



**Meeting Date:** Friday, August 12, 2005

**Purpose:** Project Development Team Meeting #6

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

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

**Date Prepared:** August 17, 2005

**PDT Attendees:** Laurel Samson, Steve Hodge , Jeff Hunter, Dorothy Upton, Jerry Marmon, Tracy Rico, Eryca McCartin, Angela Findley, Vicki Guarino, Ray Lapke, Connie Kratovil, Rowdy Bates, Jason Sheadel, James Burford, Dave Breshears, Nick Fortey.

**PDT Absent:** Tanya Henderson, Jon Jordan

**Other Attendees:** Del Robertson

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

Vicki Guarino, RVCOG Facilitator

Guarino called the meeting to order at 9:15 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

Rowdy Bates, CAC

Bates reported on the previous night's CAC meeting. He said specific recommendations will be reported during the PDT's evaluation and discussion of east section concepts and alternatives. In general, though the CAC had a long meeting and struggled with the number of concepts and the variety of opinions. A lot of differing opinions were shared, but the group was able to make some recommendations.

## 4. Fourth Bridge

Eryca McCartin, ODOT

McCartin began by first making three announcements:

- An additional \$2 million for this project has been appropriated in the new federal transportation bill, which was signed this week by the President;

- Jon Jordan won't be able to attend, but McCartin gave him meeting materials and reviewed them with him. He gave her his comments and vote, and reviewed her notes of their conversation for accuracy. She will share his comments and vote with the committee as material comes up in the meeting; and
- Reminder to the committee that the purpose of this meeting is to reduce number of concepts. Eventually, the process requires that there be one alternative to be built. At this point, the task is to focus on the best of 11 concepts now on the table, because the project can't keep all concepts in the analysis process. The PDT needs to narrow the focus to elements and concepts that add value so that in September, after the open house, they can narrow down the options to just a few for Environmental Assessment.

Regarding the Fourth Bridge, she noted that the PDT raised this as a possible alternative at their last meeting in June. The Project Management Team responded by preparing and evaluating the Fourth Bridge as another alternative, East 6, which will be discussed later in meeting.

## 5. Review of East Concepts & Traffic Modeling

Connie Kratovil, Parsons Brinckerhoff; and Dorothy Upton, ODOT

Kratovil began by reviewing all 11 of the east section concepts. She reminded members of the details in all of the concepts, referring to maps of each concept in members' project files. Three revised maps were distributed at the start of the meeting, included the new option for the fourth bridge. There was some committee discussion of the alternative features. Upton brought up some of the CAC concerns and suggestions as concepts were reviewed.

Upton introduced the traffic modeling results. To run her evaluations, she said she grouped like elements from each of the concepts, so the PDT will be looking at modeling results for elements common to groups of concepts. She presented the data using a simulation and focused on congested intersections. The results illustrated traffic flows and delays in the design elements projected to the year 2025. There were questions and discussion from the group about the delays shown. She noted that the model doesn't include at this point all of the traffic from driveways and small collectors.

Traffic findings and PDT discussion, by element, were as follows:

**Union Avenue Slip Ramp** would reduce traffic on Hwy. 199. Upton said that it would have other impacts elsewhere. It moves traffic onto Union Avenue from Ringuette to Hwy. 238. To accommodate traffic and keep the traffic flowing adequately there would likely have to be a traffic signal installed at Union/Ringuette as well as a dual left turn lanes for eastbound to northbound. There may not be adequate distance (road length) extending back to Redwood Highway (along Ringuette between Union and the Highway) to accommodate vehicles. Speed would have to be increased to 35 MPH.

**Fourth Bridge** shows neutral impacts on the project: it relieves some traffic, but it also draws in more traffic. Steve Hodge suggested that if additional intersection improvements are made, then maybe the bridge would function better for this project. Upton said that it wouldn't have a big impact on traffic flows, maybe 1-2 percent. Hodge said he could see how the bridge might benefit the entire city area, but not help the project area. Samson said she would need clear explanation and

supporting documentation to present to the Grants Pass City Council, because the council is thinking the bridge would solve problems at the South Y too.

**Additional lanes**, Upton said the lanes aren't used equally, so adding a third or fourth lane doesn't have the same benefit as a second lane because of lane changes and other traffic movements. It also adds problems for pedestrians, and the traffic weaving requirements adds potential vehicle conflicts which makes it less safe. Nick Fortey said that the group could consider some improvements to local streets to make the additional lanes work better. There was some discussion about possible changes to side streets. Samson said the project shouldn't remove a lot of the side connections.

Upton presented a summary of her findings and recommendations. Based on the traffic analysis the recommendations are:

- Drop from further analysis
  - West Park connector;
  - Additional lanes; and
  - Fourth bridge.
  
