



**Meeting Date:** Friday, June 10, 2005

**Purpose:** Project Development Team Meeting #5

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

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

**Date Prepared:** June 16, 2005

**PDT Attendees:** Laurel Samson, Steve Hodge, Tanya Henderson, Jeff Hunter, Dorothy Upton, Jerry Marmon, Tracy Rico, Eryca McCartin, Angela Findley, Vicki Guarino, Ray Lapke, Brian Sheadel, Connie Kratovil, Irv Citron, Jon Jordan, James Burford, Dave Breshears, Nick Fortey.

**PDT Absent:** Jason Sheadel

**Other Attendees:** Del Robertson

## 1. Call to Order/Review Agenda/Approve Minutes

Vicki Guarino, RVCOG Facilitator

Vicki Guarino called the meeting to order at 9 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 reported on the previous night's CAC meeting. He said the main objective had been to make recommendations on how to reduce the number of concepts for the PDT to consider. The CAC is recommending one concept for on the western portion of the project area. A second concept is recommended to be dropped by a split vote.

## 4. Report on Upcoming Project in Hwy. 199 Project Area

Brian Sheadel, ODOT

Sheadel said a maintenance and safety project will extend the median at Tussey Lane. There was a discussion about how this work might be integrated with whatever plans come out of this project. This work is being done as a short-term, immediate project and can be removed if called for. This is

being done because there have been so many accidents from traffic turning. James Burford said the whole corridor has safety issues, which is why the Hwy. 199 environmental assessment is being done.

## 5. CAC and PDT Concepts

Connie Kratovil, Parsons Brinckerhoff

Kratovil presented all of the concepts developed by the CAC and PDT in May. Committees' concepts were illustrated on slides and handouts. She began with the CAC concepts, describing details on slide illustrations. There were no questions or comments.

She continued with PDT concepts, as she had the CAC concepts. She noted many commonalities between CAC and PDT ideas. The PDT was asked to check to make sure the details they noted were accurately shown.

In the eastern section of roadway, she noted common elements including treatment for eastbound traffic, but differences among westbound concepts. She noted that groups had only 25 minutes to work, so not all concepts were necessarily fully formed. For example, one concept showed four lanes westbound, although in discussion it was suggested that three lanes, or an acceleration lane might work better.

In discussion of East PDT 1 it was noted that the concept was not captured as the PDT intended. Instead of driveway consolidations on the north side of the highway, there should be 3 westbound lanes that connect to Redwood Avenue with a slip ramp. Some PDT members said that if adding three lanes would not work, the project needs to look again at the area because the option as drawn impacts a residential neighborhood. The issue won't be settled until there is a traffic analysis, but the PDT was in general agreement that they did not want both bulb-outs and additional lanes on 199.

In discussion of East PDT 2 there were questions about right-of-way costs and bridge costs. McCartin said there still is the option of scaling and phasing to control cost. Kratovil said there are several factors to consider when weighing right-of-way costs vs. structure cost. Marmon said concepts should not be dropped at this point in the process out of concern for costs. Too little is known about costs at this point to make any determination.

## 6. Traffic Modeling – Dowell Road to Midway Avenue

Dorothy Upton, ODOT

Upton distributed a handout addressing intersection capacity, highway standards and traffic volumes at intersections on Redwood Avenue and Hwy. 199 from Dowell Road to Midway Avenue (western portion of the project). She reviewed findings with the PDT. She described the meaning of the terms, and the traffic conditions expressed by the ratios and level-of-service standards. She noted the standards that apply to an expressway.

She also presented details about v/c ratios at intersections in the project area. The Redwood Ave/Hubbard intersection is about to rate as a failing now. In part, problems at Redwood Ave/Dowell are due to a less than ideal configuration. East of Hubbard, Redwood Avenue capacity problems involve many streets. Upton also pointed out a probable data problem with results for the Willow Avenue intersection with Redwood Avenue, which she will have to recheck.

