



Meeting Date: Friday, June 9, 2006

Purpose: Project Development Team Meeting

Distribution: Project Development Team Members, public

From: Vicki Guarino, Rogue Valley Council of Governments

Date Prepared: June 12, 2006

PDT Attendees: Laurel Samson, Tanya Henderson, Jeff Hunter, Jon Jordan, Dorothy Upton, Jerry Marmon, Debbie Timms, Angela Findley, Vicki Guarino, Jason Sheadel, Connie Kratovil, Irv Citron (for Rowdy Bates), Chuck DeJanvier (for Jim Raffenburg).

PDT Absent: Tracy Rico (attended June 8 CAC)

Other Attendees: None

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 changes to the minutes of the previous PDT meeting. The PDT approved the minutes as presented.

2. CAC Update

Irv Citron, CAC

Citron said the CAC heard interesting safety information, but did not take any action. Detailed information on CAC recommendations and findings will be introduced as the topics come up in discussion.

4. Examine information provided to CAC at June meeting

Project team

Findley began by reviewing each of five bullet items which were presented to the CAC last night, and introduced Laurel Samson's presentation on the planning and contents of the city's

transportation system plan. Findley also touched on the safety presentation, saying the conclusion seems to be that the dangers haven't been reduced because of the efforts that already have been made, including stepped up enforcement and education. Upton said speed information showed a 4-mile-per-hour speed decrease, which was good, but a significant increase in the number of motorists violating the speed limit. Henderson said the information comes from the area around Midway, where the speed limit was reduced from 55 to 50 miles an hour. Timms said the data show that the education and enforcement haven't solved the safety problem and it's time to look to roadway engineering to improved safety. Jordan asked if the speed limit could be increased after the dividers go in and the safety record improves. He was told that would be a decision by ODOT. Also, the safety discussion included U-turn safety, with research showing that U-turns are among the safest movements in intersections. Marmon said the CAC has been very concerned that the U-turns on the western section of Hwy. 199 would not be safe. Jordan noted the exposure to traffic is much less because motorists making U-turns are exposed to traffic in only one direction.

Design components discussion—flyover and slip ramp

Modified Alternative A with a flyover -- Findley began by explaining the function of the flyover from Allen Creek and Redwood Avenue to east-bound Hwy. 199, referring to a map handout. Kratovil said this was suggested by a CAC member. As it was being developed, the most serious problem is the short distance between the flyover's east touch-down point and the Hwy 199/Ringuette Street intersection, and the resulting conflicts with drivers changing lanes to turn onto Ringuette Street. There also would be access difficulty in the area north of Hwy. 199 and east of Allen Creek Road. Jordan said the wall for the structure would be unsightly. The CAC did not want to move forward with this, and the PDT by general agreement agreed to drop it.

Regarding the Union Avenue slip ramp, Findley introduced the map handout illustrating pros and cons of this component. She reviewed the history of this component: the CAC originally moved this component forward, but the PDT voted to drop it last fall (2005). The CAC, however, continues to be very interested in seeing this remain a component. Marmon said the CAC voted 5-3 to continue this alternative with 2 people abstaining. Henderson expressed concern about people abstaining because it doesn't help the PDT make a decision. Citron said he felt as though there were two arguments going and the two people who abstained were not convinced by either side. Upton said this component, like the West Park connector, is part of a CAC idea that to improve the expressway as much traffic as possible should be pulled off the expressway. Several PDT members said getting traffic off the expressway is not the purpose of this project; the purpose is to make the expressway function better. Timms was concerned about the access control and possible right of way acquisition needed to move this component forward. Samson said it causes a lot of problems with only a little convenience to some motorists. It was noted that several months ago the PDT had voted to eliminate this component. It is being reconsidered now at the request of the CAC. Hunter and Henderson said there are not congestion problems that need to be fixed in the area of the proposed slip ramp. Samson asked if this entire area will be looked at with the South Y project. Sheadel agreed, saying this slip ramp seems like more of a north-south connectivity issue, which is what the South Y project will address, and not part of this project's east-west traffic focus. There was discussion about funding, phasing and the acknowledgement that the three lanes will be added to each direction on Hwy 199, but the frontage road will be reconsidered as part of the South Y study. Samson said she had thought all

