



Meeting Date: Friday, July 14, 2006

Purpose: Project Development Team Meeting

Distribution: Project Development Team Members, public

From: Vicki Guarino, Rogue Valley Council of Governments

Date Prepared: July 19, 2006

PDT Attendees: Tracy Rico, Laurel Samson, Tanya Henderson, Jon Jordan, Jerry Marmon, Debbie Timms, Angela Findley, Vicki Guarino, Jason Sheadel, Connie Kratovil.

PDT Absent: Jeff Hunter, Dorothy Upton, Jim Raffenburg

Other Attendees: Nick Fortey, FHWA, Six members of the public.

1. Call to Order/Review Agenda/Approve Minutes

Vicki Guarino, RVCOG Facilitator

Vicki Guarino called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. She reviewed the agenda and asked for corrections to the minutes of the June PDT meeting. The PDT approved the minutes as presented.

2. CAC Update

Vicki Guarino, RVCOG

No one from the CAC was able to attend the PDT meeting. Guarino briefly reviewed the CAC meeting, including audience participation in the review of alternatives and preliminary access management strategy. The CAC made recommendations on which alternatives should be examined in the Environmental Assessment. Recommendations will be presented during the evaluation portion of the meeting.

4. Construction Phasing for Alternatives

Connie Kratovil, Parsons Brinckerhoff

Jason Sheadel, ODOT

Kratovil briefly reviewed the design process. She said the west section alternative (West 6) with the median is a part of all the alternatives being considered in the east section. She explained that refinements have been made on all three alternatives, including providing for access on and off Hwy. 199. Also, a phasing plan has been proposed for all alternatives. The alternatives have been renamed for the remainder of the project as follows (all include West 6): East 1 renamed to Alternative A; East 5b renamed to Alternative B; and East C renamed to Alternative C.

Regarding potential project phasing, Kratovil identified the work that would be done in a phase one and phase two on each alternative. Maps, which were distributed to PDT members and the public, illustrated possible phase one and phase two improvements, with phase two drawn in yellow on maps. She said phase two work would be dependent on the outcomes of the South Y project, especially in the vicinity of Tussey Lane and relating to the frontage road. All alternatives in the phase one would widen Hwy. 199, with the following eastbound and west bound cross-section: three travel lanes, eight-foot shoulder, curb, planter strip and sidewalk. Maps also show proposed driveways in phase one. In most cases, driveways would be consolidated. Kratovil reviewed in detail the first and second phase of each alternative. It was noted that in all cases the phase one improvements would have independent utility and benefits even if the second phase is not built, or built differently from what has been drawn. It was discussed that driveway consolidation would be part of phase one to address the purpose and need by improving safety and traffic flow on the expressway. Additional detailed discussion regarding each alternative included the following:

Alternative A The portion of the frontage road shown in phase one would serve as an access road to the YMCA and fairgrounds. Questions were raised that all of the alternatives show limited landscaping and staff said full landscaping plans would be part of later design. Samson was concerned that if this level of landscaping is shown on drawings that are approved now, more landscaping will not be added later. Marmon said the landscaping is shown now only to establish a cross-section and the total width of the project; more landscaping could still be added later. Also, the concept of a third, separated lane on the expressway – a boulevard treatment suggested by Grants Pass -- will be addressed in design refinements. Jordon noted that this alternative still would take out the Pepsi Building. ODOT is meeting with the county to talk about fairgrounds phase one access which does not extend to the Pepsi Building. The county seems satisfied that the full frontage road (phase 2) would only be built as a part of the South Y study, but probably they are still concerned about protecting the Pepsi building. Jordan also asked about other business acquisitions; staff said those will be examined later in the meeting, on the larger scale maps.

Alternative B Kratovil noted refinements, including the phase one access road extending to Ringuette, rather than stopping at fairgrounds. This is because of the cost of the bridge overpass. The cost is such that without a road extending to serve a larger area, there would be too little public benefit to the bridge. In discussion there were questions about the rationale for not extending the frontage road in Alternative A to Ringuette as well. There was a concern that by extending the road and showing it taking out buildings, this alternative was being intentionally

doomed. However, the cost/benefit ratio would not justify the cost if the road ended at the YMCA and the traffic benefits at the Allen Creek Rd. and Redwood Ave. intersection could not be fully realized with the added out of direction traffic.

Alternative C The review included discussion of pedestrian access. Also, potential for the fourth bridge connection into this Alternative was discussed. It was noted that the CAC heard from the Grants Pass Urban Area Planning Commission that it has been setting design requirements that would be compatible with a fourth bridge as a continuation of Lincoln Street. That location works with this alternative. PDT was reminded of drawings from the June committee meetings that showed how a bridge would tie in with each of the alternatives. Some improvements from this project would have to be taken out, but not a significant amount. Samson suggested building in a T intersection if the bridge location can be pinned down before construction begins on this project. It was noted that Alternative B is more problematic for a fourth bridge location at Lincoln Street than the other two alternatives.

