



Highway 62 Corridor Project

Date: November 2009

From: Sue Casavan, RVCOG

Re: **PROJECT DEVELOPMENT TEAM (PDT) / CITIZEN
ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAC) JOINT MEETING MINUTES
for November 4, 2009**

CAC Members in Attendance: Mike Malepsy, Susan Rachor, Paige Townsend, Becky Brooks, Bill Blair, Richard Moorman, Mike Montero, Don Riegger, ~~Nanci Watkins~~, Mike Gardiner

CAC Members Absent: Wade Six, Nanci Watkins, Curt Burrill, David Christian, Bob Plankenhorn

PDT Members in Attendance: John Vial, ~~Mark Gibson~~, Brian Dunn, Suzanne Myers, Vicki Guarino, Al Densmore, Anna Henson, Chris Zelmer, David Elliott, Nick Fortey

PDT Members Absent: Mike Quilty, Mark Gibson, Dale Lininger

Location: Rogue Community College, Table Rock Campus

Guests: 42 members of the public

Staff Present: Tim Fletcher, Art Anderson, Dick Leever, Debbie Timms, Lisa Cortes, and Gary Leaming of ODOT; Terry Kearns of URS; Pat Foley and Sue Casavan of RVCOG

1.0 Review Agenda and Approval of Minutes

Terry Kearns, URS

Terry K. convened the meeting of the Highway 62 Corridor Project at 6:05 p.m. He asked committee members if there were any additions or corrections to the September 30, 2009 meeting minutes.

On a motion by Mike Malepsy and seconded by Don R. the committee unanimously approved the September 30, 2009 minutes as presented.

2.0 Project Update and Object of Tonight's Meeting

Terry Kearns, URS

Terry K. said that staff was in the process of finishing the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) which looks at the entire corridor. He added that it has been a long process of looking at alternatives and it is now narrowed down to two alternatives and a no-build. He informed the committee that the costs for the entire corridor are high and whatever will be built will be done in phases. In the DEIS there will be a 45-day comment period on the alternatives and once an alternative is chosen it will be advanced into the design stage. He said the region is in a unique situation because the legislature has been able to secure money and provide an opportunity to build a phase of the project. He explained that the public will have an opportunity to comment through a series of workshops and public hearings.

John V. said that in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process the final decision cannot be presupposed and he wondered if advancing this phase would be inconsistent and how would it be reconciled. Terry K. responded that an action was not allowed that would preclude another action from occurring and the interim solution Phase II fits into both of the build alternatives on the table. He added that ultimately the community could decide to take a no-build and what would happen in that case is that the remaining phases of the project would not be built. He emphasized that the interim phase was not precluding any of the three decisions from occurring. He said the purpose of this meeting was to get recommendations from the committee and the public on where the north terminus should be.

3.0 South Terminus Update

Terry Kearns, URS

Terry K. presented maps of the proposed Phase II alignment showing the two full build-out alternative alignments with Phase II overlaid. Both alternatives envision a future interchange at Vilas Road.

Vicki G. asked what the length of the full build-out was and Terry K. responded that it was 8 miles and the length of Phase II was about 3 miles.

Terry K. said at the last meeting there was a unanimous vote from the committee to use the free flow interchange for the South Terminus and he informed the committee that ODOT had concurred with the recommendation.

4.0 Update on Design Changes

Tim Fletcher, ODOT

Tim F. showed a map of the proposed Phase II Design and said one of the constraints ODOT was working with was the funding of \$123 million. He said they were currently looking at a grade-separation at Vilas Road (no access at location, no ramps) where the highway will pass over Vilas and tie into existing Hwy 62 at the north. He showed the proposed costs for the South Terminus and added that there were comments made by several people to look at extending two

lanes in each direction through the bypass which would cost approximately \$5 million more. In order to optimize available funds, he explained that staff looked at pulling the Northern Terminus further back to the south.

5.0 North Terminus Options

Tim Fletcher, ODOT

Tim F. presented maps and explained alignment differences between the two North Terminus Options. He discussed the required land use actions and said a goal exception was required for either option.

He discussed cost differences and volume to capacity ratios between the free flow and signal option.