of the highway work in this area will be considered as part of the South Y study. She asked about the city manager's request to change the highway designation from expressway to boulevard, saying that maybe the expressway designation needs to be re-evaluated in this area. Timms said this is the only connection to the coast for freight and people and to move traffic through the Oregon Transportation Commission designated it as an expressway. The OTC would have to change the designation. Samson said that changing the designation may make more local residents happy, and ultimately not cost a great deal in terms of travel time. Timms said there needs to be further discussion in July by both committees on the issue of expressway designation. She said the ODOT area manager might approach the OTC about its willingness to change the designation. Also, the PDT agreed there needs to be more information about what a boulevard designation would mean for this section of Hwy. 199. The PDT asked that the letter and attachments from the city manager to ODOT be distributed to the CAC and PDT at the July meetings. Discussion returned to the Union Avenue slip ramp. Citron said there are backups at the Fairgrounds Road intersection because of the very short distance. Samson said once the signal is removed there may be other things that could be done to move traffic, such as moving the stop sign at the intersection of Fairgrounds Road and Union Avenue. Marmon asked for a PDT vote because the CAC made a formal recommendation: the PDT voted unanimously to drop the slip ramp. There was discussion about Tracy Rico, who attended the CAC meeting but couldn't attend the PDT meeting. She has noted how she would vote and would like to have it counted. Several PDT members agreed that Rico had heard all of the salient information. Rico voted to remove the Union Avenue slip ramp from further consideration, making the vote 9-0 to again drop this component.

West Park connector. Findley referred to earlier analysis of this component and that even with an upgrade of the road classification beyond what the city had planned, it would not move a sufficient amount of traffic off Hwy. 199 to be worthwhile. The CAC remained interested in this component to protect businesses along Hwy 199 that would be directly affected by the frontage road component. Samson said there is not a choice of doing this and not doing anything else that would harm businesses and still solve the highway problems. Findley said that this design would involve widening Hwy. 199 and West Park and connecting West Park through to the Allen Creek Road area on Redwood Ave., and dropping the frontage road. The businesses would still have to have access off Hwy. 199 and there would likely be some driveway consolidations to try and improve traffic flow on the highway. There was also discussion about how this would fit with city plans, and Samson said the city council probably would be reluctant to change West Park if the home owners come out against it. Marmon said this group's decision has to address this project's purpose and need. He said West Park doesn't address safety and it does not substantially improve highway congestion. Henderson and Jordan said that like the Union Avenue slip ramp component, this connector doesn't do the job that needs to be done to accommodate traffic on Hwy. 199. PDT unanimously agreed to drop this component; also Tracy Rico voted against forwarding this component. There was discussion about how at least some CAC members felt as though they are being blamed by the public for design concepts that have the potential for harming property owners and businesses. Henderson said the public could attend the PDT meeting and there should be emphasis that the PDT is responsible for the decisions made. Citron also said people around town are blaming the CAC. Jordan said it is tough sometimes to look at the larger picture of what is good for the community as a whole.

(Break)

5. Revisions to Alternatives A and B

Connie Kratovil, Parsons Brinckerhoff

Jason Sheadel, ODOT

Kratovil began by reviewing the history of Alternative A, and some of the changes that have been made, generally to accommodate minor adjustments. She also introduced information that shows ownership of land in the area: city, county, private. There was discussion about a small piece of city land near Allen Creek Road and north of Redwood Ave. Jordon said that it wasn't directly discussed by this group last fall that the Pepsi Pavilion at the fairgrounds would be directly affected. Sheadel said the choice was between directly affecting the Pepsi Pavilion or several businesses. The route is drawn over the Pepsi building now as a place holder until further analysis is completed. Also, it was noted that all access details have not yet been worked out. Access information will be presented before the committees decide which alternatives to take into the environmental document, probably next month.

Kratovil continued to Alternative B. She reviewed the map handout and pointed out the beginnings of some access management work. There were no questions about this alternative from the PDT.

6. Alternative C

Connie Kratovil, Parsons Brinckerhoff

Jason Sheadel, ODOT

Kratovil said work on this alternative began two or three months ago. She referred to two map handouts illustrating this concept -- one showing the entire east section and the other a close-up of the Allen Creek area. As with alternatives A and B, staff has been trying to minimize business and fairgrounds impacts and maintain storage spacing for vehicles between intersections. She reviewed the significant design differences between this concept and Alternatives A and B, in particular the access at the fairgrounds. This concept does not address access management issues around Ringuette Street. This concept resolves access issues for the fairgrounds. The access road is a component, not an alternative in itself. As drawn it eliminates the frontage road, but doesn't resolve all of the access issues between Fairgrounds and Tussey. It is being developed to respond to the concerns heard from the public about the frontage road. In the Ringuette area the resolution likely would be driveway collectors and right-in, right-out access. Samson is concerned that people don't look at Alternative C and decide they like it simply because it doesn't show a frontage road. Timms said it also postpones some work in the area for the South Y project. In discussion it was noted that the alternative gives eastbound traffic access to the fairgrounds. Westbound access to the fairgrounds vicinity would occur directly from Hwy. 199 and via a lower speed, signalized, slip ramp to Allen Creek Road. This would eliminate the need for a higher-speed (sweeping) westbound slip ramp in addition to fairgrounds access (frontage road), thus reducing the footprint upon the fairground property and the adjacent area. It was noted that this option impacts properties that were not touched by previous alternatives. There was discussion about access to businesses around Ringuette Street. Fairgrounds impacts were discussed, including impacts to the racetrack, the BMX track, the fairgrounds light on Hwy. 199 and the Pepsi building and how Alternative C as a whole reduces these impacts. The frontage road could tie in with the access road to the Fairgrounds from Allen Creek Road could also be

