purpose of the EA is to determine whether there are significant impacts sufficient to require an EIS. The assumption at this time is that we can mitigate the level of impacts to non-significance. If this is not possible, an EIS would be written. Craig asked when this decision would be made. Jerry said we would take a look at that when more information on level of impacts is available. However, he did feel it would result in a level of non-significance. Craig said he felt it should be an EIS, considering the impacts of the alternatives.

Craig said he did not see how the alternatives are consistent with the RTP process to focus on transit-oriented development in downtown (Phoenix). He felt that this project planning doesn't address Goal 12 (Transportation) which emphasizes reducing reliance on the automobile. Jerry said that the Purpose and Need for the project is to address the interchange problems, not necessarily to address city and RTP land use goals, and that compatibility with plans and policies would be addressed in the EA.

Craig felt that to be so focused on v/c results in enormous impacts to the community. He doesn't think that this PDT group has effectively heard what impacts are going to occur. The project will result in regional impacts and contrasts with goals and plans that have been worked on for several years and which are in the RTP. He also said the cost will be well in excess of the \$40 million in the STIP; he felt it could reach as high as \$100 million. He felt it was important that there be more commitment from Home Depot and other future developments to pay more of the project cost. He said there needs to be discussion in the RPS process that developers in the southeast areas need to be helping to pay for this interchange in a substantial way.

Jerry indicated that this project is in the RTP, but it is not specific. Craig said that the RTP calls for a 4-lane with a Diamond Interchange for the Fern Valley Interchange. He said the current project alternatives are a radical departure from the originally conceived project—and do not reflect the RTP and TPR goals on transportation and land use. Jerry responded that, while the SPUIs are very different from the original concept, they have much less impacts than the Diamond. The Diamond Interchange was thus thrown out based on right of way impacts. Debbie indicated that Rogue Valley is seeing the most intense growth in the state. Planned development in the area includes a number of parcels over 100 acres in size, with thousands of residences. Planned uses probably will be even greater than the v/c we're assuming.

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Jeannell said that goals for Phoenix are evolving on the east side—and development is occurring. Debbie indicated these types of projects are trying to accommodate that growth. Craig said that there is no approved UGB expansion at this time. Initially, the southeast Medford development was to be addressed through the south interchange, and now additional development in that area will be accommodated by the Fern Valley Interchange.

Craig said that the CAC does not really reflect all of the community. He also said that there had been no discussion on the project at the MPO TAC—that it needed to be discussed at the MPO level. Jerry said that the MPO has representation on the PDT and that it is that person's responsibility to convey information to the MPO. Dave said the IAMP may help to determine how to address some of these issues.

6. PDT VOTE ON ALTERNATIVES

The PDT voted unanimously to forward both the CAC Table 1 SPUI and the Lowry SPUI for consideration in the EA. The reasons given were:

- Dale: He would prefer the Table 1 SPUI if he had to choose now. The only reason he voted to keep the Lowry SPUI is concern regarding the truck access and eastside connections. He would like to relook at the Cheryl access.
- Christina: She's leaning towards the Table 1 SPUI, but after hearing the CAC comments, thinks we need to keep both to forward into the EA.
- Jerry: Neither alternative is perfect; it is difficult to retrofit a new project into an existing urban environment. Both alternatives will meet the needs of the project. He feels that the Table 1 SPUI meets the goals and objectives of the project slightly better than the Lowry SPUI. He feels the decision needs to be made with more public input.
- Brian: Both alternatives will work. The Table 1 SPUI works better on the west side. The only way to answer the questions regarding impacts is to finish out the analysis in the EA.
- Jim: He agrees that the Lowry alternative is best for trucks on the east side. There is a problem on N. Phoenix regarding left turns. The impacts to Ray's may be a fatal flaw. He is concerned about the access impacts to properties in the triangle south of Ray's; this needs further evaluation.
- Jeannell: She agrees with Jim. She's concerned about the Table 1 SPUI on the east side, but doesn't like the Lowry SPUI wrapping around Ray's on the west side. She feels there will be lots of opposition.
- Dan: He agrees with the prior comments, and tends to support Table 1 due to impacts.

Jim feels that people along OR 99 do not realize the impacts the project will have on them, and this is a concern. Jeannell said that RVCOG put out at least 300 brochures on this, and also had public meetings—we're trying to reach people. However, Jim felt the real impact is not yet clear to the community. Jeannell indicated that we need another brochure to show these alternatives more clearly.

7. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Bill asked if other alternatives would be considered, and when the project would be constructed. Debbie said that the designs of the two alternatives will be further refined. Impacts to the natural

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and social environment will be documented in technical reports. The EA is a disclosure statement, and will compare and contrast impacts. It should be about six months before the EA is published. There will then be a public hearing and a 45-day public comment period. The project is anticipated to go to bid in late 2007, with construction in 2008.

Debbie indicated that \$40 million is committed for construction. She doesn't know if there's going to be phasing of the project. It will take 2 to 3 years to construct. The intent is to have a way to cross I-5 throughout the construction period.

Jerry suggested that the public attendees be sure to get on the mailing list for further information about the project.

8. INTERCHANGE AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN (IAMP)

David Pyles provided an overview of the IAMP requirements for the Fern Valley Interchange project. An IAMP is a long-term (20+ year) transportation and land use plan. It is a joint effort between ODOT and the local government. The intent is to use the IAMP to guide decisions on future land use development patterns and the transportation network and access in the project area. The purpose is to protect the function and capacity of the interstate interchange and the supporting local street network, and to balance and manage land use and transportation decisions in interchange areas.

There are a number of ODOT and other state regulations, plans and manuals that support the development of an IAMP. These are listed in the attachment. Because the IAMP must be a component of the local comprehensive plan, it must be adopted prior to completion of the final environmental document.

The content of the IAMP includes: purpose and intent, problem statement, interchange function, goals and objectives, management area, existing conditions inventory and data analysis, future conditions analysis, alternatives development and analysis, and the interchange area and access management plan.

Dave said that each IAMP is different. As with the Fern Valley Interchange project itself, the IAMP has both a recommendation (CAC) and decision (PDT) body as the IAMP is developed. The CAC voice will be especially important in this project because of the land use nature of the IAMP and the anticipated development in the area.

Dave indicated that he had discussed with the existing Fern Valley Interchange project Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) the potential to help form the new CAC needed to develop the IAMP. Some members of the CAC indicated that because they were on the Planning Commission or City Council, they had some concerns regarding conflict of interest. Affected CAC members are looking into how this would be interpreted.

Dave reiterated the timeline anticipated for the IAMP: begin January/February 2006, first draft in July 2006, final IAMP in the Fall 2006, City adoption in Winter 2006, and ODOT OTC adoption in Winter 2006 or early 2007. The EA Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is

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anticipated in December 2006. Dave said that the goal is to not hold up the EA schedule. A flow chart of the IAMP process is attached.

Jeannell indicated that the City does not have the funds to develop adoption-ready ordinance language. Dave was going to check to see if it is scheduled to be done under the IAMP scope of work. Jeannell said that, since this is a requirement for the project, they felt ODOT was obligated to pay the costs of developing amendments and ordinances. Dave said that ODOT is aware that the City cannot handle this workload.

Jeannell requested that Dave forward the IAMP consultant scope of work to her. Jeannell indicated that the land use process is very specific and clear—and it is likely to hold up the EA process. Jeannell said that when the City adopts the IAMP, they must personally notify each property owner. She anticipates that the meetings will draw more people than the recent public meetings on this project. Dave indicated that he would like to look at creative public involvement possibilities. Jeannell said to determine public notification needs as soon as possible. It was agreed that it is important to ensure clarity to the public, Planning Commission and City Council to try to reduce confusion. Dave said it's likely that the meeting style would be open meetings, with some presentations and an opportunity for people to walk to different stations and ask questions.

Jeannell indicated an interest in having RVCOG added to the scope. They want to continue to work with the COG because of their experience in managing public involvement and their knowledge of this area.

Dave provided information on available resources, and suggested he be contacted if there are any questions.

WRAP UP:

Debbie Timms thanked the team for their involvement and hard work to get us to this point in the process.

Nancy Reynolds said that as the technical environmental specialists begin work on the project, they will be contact their ODOT counterparts to ensure clarity on methodology and expectations.

Jerry Marmon said that there will be at least one more meeting between now and when the environmental document is released to the public.

NEXT MEETING:

The next PDT meeting has not been set.

ATTACHMENTS:

Fern Valley Interchange Phase 2, Analysis of Alternatives, TPAU
Fern Valley Interchange Area Management Plan (IAMP), ODOT
IAMP Typical Process Flow Chart