



**Meeting Date:** Friday, Aug. 10, 2007

**Purpose:** Project Development Team Meeting

**Distribution:** Project Development Team Members, public

**From:** Vicki Guarino, Rogue Valley Council of Governments

**Date Prepared:** Aug. 13, 2007

**PDT Attendees:** Tracy Rico, David Frasher, Tanya Henderson, Jon Jordan, Jerry Marmon, Jason Sheadel, Jeff Hunter, Dorothy Upton, Jim Raffenburg, Jayne Randleman, Angela Findley, Art Anderson, Dan Dorrell, Irv Citron, Vicki Guarino.

**PDT Absent:** None

**Other Attendees:** Nick Fortey, FHWA; Robert Bernstein, consulting transportation engineer/planner representing Grants Pass; about 10 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 July joint CAC/PDT meeting. The PDT approved the minutes as presented.

### 2. CAC Report

Irv Citron, CAC

Citron said the CAC appreciated the high standards of presentations, and that the voting was interesting vote. Details of the vote and CAC comments will be presented later in the meeting.

### 3. Meeting Objectives & Project Update

Jerry Marmon, ODOT

Marmon referred to PowerPoint slides, which were distributed at the meeting. He described the evaluation process used in past for review of Alternatives A and C. The new alternative under consideration comes by way of the public comment period on the Environmental Assessment (EA). Today the question is whether this new alternative should be forwarded into the EA for full analysis as was performed on the other two alternatives. Today's vote will be by secret ballot and PDT members will be asked to provide the reasons for their votes, which are just as important as the vote itself. He said he hopes for an open discussion. Frasher asked for the chance to comment openly.

Marmon described the development of the Grants Pass Working Group alternative, saying the design has been modified based on the traffic analysis that has been done by ODOT. The Grants Pass City Council has voted to formally submit the Working Group Alternative to the CAC and PDT for consideration in the process.

He reviewed the decision-making process to date and the next steps, which will lead to a decision on what to build. The question today is whether the decision will be among two or three build alternatives. Responding to a question, Marmon said the PDT could decide to support elements or parts of the Working Group alternative, and changes could still be made to it.

#### 4. Refinements Made to Working Group Alternative

Dorothy Upton, Jason Sheadel, ODOT

Sheadel referred to PowerPoint slides to describe the process of modifying the Working Group Alternative since the last meeting. Changes were based on traffic modeling which indicated queue lengths and necessary storage lane lengths. Modifications to Hwy. 199 were made to improve through traffic. He referred to maps as he described modifications in detail, and compared the design to Alternatives A and C.

- Between 6<sup>th</sup> Street and Ringuette: eastbound Hwy. 199 has a single left turn lane to northbound Ringuette.
- Fairgrounds to Allen Creek Road: there is a two-lane slip ramp from westbound Hwy. 199 to westbound Redwood Avenue, with the right lane becoming a trapped right-turn lane westbound. Center lane can turn right onto avenue also. Three through lanes on Hwy. 199 between Redwood Avenue and Allen Creek Road, dual left-turn lanes from eastbound Redwood Avenue to eastbound Hwy. 199 and exclusive right-turn lane from eastbound Redwood Avenue to westbound Hwy. 199.
- Allen Creek Road area: Prohibited left turns from southbound Allen Creek to eastbound Hwy. 199. The movement would be accommodated at the Redwood Avenue-Hwy. 199 intersection signal. Allen Creek Road would be widened between the highway and the avenue and have a median installed; a median added on Redwood Avenue between Hwy. 199 and Redwood Circle. Access to private properties provided by an extension of Allen Creek Road to connect to Flower and Pansy lanes.

- Allen Creek to Dowell Road: Highway 199 narrows back to two lanes in each direction.
- West of Dowell the alternative is the same as Alternatives A and C.

He noted that the Working Group is opposed to the median on Redwood Avenue, particularly between Allen Creek Road and Redwood Circle.