There was a general discussion of traffic projections based on this region's transportation model. The model includes 20-year projections for development and employment growth by Portland State University which provides forecasts for the entire state. The forecast provides ranges for trending numbers from existing traffic counts. Jon Jordan said that he has been hearing about a lot of growth coming in Cave Junction area, which he thought would impact Hwy. 199 traffic. There was discussion about whether the model takes such information into account. It was noted that the model is based on the best available information including in this case the county's comprehensive land use plan. If the development in Cave Junction is in the plan, it would be included in the model.

Jerry Marmon asked about installing traffic signals. Upton said current option in western area leaves cross streets open, so there won't be a major shift in traffic flow – an increase in traffic elsewhere -- to warrant a light. There was discussion about the role accident history plays in warranting a light. Dave Breshears said the issue is whether a light would have prevented the accidents, and there have not been enough light-preventable accidents at this location. He also said lights cause accidents, so there is a trade off. Projected traffic indicates that signal warrants (#1 ) is not met at Hwy 199/Hubbard. If the PDT wants signal there, there would have to be further analysis to see if can qualify by meeting other warrants. Upton said it may qualify for a signal in 10 years with additional growth up Hubbard. Also, she said not all the local system changes have been put into the model at this point in the process. Also, a signal at Willow might not be possible because of spacing between Willow and Dowell. Breshears said Willow has not qualified for a signal in the past because traffic volume has not been sufficient. Jordan said having a light at every intersection is not an answer. Henderson said most accidents have been due to bad left turns.

## 7. Environmental Baseline Map

Angela Findley, Parsons Brinckerhoff

Findley referred to two maps, which were distributed to the PDT. She said the maps identify existing resources, so that later in the process it will be possible to determine how the concepts will impact resources. The maps identify wetlands (some already developed), historic and recreation resources. Wetland features shown on the maps will be checked in a ground-truthing process later. It is in the best interest of the project to avoid resources if possible, and minimize impacts if resources cannot be avoided. Impacts to some resources will likely require mitigation. No threatened plants or wildlife have been identified in the project area. Hodge noted Sand Creek and a conflict with irrigation, so it may not be a fish migration stream; Marmon said that it probably still would be critical habitat even if fish are no longer there. The goal of the federal protections is to eventually restore habitat.

On the east side, Findley pointed out the Allen Creek culvert, which blocks fish passage because it's so long -- about 700 feet. There was discussion about whether this project must improve the culvert, or not make it worse. ODOT representatives said that the answer depends on whether and how much this project impacts the culvert. If there is a significant impact, then this project may have to fix the causes of the fish blockage, which probably would be difficult. Findley also noted that park land would have to be protected. Federal rules require that if there is a feasible alternative that doesn't impact a park then that alternative must be chosen. Samson will provide information about additional city land earmarked for parks in the project area.

*(10 minute break)*

## 8. Evaluation and Recommendations on Alternative Concepts

Angela Findley, Parsons Brinckerhoff

Findley said the team would focus on concepts for the west portion of the project. She began by introducing West 6, a concept that is a combination of five different concepts: West 1, West 5, West CAC 2, and West PDT 1 and West PDT 2. She said not all details, such as the exact configuration at Arbor Ridge and Dawn Drive, have been pinned down.

She introduced West 7, which combines concepts West 3 and West CAC 1. There were no comments on the combination alternatives, which reduce the total number of different concepts. Also remaining in the evaluation process is West 2 and 4, because they are so different from other options.

The PDT was asked to accept the combination options. Jerry Marmon noted that the CAC unanimously approved the combinations, but asked for some leeway for needs that may appear later in the process. It was noted that the CAC recommendation for West 6 and West 7 at the west college entrance would be changed to a Willow Avenue style treatment, which would allow left turns into the college. Jon Jordan suggested a frontage road in front of the college. Eryca McCartin identified the PDT voting members and the PDT unanimously accepted the two combinations as accurate representations of the original concepts, leaving a total of four concepts on the west to be evaluated further.