viewed as a phasing of the frontage road concept. In all of the concepts there will be three lanes on Hwy. 199, eliminating the existing depressed median area considerably. DeJanvier said Alternative C has less impact to county property, but it should be disclosed that the frontage road still could be a part of the South Y project. Samson said drawings and alternative analysis should make it clear that there is an existing fairgrounds access from Pansy Lane. It was noted that in Alternatives A and C the fairgrounds could utilize this existing access. It was reported that the CAC voted 8-0 to continue work on this concept, with 2 members abstaining. The PDT voted unanimously to continue this alternative to July when it will be compared in the matrix against Alternatives A and B. Tracy Rico also had voted to continue analysis of Alternative C. It was noted that Alternative B probably would not be phasable because the frontage road has to be in place clear to Ringuette Street from the Allen Creek Road overcrossing to provide access to the Fairgrounds.

There was discussion about when in this planning process cost estimates will be presented. Staff said some rough construction estimates could be put together, but right-of-way area and associated costs won't be known until the technical reports are done, several months from now. However, estimates of the amount of property needs -- numbers of houses, businesses and full and partial acquisitions -- will be presented in July as part of the screening matrix comparison. In the discussion, it was noted that frontage road would be 30-35 miles per hour. The frontage road is designed to provide access to businesses that are losing access to Hwy. 199, not a bypass for through traffic heading to Redwood Ave. The purpose of the frontage road is to get turning movements off Hwy. 199, which improves safety. ODOT staff reported that they are setting up a meeting with Jim Raffenburg and the other county commissioners and the fairgrounds representatives to review options for fairgrounds access. The need to draw in the frontage road on Alternative C was discussed; it could be shown as a dotted line or different coloring, indicating its future need on all Alternatives.

10. Next Steps

Angela Findley, Parsons Brinckerhoff

Findley said for the most part, next steps have been brought up in this meeting's discussion. Committees in July will compare side-by-side various aspects of the three designs, including phasing, long-term impacts, etc., and making decisions about which alternatives to forward into the Environmental Assessment for detailed analysis. There was discussion about the scheduling and organization of public meetings during the time that work is being done on the EA when there isn't the month-to-month need for public or committee decisions/recommendations. During the past winter when there had been a break in the meetings, anxiety grew about what was going on despite email updates that had been distributed. The PDT suggested possibly holding brief update meetings, more email updates, or holding joint CAC-PDT meetings with attendance being optional for project staff to provide progress updates. Staff will give more thought on a future meeting schedule and in July the committees can decide how to go forward.

11. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

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.

Irv Citron: Same as last night (he was concerned that too little was being done in the western section of the project).

Jeff Hunter: OK, good to be moving ahead.

Tanya Henderson: Good.

Laurel Samson: Good, looking forward to discussing the boulevard concept, to see if it works. She also asked for information on Redwood Avenue traffic impacts from this project; Upton said modeling shows there is not much impact from Dowell Road west, but she is still studying impacts east of Dowell Road, however the traffic flows seem to be ok. Samson said the project will need to look closely at the Redwood Avenue traffic counts. She also suggested that the project give greater publicity to the PDT meetings to help send the message that it is the PDT, not the CAC, that makes project decisions and that these meetings are open to the public.

DeJanvier: OK given his limited background on the project.

Jerry Marmon: OK.

Dorothy Upton: Good discussion, and good to talk through issues to show that the PDT did consider CAC recommendations.

Jon Jordan: Good, senses a good understanding of the issues and there has been good input.

Jason Sheadel: Good, and glad to see the project move forward.

Debbie Timms: Good.

Angela Findley: Good.

Connie Kratovil: Happy to be moving forward.

13. Wrap Up

Vicki Guarino, RVCOG

Guarino said the next meeting of the project development team will be 9-11:30 a.m., July 14, in the Rogue Community College board room. The meeting adjourned at 11:35 a.m.