Upton reviewed modeling results, particularly along the highway. She explained organization of the volume/capacity (v/c) ratio table. The standard is .70, and the lane configurations described by Sheadel are intended to meet the standard at highway intersections. Five or 10 simulation model runs are done to produce each v/c result shown on the v/c ratio table as well as necessary queuing lengths. In discussing the results, she noted that Alternative C works better than Alternative A and the Working Group Alternative at Allen Creek Road because the heaviest traffic movement is a through movement, rather than a turn movement. The analysis shows that all of the alternatives perform similarly. Because of the similar performance results, the analysis went on to look at how the alternatives compare across the system, in the areas of signal progression and sensitivity to growth. Regarding signal progression, generally the more signals the more difficult it becomes to move traffic. The sensitivity analysis related to growth, especially unanticipated growth. This analysis considered the impacts of 10 percent additional traffic at each intersection, and is a measure of the flexibility of each alternative to continue to perform. Analysis showed the Alternative A could best accommodate the additional growth and that both it and Alternative C could be modified to accommodate growth while the Working Group alternative could not be modified.

There was discussion about the changes ODOT made to the Working Group design. Marmon said the changes are what ODOT sees as necessary to have the design perform adequately. Robert Bernstein, representing the city and the Working Group, responded to the ODOT changes. Although the Working Group disagrees with some changes, Bernstein said the city and ODOT don't seem to be far apart and there is room for compromise. For instance the single left-turn lane at Ringuette is desired by the city and Working Group, and keeping the road as narrow as possible helps pedestrians. In the West Y area (Allen Creek, Redwood Avenue and Hwy. 199) there are access concerns in the triangle area just west of the Hwy. 199 and Redwood Avenue intersection. Properties need a right-in/right-out on Allen Creek Road between the highway and the avenue, to assist in west-bound movement. Randleman said that for the access to work the property owners also would have to agree to some kind of internal circulation plan. Bernstein said an alternative would be for ODOT to buy the land and create the internal circulation among the parcels.

Marmon asked for group discussion on the Working Group responses to the ODOT modifications. Bernstein said there were really only two changes the Working Group wants at this point. His intent is to define the alternative for the PDT vote. Marmon said the design has to be feasible to ODOT first, because a design can't be put into the EA if it can't be built. Bernstein added that the screening process has to take into account all impacts, in this case the impacts in the West Y area. There was detailed discussion about access of various parcels in the West Y area and allowing a right-in/right-out on Allen Creek Road. Henderson said the new access proposal would require more building takes and Hunter noted that Alternative A provides the

access without taking private property. Upton said that from a traffic standpoint there are problems with providing right-in/right-out access on the east side of Allen Creek Road. The road segment is 250 feet long--just over eight car lengths. Providing drivers the expectation that they can cross traffic lanes in the short distance is not feasible. Alternative A lengthened the distance so the lane changes would be possible. Dorrell said through traffic would be interrupted by vehicles entering the road and attempting the lane changes before reaching Redwood Avenue. Bernstein said he hasn't had the chance to review the analysis, so maybe another configuration could work, such as a dual left turn. Dorrell said it would only work short-term and not really solve the problem. Dorrell also said he was concerned about safely preventing the turns from southbound Allen Creek to eastbound Hwy. 199. A physical barrier couldn't be installed, so there is concern that some drivers will attempt to do it, leading to enforcement problems. Bernstein said the long-term answer is grade-separating the intersection. There was discussion and doubts about the feasibility of funding for grade separation.

Another problem for the Working Group is access to properties north and south of Redwood Avenue west of Allen Creek Road. Properties on the south don't have access from the east and can't travel directly west. Upton said they all have full access by way of Dowell. Bernstein said some motorists will attempt unsafe, illegal turns if they are denied easy access and that results in a safety impact that should be considered. To solve this problem, Bernstein asked that the median be removed from Redwood Avenue between Daisy and Redwood Circle and replaced with a two-way left-turn lane. Concerns were raised by the PDT about having the turn lane in the location where the roadway narrows to one lane in each direction. A compromise was discussed to extend the median to just west of Daisy on Redwood Ave. and provide street access from Daisy over to Flower for eastbound access. It was noted that Alternatives A and C provide access in this area, and the new access would take additional property. Bernstein also asked the PDT to avoid making the conclusion that more signals on the highway are a bad outcome.