Other topics discussed included:

- **Fairground access.** In Alternative B access would be off the frontage road; with other alternatives the fairgrounds would have right-in, right-out to Hwy. 199 in phase one at their existing main entrance. In phase two of those alternatives, fairgrounds access would move to the new frontage road.
- **Regional Bike Trail** A map handout, in response to a CAC request, shows how the existing trail system could be incorporated into each of the three alternatives. There was discussion about the extension of West Park Street, which would connect to Pansy Lane, the closest street. The city plans for West Park to be connected to the Fourth Bridge. In Alternative B, Pansy Lane would be a right-in/right-out turn only. There was discussion about pedestrian crossing that will have to be accommodated, such as across the new loop in Alternative B. Kratovil pointed out the crossing points that would be controlled by signals. There would be at least one bike lane along the access road, but it is not set yet exactly how the design will be incorporated into the trail system across the Alternative footprints.

5. Review Preliminary Access Plans

Connie Kratovil, Parsons Brinckerhoff

Jason Sheadel, ODOT

The PDT and audience circulated around the larger maps of the three alternatives to examine access proposals and other details about the alternatives. Staff reported on discussion and comments by CAC and audience during review of the maps the night before. Topics raised by the PDT in addition to access issues and requests included traffic signal placement, pedestrian access to the fairgrounds and other fairgrounds operational needs.

(Break)

6. Alternative Evaluation and Decisions

Angela Findley, Parsons Brinckerhoff

Findley referred to the revised matrix handout, which had been updated with the newest information. The evaluations address phase one only. She examined some highlights from the staff's scoring, reminding committee members that the ratings shown are staff opinions and PDT members could come to their own conclusions about how well the alternatives meet the project's goals. Findley also reported on CAC discussion including discussion about the significance of the difference in the various traffic v/c (volume to capacity) ratios. The ratio differences are small, and therefore insignificant in terms of congestion, staff said. Even with the added lanes, there is more traffic so the reduction in v/c is not substantial. Improvement would come from not having driveway conflict points, so the expressway traffic would move more smoothly between the intersections. Marmon cautioned against putting too much weight in traffic ratios. A more significant measure could be to examine before and after changes to travel time through the corridor, which might better illustrate performance of the road. Fortey asked about the consequences if phase two doesn't happen: What is the benefit of phase one beyond consolidating driveways? Findley said the benefits are shown in the other evaluation measures and in the areas between the intersections where traffic flows more smoothly.

PDT members discussed which alternative works best for the fairgrounds. It appears that A causes problems for operations impacted by the access road alignment and C might be the best. It was noted that although ODOT has been meeting with county and fairgrounds officials, the fairgrounds has not identified the alternative that works best for them or exactly where the Phase one access road will end along the fairgrounds frontage area.

As discussion returned to access, Findley reminded the committee that exact access will be worked out later. The criterion addressing maintaining adequate access was applied by measuring the amount of out-of-direction travel each alternative would require for motorists accessing project area businesses. Other discussion:

- Rough estimate cost of \$1-\$2 million for the bridge on Redwood Ave. in Alternative B, which might be a trade off against the amount of land and business that would be taken in Alternative A. However, the PDT noted that Alternative B also would require a larger number of businesses acquisitions for the connection to Ringuette.
- No grading is shown in the matrix for urban/rural transitional clues because that criterion was applicable to west, where the rural to urban transition occurs, but not the east which is all urban.

Public Comment. The meeting was open for public comments.

Colvin Oil comptroller Scott Redd said that given the impacts, Alternative C seems best. The station needs direct expressway access.

Loree Authur, Grants Pass Urban Area Planning Commission, said Alternatives A and C would be better for connecting to the fourth bridge.

CAC Votes. Findley reported the CAC recommendations as shown on Table 1 ('yes' vote is a recommendation to forward into the Environmental Assessment, and 'no' vote is a recommendation to drop the alternative from further consideration and study.

Table 1: CAC vote recommendations as reported to the PDT on July 14, 2006

	Yes	No
Alternative A	6	3
Alternative B	0	9
Alternative C	8	1

Table 1 shows the votes of the Hwy 199 Expressway Upgrade CAC recommendations, July 13, 2006. All CAC members present voted.

Decisions on Alternatives to Forward for Detailed Study in the EA. Marmon asked for discussion on Alternative A because of the CAC's split vote. Samson wanted at least two alternatives compared in the EA, although she favors C. Others agreed on the need for choice, and an option if one alternative is found to have a fatal flaw during further analysis. Several members said they saw problems with Alternative B. Also, members were asked to consider Dorothy Upton's votes, which she has submitted. Although she did not attend the July committee meetings, she has been at all other meetings and an active participant in the project on a daily basis. However, she didn't hear discussion from CAC or PDT this month. PDT members agree that they were comfortable with ODOT submitting Upton's vote. They were concerned about county's absence, and PDT members suggested that ODOT meet with all commissioners. It was noted that the county board will be changing in January. Marmon said that in other talks, the county and fair board seem to prefer C, as well as perhaps the city council.