Free Flow

- Significant impacts to access on Hwy 62
- Southbound movement would come up over the top of the bypass movement for traffic going northbound on Hwy 62
- With the elevated move, access to properties would be pushed farther to the south to Justice Road

Signal

- Discussed impacts to properties and modified accesses
- Frontage road as close to Hwy 62 as possible to minimize impacts, looking at what could be done to provide full movements

Tim F. informed the committee that over the past couple weeks ODOT had met with various business owners and collected feedback from them resulting in the graphics being slightly different than from the previous meetings.

He discussed bike/ped accommodations adding that the Free Flow option was extremely costly and problematic and said accommodations would be much easier to address with the signalized intersection.

Nick F. asked what scale of the access points were and Chris Z. responded that they were 700 feet from the stop bar.

Man from the audience asked if the highway was divided between the two access points and Tim F. said there would not be a physical barrier but there would be separation between the southbound lane and the roadway providing access. There would not be an opportunity to turn left into the businesses if heading north.

John V. commented that the southbound off-ramp was encroaching upon those businesses and he asked why the road could not flyover Hwy 62 and merge on the right hand side which was much more standard. Tim F. said that staff had looked at that in another location and it would add \$20 million to the cost and would possibly be looking at pushing Crater Lake Avenue out to accommodate that.

David E. asked how it was determined that this would be the point or area to tie in and Tim F. responded that the greatest benefit was to get as far to the north as possible, the ultimate build-out will eventually go out to Corey Road but to make four lanes with the allotted funds the options were pulled further to the south. David E. asked why not consider taking an interchange to Vilas Road and provide two lanes from there through the South Terminus. Tim F. said that was something ODOT had looked at but it would concentrate all the traffic on Vilas Road and the analysis said it would not operate well.

Man from the audience asked if that many access points on the 8 miles were originally considered and Tim F. responded that in the future the connection will be severed and not provide access to the bypass.

Suzanne M. asked if the at-grade intersection would reduce the amount of traffic that would choose to use the bypass and Tim F. said he did not believe so, if going southbound on Hwy 62 and wanting to get on the bypass there would be no stopping at the signal and there would be a stop only if getting off the bypass.

Paige T. asked if travelling northbound and want to get on the bypass would the signal be used and Tim F. responded if travelling northbound on Hwy 62 that movement would not be accommodated.

Paige T. asked if modeling was done for freight coming off of Hwy 140 and Brian D. responded that freight was not specifically modeled at this point. Paige T. asked if the interim phase would still meet the purpose and need of this project and Brian D. said yes, the project will pull about 25,000 trips (2030 numbers) a day and expressed as a percentage it would be 26-36%.

David E. asked if he was travelling northbound on Hwy 62 how would he get to the businesses north of the interchange and Tim F. said he would turn on the frontage road depicted on the map.

Vicki G. asked if a free flow interchange with ramps at Vilas Road was considered and Tim F. responded that ODOT looked at several configurations and for the money that would be invested at Vilas Road (\$30-40 million) the volume to capacity ratio was not that impressive. Brian D. added that it would all be throw away and once all the traffic is pulled out of the old Vilas Road intersection it actually operates really well with the current configuration.

Tim F. said that ODOT would like to hear comment from the public to better understand what their concerns are and then come back to the committee and obtain information about other concerns or locations they should be looking at. He added that staff will take information from tonight to plan further analysis and assessment.

6.0 Public Comment

Terry Kearns, URS

Terry K. said there would be a short break before public comment and asked members to take a look at the maps and see where locations were for a North Terminus. He said the members will be asked to recommend a northern terminus location.