Discussing the Fairgrounds area, there was a Working Group request for a right-in/right-out access off Hwy. 199 or the Redwood Ave. westbound exit in the area of the YMCA, in case a planned fairgrounds circulation plan concluded that it is desirable. Raffenburg said the county hasn't had the chance to review the new plans, noting that what was being considered was not the city/working group plan but ODOT's modifications to that plan. Marmon said any alternative going forward is similarly modified to make it feasible. Frasher said he was concerned that the CAC did not have the original city alternative and the resolution and other comments from the city, and was concerned that the PDT didn't have the material either. PDT members said they had the material and project staff said it also had been supplied to the CAC.

*(Break)*

## 5. Comparison of Working Group Alternative to Alternatives A & C

Angela Findley, Parsons Brinckerhoff

Findley referred the PDT to the updated decision matrix, which was distributed at the meeting. She said it was based on the project goals and objectives and has been updated with staff findings for the Working Group alternative as refined by ODOT. She said it is meant to be a

guide, and individual team members could make different findings. She focused the discussion on four key areas: safety, operations, freight needs and environment.

- **Safety. The need to minimize deviations from design standards.** Bernstein disagreed with signal spacing being considered a safety problem, but some PDT members said it is a problem. Henderson noted that it has been a concern and is up to each PDT member to determine. Upton said the combination of adding a signal and the inadequate spacing is a safety problem and the reason the criterion was created. Raffenburg said it seems to be a new concern, because other segments of highway have closely spaced signals. Dorrell said the lights were installed before the bridge was built and the highway gained expressway status. Also, the intersections now are failing because the signals are too close. There was discussion of expressway designation. Frasher asked the group to consider the council's request to change the designation to better reflect the community's needs. Also, he said the analysis ignores the possibility of grade separation.
- **Operations. Maintaining adequate local access.** Findley referred to the colored maps that indicate access issues for all three alternatives. The key difference is the out-of-direction travel in the Allen Creek Road vicinity associated with the Working Group alternative. There was discussion about the fairgrounds circulation plan. Raffenburg said the county and ODOT would have to start over. Regarding Alternative A and C, he said the county's support hinges on all impacts to the fairgrounds being mitigated to the county's satisfaction. Frasher said Grants Pass has funds to help with a circulation plan, but if this project won't forward the Working Group/city alternative for further analysis, the city may be reluctant to spend more money on a fairgrounds plan. Jordan suggested considering parts of the Working Group plan. Marmon said that ODOT is committed to working with the county prior to removing the fairgrounds signal regardless of which alternative is eventually selected as the preferred alternative. Raffenburg said impacts beyond the signal also would have to be mitigated. He said adequate access would be access equal to or better than what is provided now, and noted that access is a concern for county public works. Responding to a question, Raffenburg said there hasn't been a traffic-usage study at Fairgrounds Road. Raffenburg said mitigation also would be necessary for county support of the Working Group alternative as modified by ODOT because the ODOT modifications cause more impacts—access losses – at the fairgrounds. Frasher asked for a break so that a city council member could speak but others said no, the council member should wait for the public comment period. Discussion continued with the modifications and whether there should be a simple vote on the Working Group proposal as presented. Frasher said the question now is whether there should be the opportunity for further refinement, and not everyone will be happy with the outcome. Marmon said any alternative has to be feasible before it can be considered in the EA.
- **Freight. Local access and regional flow.** The out-of-direction travel in the Working Group alternative is a concern for freight movements. Frasher said the finding ignores the possibility of grade separation, which avoids the damages that Alternatives A and C would cause.

- ***Environment. Displacement of businesses and residences.*** Findley referred to a chart showing 4 homes and 7 businesses taken for Alternative A; 2 homes and 8 businesses for Alternative C; and one home and 4 businesses for the Working Group. The total estimated cost for Alternative A is \$36.4 million; for Alternative C, \$35.8 million; and for the Working Group alternative, \$28.9 million

**CAC Vote Results.** The CAC made the following recommendations the previous evening

Question: *Should additional analysis be performed on the City of Grants Pass Working Group Alternative?*