- Elements for further discussion:
  - Redwood Avenue connector;
  - Union Avenue slip ramp; and
  - The concept of frontage roads and driveway collectors.

Hodge asked if removing the additional lanes option would be premature now. The answer was no, that the project could add back lanes later if needed in some other concepts. Also, Jerry Marmon said that the other concepts, because of their free-flow measures (removing traffic lights), may on their own solve the traffic problems without adding the lanes. It was noted that not adding lanes would be the safer choice. There was more discussion about keeping the option of adding lanes on the table. The danger to pedestrians and bicyclist with the additional lanes also was noted.

Rowdy Bates noted the CAC's discomfort with dropping options all together. A better process may be to vote on elements to drop rather than entire options. Marmon noted the difficulty in addressing both the safety and traffic needs of this project. The group noted the need to balance the demands.

*10 minute break*

## 6. Evaluation and Recommendations on East Concepts

Angela Findley, Parsons Brinckerhoff

After the break, Findley presented the updated version of the evaluation matrix handed out at the start of the meeting. Discussion resumed on the east section elements that could be dropped from further consideration at this point in the evaluation process. The process will be to evaluate the elements, and the matrix is for reference. She described details and changes in this version of the matrix (Aug. 8, 2005 version).

Each design element was reviewed and discussed as noted below, with PDT votes.

**West Park Connector.** Findley said the CAC voted, 6-4 with one person undecided, to drop this element. Bates said some CAC members wanted to keep this element if the city would raise the speed limit and make other improvements, but the city has said there are no plans for that. Samson said there are grade, visibility and neighborhood issues associated with making the road faster and able to handle more traffic, but it eventually will carry more traffic after planned city improvements. The city's idea, however, is to keep traffic moving slowly. Findley said the concepts that use this element are East 2, East 3, East 4 and East CAC 1A. She said other matrix issues and conflicts including Section 4(f) park issues are encountered with these options.

McCartin reported Jon Jordon's comments (in the project file) focusing on concern for neighborhood impacts. Fortey suggested further analysis, specifically to model again with increased the speed. Upton said the project time frame doesn't permit repeated evaluations, additionally it doesn't seem to be promising because it isn't impacting traffic and has so many other problems. Hodge said doing the additional modeling isn't that much extra work. McCartin noted that if the higher speed worked in drawing traffic, it would still have the other impacts, and would this feature still be worth considering. The PDT considered what percent of traffic would need to be drawn for this to be viable? Samson suggested setting a percentage and if the connector doesn't meet it at 35 miles per hour then staff could automatically drop it. She suggested a 15-20 percent reduction. Upton said modeling has to show a 10-15 percent change to be able to say that it's affecting traffic loads, and for new roads the standard is 15-20 percent. James Burford proposed a 20-percent threshold. There was discussion that the vote would be to drop this concept unless it reaches a 20 percent change, which would also compensate for the neighbor/park impacts. This element will be forwarded if it achieves 20 percent or greater reduction on Hwy. 199, at 35 mph and with collector status, which may require other improvements such as adjusting curves and slope.

The PDT voted to forward if it does meet the threshold: 4 yes, and 3 members voted to drop now. Also, McCartin said that Jon Jordon voted to drop, but his vote did not reflect the conditional option proposed. Marmon noted that if the connector doesn't meet the 20 percent requirement, this concept will be dropped and won't appear at the open house.

**Fourth Bridge.** Findley reviewed the staff recommendations recorded on the matrix for East 6. There was discussion about residential displacements. Hodge asked about the five business displacements; he said the county owns that land and the business lease from the county. Leaseholders know their time at that location is limited. The CAC voted unanimously to drop this alternative because of safety and cost, but CAC wanted to be able to accommodate fourth bridge if one is built in the future. Fortey said the EA should explain how the Hwy 199 project's selected alternative would be compatible with a future, fourth bridge. McCartin reported that Jordan had said the bridge is nice concept but not for this project.

The PDT voted: 0 to forward and 7 to drop this alternative. After discussion, PDT members agreed that Jordan's votes can't be counted because he had not participated in the discussion, but his comments will be kept in the record.

**Additional lane.** This feature is in East 4, East CAC 1A, East CAC 1B, and East PDT 1. The CAC voted 9 to forward, 1 to drop, and 1 undecided on whether this element should be considered as sole fix to the project, Bates said. The CAC agreed that this option should be kept as part of a possible mix of options later. Marmon noted, for example, that East 4 is just adding a lane. McCartin said Jordon agreed with not forwarding the additional lane element (full comments in record).

Ray Lapke said half lanes and other options could still be considered in the future even if this element is eliminated now. Samson asked if anything would be accomplished by keeping this element in. Upton and Jason Sheadel said that if it is eliminated as a stand-alone feature, the extra lane could be an element in another concept if needed. Sheadel said if the PDT keeps this element in, then the project would have to continue making adjustments to try to make it work. Samson said it seems preferable to go to driveway collectors/frontage roads, using additional highway lanes if needed.