Findley referred the committee to the evaluation matrix, which was distributed to the PDT at the start of the meeting. She noted that the ratings shown are somewhat subjective. If team members disagree with the rating shown, suggested by the management team, they should change it. Nick Forty said the evaluation matrix seems to be not enough of a fine-grained analysis. For example, he said, certain types of access will be better than others. Findley said that detail would come at later stages, when more details are worked out. James Burford said more traffic information also would provide greater detail. There was a question about when shaded out goals would be considered. In particular, there were objections to waiting until later in the analysis to rate concepts for multimodal values.

Under environmental impacts it was noted that the mini-couplet concept would have a greater impact because it would be so wide, about 150 feet, or three times the width of the existing road. In the real estate discussion it was noted that the existing right-of-way in the project area varies. The matrix recorded the varied right-of-way impacts of the four concepts.

Regarding construction cost estimates, it was noted that amounts were meant to provide comparisons among concepts rather than exact costs.

Nick Fortey said safety benefits are nebulous, and the criteria don't distinguish a range of benefit, especially for safety. Burford said the purpose of the project is to address safety but it seems minor in this rating system. Findley said the bubble scores aren't necessarily of equal value. On the other hand, at this stage this is not a fine-grained evaluation, and is subject to change. Hodge said he wanted to drop the mini-couplet concept because of expense. Marmon said the CAC recommended dropping West 2 and 4, keeping West 6. On West 7, six CAC members voted to drop it because it would have too many impacts and no benefits, but four CAC members said it should remain under consideration. Samson said if all the concepts are dropped, there wouldn't be any way to do a comparison. Upton said there will still be options and features to compare. Upton said West 4 has too many impacts. Others said that ODOT doesn't have the manpower to maintain landscaping in the

median of a mini-couplet, so it typically has the local jurisdiction that wants the landscaping agree to maintain it. Also, there was concern about safety with turn traffic having to enter the fast lane of the couplet.

PDT asked if it is possible to keep pieces of other concepts: ODOT representatives said yes, and other modifications can be made later. Samson was concerned that the mini-couplet never was really on the table and asked if that true of other concepts as well. She was also worried Hwy 199 won't have a signal at Hubbard, so the community will be stuck with road with median but no signal. If that happens the PDT should be able to start the design process over. Marmon said West 6 includes the Hubbard light, so it won't be done without a light. Tracy Rico said she wants to know from ODOT up front about aspects of plans that can't be done. Marmon said the couplet doesn't have a fatal flaw; that ODOT not wanting to maintain it is not a fatal flaw. Burford said not being able to phase, or to get more money, is a fatal flaw, but it appears that the couplet is fundable. Burford recommended keeping West 4 and studying it further for money and phasing. Henderson opposed phasing the western section because that is where people are being killed. She said the PDT needs to look at what can be done realistically to make it safer and for that reason the mini-couplet is not worth further consideration. Others agreed to address safety as the first phase and address other needs later. McCartin said the committees should be open to all alternatives and not worry about limitations in the beginning of the process. For instance, landscaping may yet be possible. Marmon noted that lots of design changes can occur throughout the process.

Hodge said that if a signal at Hubbard is not installed, then a pedestrian crossing is needed at Willow, with light, or maybe a pedestrian bridge is needed if a light can't be installed. The PDT wants to know if signals are possible so that if they learn a light is not possible in near future they can make design changes. There was discussion about the amount of pedestrian traffic. Some said people don't walk because it's too dangerous and the project can't base potential pedestrian traffic on current usage.

Hodge moved to drop West 2, 4 and 7; Marmon repeated the CAC recommendations, which essentially were the same as Hodge's motion, with the remaining alternative being subject to future change as the need arises. The PDT voted on each alternative separately. The PDT voted unanimously to drop West 2; voted 8-1 to drop West 4; voted unanimously to keep West 6; voted 8-1 to drop West 7.