Yes: 3 votes

No: 4 votes

Comments

- Among those voting *yes*:
  - Alternative is workable
  - Follow city recommendations
- Among those voting *no*:
  - Not adjustable (2)
  - Considered before
  - Focused on special interests and does not address primary needs of moving traffic safely
  - Not stageable
  - Not adaptable to future growth
  - Too much out of direction travel
  - Adding signals would cause more congestion
  - Bias of Art Anderson
  - Doesn't appreciate city expecting CAC to do what city wants

## 6. PDT Discussion on Further Analysis

Angela Findley, Parsons Brinckerhoff

Fortey suggested that it would be good to clarify what the alternative is—modifications or original proposal—to avoid possible process problems and assure there has been thorough evaluation of all reasonable alternatives.

There was discussion about the design the PDT should vote on and a general agreement that it should be clearly defined. Jordan said he wanted to avoid any vote that would be a deal-breaker for any party. Also the vote needs to reflect improvements for safety and congestion. Bernstein suggested that to move forward the group come up with the most workable version. To define the alternative that would be voted on, Marmon said it is the Working Group alternative with the following provisions:

- Fairgrounds right-in/right-out at Hwy. 199 at existing Fairgrounds signal
- Three fairgrounds properties acquired unless a circulation plane provides them access
- Medians on Redwood Avenue, which may be adjusted to end west of Daisy and east of the nursery driveway.
- Pansy extension for access from Redwood Ave./ Allen Creek Signalized intersection.

There would not be a right-in/right-out permitted on Allen Creek Road between the highway and Redwood Avenue.

It was confirmed in discussion that Grants Pass wouldn't fund the fairgrounds circulation plan unless the Working Group alternative, as modified by ODOT, is forwarded into the EA. However ODOT still is committed to working on a plan with the county. Raffenburg wanted it understood that there would have to be mutual agreement by both ODOT and the county and that the planning work would continue until the county is satisfied. It may take more than a year.

Access in the area around Daisy would be subject to further study, as would the extent of the median on Redwood Avenue.

## 11. Public Comment

A public comment period was opened.

Scott Redd, an Access member, said he support the Working Group Alternative as it was presented to the CAC. He said there have been so many refinements that it should go forward so that all the details can be worked out.

Tamerie Mesman, an Access member, said the green areas on the maps indicating properties with right-in/right-out access and out-of-direction travel should be larger on A and C. Marmon said the areas she indicated would not have out-of-direction travel and he explained the access plan on Redwood Avenue. She said she understood but still believed there was an impact.

Jim Rafferty, CAC member, said the Working Group Alternative should go forward for further analysis. He asked that the ODOT voting members be identified. Jason Sheadel, Jerry Marmon and Dorothy Upton identified themselves.

Art Anderson, ODOT area manager, noted the CAC comment about his bias and said he wasn't sure he understood what was intended. He spoke at the CAC asking for clarification about the sensitivity analysis and noted that the Working Group alternative could be made to function, but that it would be expensive. He was concerned because no one on the ODOT team has a bias concerning the project.

Rosie Burroughs, business owner, said she would lose her business with Alternatives A and C, but has an 80 percent chance of surviving with the Working Group alternative. She said her employees' jobs and the jobs at the businesses they serve would be threatened and asked that the Working Group alternative be given a chance to work. She identified the location of her business next to the BMX track.

## 6. PDT Decision on Further Analysis

Angela Findley, Parsons Brinckerhoff

Frasher asked for clarification on who votes and how. Findley said the vote would be anonymous by paper ballot. Raffenburg objected saying the vote should not be secret under Oregon public records law. He asked for the legal citation that permitted ODOT to conduct an anonymous vote. Fortey was asked to comment from a federal perspective and he said the ballots seem to be interim documents used toward making decisions and are not necessarily public. There is flexibility in the process. The legal requirement for this process is to show that a range of reasonable alternatives have been considered. Frasher also objected, saying preliminary drafts aren't public but something such as this vote is public. He said there is the issue of ethics and doing not just what is legal, but the right thing to do and it is likely that most members probably are comfortable announcing their vote. Jordon said he was a volunteer, not an elected official, and there is a difference. He is concerned about avoiding a coercive situation. Rico said she agreed that volunteers should be protected from the exposure; however she personally would not mind telling anyone how she voted.