The PDT discussed a vote to forward the additional lane as a primary component vs. keeping it as tool if needed. Burford said the project can't just drop it and not consider using it in the future. Hodge said the preference seems to be to use frontage roads and access control over adding a lane. Findley noted that the team does not have sufficient information to make a decision regarding frontage roads. Fortey said additional through lanes could still be valid. The frontage roads and turn bays may trigger other impacts that will need to be addressed with additional lanes. Burford said additional lanes would require stricter access control for safety, so there would have to have more frontage roads anyway.

There was additional discussion about adding a lane vs. other measures such as access controls and frontage roads. Samson wanted some option other than putting in frontage roads. Shaedel said the driveway collectors have to be done regardless of other elements used. Responding to Samson, Marmon noted that East CAC 2, the 6/21/05 version, would be one such alternative that has neither additional lanes nor frontage roads. Samson noted that East 3 minimizes frontage roads and may require a third lane. Marmon said the issue is whether to go with an alternative that just adds lanes or one that adds lanes as part of some other concept or set of features.

The PDT discussed a vote to keep a stand alone 3 lanes west bound concept, and minimize collectors to make it work, keeping local and through traffic on the same road. Burford said the question will be how many access points have to be closed to make the 3-lane work. For instance, would Ringuette have to be closed? Then based on how many accesses are lost, the PDT could make decision on this option. Fortey said it may be to onerous to pursue the issue in this fashion, but he recommended that the project show what would have to be done (how much access lost) to make the concept work.

The PDT voted to keep for further analysis added lanes in whole or in part: 4 members voted to forward this concept for further analysis; 2 members voted to drop this element now. One member abstained.

**Union Avenue slip ramp.** CAC voted 9-2 to keep this option for further analysis. Upton talked about further modeling steps and the design refinements that will have to be made for her to model it further. For example, one end of Nebraska may have to be closed to make this element work traffic-wise. It was reported that the CAC talk about this element as a good option to do if the project has money left over. Marmon said the trouble with that plan is that if it's not needed to fulfill the project's needs, then why do it? The project needs to develop a comprehensive solution either with the slip ramp, or without it. It also was noted that the CAC had bike-pedestrian concerns with this element. So given the project purpose and need, and funding limits, does this project want to continue with this at all, Upton asked? She added that it would impact hospital traffic. McCartin reported that Jordon said if there are other alternatives for access and traffic flow (i.e., Fairgrounds

and Ringuette), the slip ramp can be dropped. Other needs may be a right-turn lane for the Fairgrounds, or acceleration lane on Hwy. 199. Some PDT members agreed that a dedicated right-turn lane might be a better option. The PDT voted unanimously (7-0) to drop this element.

The PDT was reminded that they will see fewer options at the Open House, depending on West Park findings.

## 7. Next Steps

Angela Findley, Parsons/Brinckerhoff

Findley told the PDT the time and date of the Open House. She said comments received at the Open House will be summarized and presented to the committees in September. Also in September, the committees will receive additional traffic analysis. The goal at the September meeting will be to refine the alternatives that will be forwarded into the Environmental Assessment.

## 8. Public Comments

Vicki Guarino, RVCOG

Del Robertson, asked about the decision on the realignment of Redwood Avenue with Allen Creek Road, and McCartin said that element is part of other designs that will be coming up in future traffic analysis. He said West Park may come up again in discussion on the South Y.

## 9. 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.

Laurel Samson: There were some hard decisions, but feeling OK. She has some concerns about West Park upgrading and the impacts on the neighborhood.

Tracy Rico: OK.

Jerry Marmon: OK. Sees progress being made and this is the hardest part of the process.

Jeff Hunter: Good, although there were some hard decisions.

Steve Hodge: Good.

Jason Sheadel: Good discussion; covered all aspects.

Rowdy Bates: OK. Happy with the West Park decision.

Ray Lapke: Good.

Connie Kratovil: Good, received clear direction.

James Burford: Good.

Vicki Guarino: Noted the difficulty of the decisions, and appreciated the way committee members used the analysis to help form decisions.

Eryca McCartin: Pleased that the meeting produced some good decisions

Angela Findley: Appreciated the direction and hearing the local voice

Dorothy Upton: Appreciated the clear direction she was receiving.

## 10. Wrap Up

Vicki Guarino, RVCOG

Guarino said the next meeting of the project development team will be 9-11:30, Sept. 9, 2005, in the Rogue Community College board room.

Also, she reminded everyone about the Open House Aug. 25 at the Grants Pass YMCA gym. She thanked everyone for their hard work and giving extra time to the project.

The meeting adjourned at 12:35 p.m.