Nick Fortey said it is important to have a reasonable range of alternatives to study. Marmon said the east side of the project will be different from the west, with many alternatives needing analysis. James Burford had concerns about dropping the couplet (West 4) now. Hodge said the project is not paying enough attention to the fourth bridge and the potential impacts it would have on the project area. Others said the bridge wouldn't make that much difference on the west. Also, it was noted the fourth bridge is an idea, not a certain project, and there is not enough detailed information about it for this project. Hodge questioned why the project can't model the fourth bridge, but can model a proposed Union Ave bridge. The answer was that the Union Ave. bridge is part of this project, but the fourth bridge is not, and it is not funded. Hodge said the fourth bridge would solve problems for this project area, but others said it wouldn't solve the Hwy. 199 safety problems. Samson said the Union Ave bridge would make a difference and the funding situation (re: an un-funded fourth bridge) shouldn't make any difference as far as considering it as a solution for this project. McCartin said funding is an issue in the sense that this project perhaps could obtain a few million dollars more, but not the \$30-\$50 million that a fourth bridge would cost. Hodge still has concern that fourth

bridge would have impacts on the western section of the project area. Jon Jordan said this project is looking at work that can be done in the next few years but the fourth bridge is too far in the future to consider now. Marmon said there is not enough certainty about the bridge for it to have an impact on this project. Findley said NEPA sets guidelines for evaluation of secondary and cumulative effects, which addresses project impacts that take place later in time and effects of other projects. She suggested that the PDT table this topic, and the Project Management Team will come back to make some recommendations in the future. Upton and Burford said plans for this project would not preclude a fourth bridge in the future.

There was a brief discussion regarding the east side concepts. It was noted that on East PDT 1, regarding the connectors at Tussey and Ringette, a connector would serve fairgrounds and dead-end at that point. It was noted that in the next set of meetings, the committees would evaluate the east side concepts using the developed evaluation criteria.

## 11. Public Comment

Del Robertson asked about the planning horizon for this project and was told it was through 2030. He said a signal is needed at Willow, especially for bicycle and pedestrian crossing, and money could be available from a variety of sources for the fourth bridge.

## 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.

Tracy Rico: OK, the decisions seem to be leading to a feasible project.

Jeff Hunter: OK, but there will need to be flexibility in design details.

Tanya Henderson: OK

Laurel Samson: Anxious about seeing that the project will still be flexible regarding design details.

Steve Hodge: Concerned that the fourth bridge as a solution to safety problems is being omitted. It probably would prove to be too expensive, but it is too soon to omit it now.

Jerry Marmon: Satisfied seeing the project make good headway, and the level of concern committee members are showing in their decisions.

Dorothy Upton: Appreciates everyone's hard work.

Ray Lapke: OK

Angela Findley: Sees the work becoming more challenging, and there has been good dialog around the decisions.

Eryca McCartin: The project is on an aggressive schedule, and this is the hardest part, figuring out which alternatives to move forward. She announced that an open house for all ODOT projects in the area would be held in Cave Junction on June 14 (copies of the press release were available).

Connie Kratovil: Excited about next month's meetings.

Irv Citron: OK and happy to see the CAC is being heard.

James Burford: Some concern that it may be premature to drop West 4. Need to document reasons for dropping this concept.

Dave Breshears: Unless there is a signal at this intersection, pedestrians and bikes will not have a safe crossing from a north side bike/ped facility. We need to conduct further analysis to determine if a signal would meet warrants and gain approval from the State Traffic Engineer..

Brian Sheadel: Enjoys the interaction, and sees the project moving forward.

Nick Fortey: This is a good group; concerned with the process and not sure about the range of alternatives for the west end. Cautioned against prematurely dropping concepts, and suggested that the evaluation matrix be refined to rank importance of the criteria.

### 13. Wrap Up

Vicki Guarino, RVCOG

Guarino said the next meeting of the project development team will be 9-12., July 15, in the Rogue Community College board room. The meeting adjourned at 12:15 p.m.