Hunter asked about the cost to the project of adding the Working Group Alternative and performing the additional analysis. Marmon said there would be some cost to the project for the analysis and another open house and comment process, but much of the analysis work already is done.

Raffenburg repeated his request the ODOT provide him with the legal citation in Oregon law that permitted secret ballot. He said he would cast his ballot as ODOT instructs, but with the understanding that if ODOT is incorrect the vote will be redone.

Upton asked for clarification about the vote. Findley read the ballot aloud. Marmon repeated the description of the alternative as including:

- Fairgrounds right-in/right-out at Hwy. 199 at the existing Fairgrounds signal
- Three fairgrounds properties acquired unless a circulation plane provides them access
- Medians on Redwood Avenue which may be adjusted to end west of Daisy and east of the nursery driveway.
- Pansy extension for access from Redwood Ave./ Allen Creek Signalized intersection.

Members voted, and the following results announced:

- Yes, perform additional analysis – 6 votes
- No, withdraw this alternative – 3 votes

(Note: Raffenburg and Frasher signed their ballots.)

PDT members asked that the comments be compiled and forwarded to them. The comments are provided below:

Among those voting “yes”

- Vote based on statements made

- It is the only alternative that addresses community impacts, affected properties
- Public and local agency support
- May be a valid 20-year solution—needs more analysis
- Unanswered questions (medians, access, etc.)—needs more analysis
- Need to see if we can address the safety and access issues
- Not my preferred alternative, but let it stand on its own merits through the EA process
- Yes vote is conditional upon the following, otherwise vote is “no”:
  - No right-in/right-out on Allen Creek Road
  - No right-in/right-out between Allen Creek and the highway
  - With median to just west of Daisy
  - With north extension
- Yes vote conditional on the following:
  - No right-in/right-out on Allen Creek Road between Redwood Avenue and Hwy 199
  - Redwood Avenue median extending west of Daisy
- Every reason in the city’s written statements accompanying the Working Group proposal
  - This includes the significant city tax dollars that funded this alternative. At minimum, it should be studied through the entire EA process
- Alleviates harm to local businesses and economy
- Long-term, grade separation is far safer than alternatives A and C.

Among those voting “no”

- Should have come forward sooner. Too much time passed and lives are at risk
- Excessive queuing between lights on Allen Creek Road between Redwood Avenue and Hwy. 199
- Most of CAC reasons for voting “no”
- Confusing, dangerous signal at Redwood Avenue and Hwy 199
- Allen Creek Road between Redwood Avenue and Hwy 199 is too short
- We need to evaluate circulation for the fairgrounds
- Adding/keeping signal and Redwood Avenue creates more congestion
- Reducing traffic flow by limiting number of lanes on Hwy 199 west of Allen Creek (from 3 lanes to 2)

## 10. Next Steps

Angela Findley, Parsons Brinckerhoff

Findley referred to the process chart to describe the next steps of analysis on the Working Group Alternative. The process will take about a month. There will be a comment period and Open House to present the results of the full analysis. She said there likely would be just one more set of committee meetings, when the selection of the preferred alternative will be made. Committee members will receive updates and an announcement of the Open House.

## 12. PDT Comfort Check

Jerry Marmon, ODOT

Marmon asked to go around the table to check in with everyone.

Jeff Hunter: Glad to be moving forward.

Tanya Henderson: OK

Irv Citron: OK

Jason Sheadel: OK.

Nick Fortey: It was good to clarify the issues around the alternative's details. And it's good to consider when there is a public controversy. It makes the decision process more clear and there will be more security in the final decision. A late-developing alternative is not unusual.

Jerry Marmon: Good. It has been frustrating, but the process works.

Angela Findley: Pledged to do the analysis quickly.

Jayne Randleman: The process is working and thanked everyone.

Dorothy Upton: Fine, and appreciated that all PDT members attended.

Jim Raffenburg: Expressed gratitude to the team and staff.

Jon Jordan: Liked what Nick Fortey said.

David Frasher: Thanked everyone for serving.

Tracy Rico: Good.

The meeting adjourned at 12:45 p.m.