Marmon asked that if the PDT votes to drop an alternative, the reasons for dropping be noted. There were seven voting members, including Upton. PDT votes are shown in Table 2, below

Table 2: PDT votes, July 14, 2006

	Yes	No
Alternative A	7	0
Alternative B	0	7
Alternative C	7	0

Table 2 shows the votes of the Hwy 199 Expressway Upgrade PDT, July 14, 2006. 'Yes' vote forwards an alternative into the Environmental Assessment, and 'no' vote eliminates it from further consideration.

PDT members discussed their reasons for voting to drop Alternative B. Reasons cited are noted here:

- Least phaseable of the alternatives
- High costs vs. benefit when compared to other alternatives
- Least compatible with 4 bridge (Allen Creek location)
- Least conducive to bike-pedestrian uses.
- High cost.
- Lack of public support
- Difficult business access from south of Redwood Ave.
- Poor redevelopment opportunities

- More out-of-direction travel, particularly with the loop movement at Allen Creek Rd.
- Forces the frontage road issue as part of this process rather than allow consideration of the frontage road as part of the South Y planning
- Larger impacts to businesses and fairgrounds
- Not intuitive for drivers to use
- Not addressing immediate safety needs
- Expense of bridge without much gain for traffic
- Low aesthetics value of bridge
- Cost delay with consideration for current funding and phaseability puts off addressing safety problems.

It was noted that only one alternative was presented for the west side, although some aspects of it were reevaluated in the June meetings.

10. Next Steps

Angela Findley, Parsons Brinckerhoff

The detailed environmental technical analyses will take a few months to prepare and results should be ready for review at meetings in October. CAC will receive email updates, and notice of any meetings ODOT might hold in the community so that they could attend. Also they've asked that the results of those meetings be shared with them. PDT members said they would like the same updates.

Findley also noted that Samson made a presentation to the CAC about a collaboration between the city and ODOT on a boulevard concept for Hwy. 199. Henderson asked if the city manager could make a presentation on what he is talking about, and then the PDT could decide if it supports the idea or some of the boulevard components. Samson said the city is just beginning to work on a plan and hopes to have some time to work with ODOT. Sheadel and the city are doing research on the possibilities for adding this treatment in as a design refinement of the preferred alternative.

11. Public Comment

Loree Authur, Grants Pass Urban Area Planning Commission, said both the CAC and public support a signal at Willow Lane and Hwy 199.

12. PDT Comfort Check

Vicki Guarino, RVCOG

Guarino said this is a time to check in with each PDT member to see how they are feeling about the process – if they're comfortable with what has gone on, or if they have concerns.

Jason Sheadel: Good.

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Jerry Marmon: OK, we have good decisions.

Laurel Samson: Good, but still cautious that the project not maximize safety and traffic flow at the expense of other amenities. There needs to be balance. Also, she asked for data on traffic impacts at other intersections along Redwood Avenue. She would like to see some traffic numbers. (Authur said she would like to see the counts for Willow and Hwy. 199) Samson said the PDT picked right alternatives – alternatives that offer the opportunity to meet community values and ODOT expressway needs.

Jon Jordan: We've moved from the general to the specific. It's nice to see everything come together and have agreement with CAC.

Tanya Henderson: Good. She likes to hear the public comment.

Tracy Rico: Very good. She's looking forward to having groups meeting to review the alternatives -- the city, county, and public.

There was PDT discussion about future joint meetings with the CAC, so that the PDT could hear public comment and perhaps take on some of the public pressure that has been focused on the CAC. Henderson said the PDT may need to meet jointly at night with CAC to make the difficult decisions about the alternatives. Samson said it would be helpful to have joint meetings so that everyone hears the same concerns, and no one feels they were blindsided. The joint meetings would have to be with CAC agreement.

Connie Kratovil: She wanted to note that ODOT has moved mail boxes on Hwy 199 so that no one has to cross the highway to get their mail. This was a complaint from several stakeholders when the project began. Sheadel said he called the postmaster, who approved the moves, and sent notices to the property owners for permission. ODOT maintenance crews did the work. In the end the problem was corrected in about a month.

Nick Fortey: Fine with the alternatives. His struggle is with the separate values for the elements of the alternatives. In particular, he'll need to see more information about restricting access and the benefits that come from that. Also, is the benefit sufficient to proceed with the project – the answer to that question will need to be explained.

13. Wrap Up

Vicki Guarino, RVCOG

Guarino said the next meeting of the project development team is scheduled for Oct. 13. The meeting adjourned at 11:45a.m.