Tim F. informed members of criteria to be considered for identifying locations:

- Cost
- Operations
- Right of Way (ROW)
- Planning issues
- Transit / Bike / Pedestrians
- Access Issues
- Community Perception

Kent Gutches: He said he owned a business in the area of the proposed options and stated that both options would be terrible for the businesses. He added that the access issues will certainly cost money to already struggling businesses. He thought there should be another plan that goes down the Haul Road all the way to Corey Road and that would have the least impact by far. He also wondered why ODOT could not stop at Vilas Road and wait until funding was available to go all the way to Corey Road. He asked why the Haul Road was taken off the table at the time of the Peace/Justice Road meeting and said he was not sent notice of this meeting. He added that the EFU property had been in his family for 40 years and if the alignment goes through the middle of it the property will become useless. He did not see how this could be the best plan in any way. He and Dr. Young stated that they might consider donating the right of way if ODOT was able to help them with a future zone change on their property. Terry K. said the DEIS will discuss why it was not possible to go out the Haul Road and added that there were a number of reasons to dismiss it. He said the Peace/Justice Road meeting was about will the bypass go over Peace/Justice Road or shall Justice Road go over the top. Kent G. summed up that he thought this would be terrible for the businesses and should not be done. He wanted to see the Haul Road option back on the table.

Ted Dole, owner of Water World: He informed the committee that his property was not an empty field but a lifelong investment with a master plan area. He was on a former Hwy 62 CAC and told members he appreciated their work. He emphasized that members take a look at the human impact, the numbers of families affected and businesses eliminated. He stressed the point that the businesses are retail and require access to stay viable. He noted that Hwy 62 was an important business access road and this area was the next step in UGB expansion. Kent Gutches said if they went back to the Haul Road option and put the EFU in the UGB or help with resale he would give ODOT the right of way on his property which would amount to a half mile of free access. Ted D. asked what a mile of straight paved road would cost and Chris Z. said about a million dollars without structures. Ted D. thought it was about a mile and a half from the proposed terminus down to Corey Road and he thought ODOT should think about it as it would have the least impact. He felt the options were chosen because it was the simplest way to get it done with the financial time constraints and I didn't think that was right.

Byron Van Kley representing Adair Homes: He said the business moved to this property about a year ago and Adair Homes has invested tens of thousands of dollars. They have been in Medford about 10 years providing high quality affordable housing. He noted that the business moved to this site specifically for the visibility achieved. He added that this was not a wholesale business and location does matter. The business has served thousands of regular people and they sure hope that will be taken into account.

Clark Stevens: He asked if the DEIS identified and studied the interim locations. Terry K, responded that the document discusses that whatever alternative is selected it will have to be phased and when an alternative is selected the document will go into much more detail of what those phases might be. He said what needs to be shown on a phase of a project is that it has independent utility and does it have a logical termini. Clark S. asked if this body was being asked to make a decision before the DEIS was available and Terry K. said no, we are asking if this was a phase where would we terminate it to the north. Clark S. referred to the comment Terry K. made earlier about not taking any action that precludes other solutions and said Mr. Gutches made a third option of staying on the Haul Road. He asked if any of the interim projects occurred wouldn't the bridge over Justice Road and that alignment preclude any other options available on the table. Terry K. responded that if Justice Road goes over the top of the highway as is normally done the fill slopes and the embankments would take out most of the homes and by taking the highway over the top that does not happen.

Bill Smith: He said he owned the building currently leased to Adair Homes and when he leased this property to Adair Homes it was in the hope of having a long term tenant. He said with the options the economic viability of the property will be questionable and Adair Homes is a significant contributor to the Medford economy. He felt whatever needed to be done to go back out to the Haul Road should be looked at it would have the least impact to everyone concerned. He added that if for some reason it was just not a possibility and this had to be done, between the two the more feasible one to him would be the signal.

Dean Evans, owner of Trailer and RV Parts Warehouse: He said he was one of the affected businesses and moved from a previous location because of traffic and the difficulty for people getting in and out so he had moved here because of the great access, easy to get on and off, have big vehicles coming in and out, and many customers come back just because of the current location. With these options he could not imagine what it would do to his business. One of the options was to do nothing and he said that sounded like the best thing to do instead of wasting millions of dollars to put several businesses out.

Linda Massey: She owns the property between Trailer and RV Parts Warehouse and said ODOT was talking about taking a few parking spaces. She noted that when improvements were done a few years ago ODOT insisted that they had to have so many parking spaces and she asked if now it was okay to eliminate two of them and staff replied yes. She felt if two spaces were taken it would put them out of business. They are full to the edge as far as they can go with big equipment. She said they bought the property several years ago with the intent of having this access. She noted that all the businesses are retail and invested because it has access both ways. She felt they would lose a lot of business and added that large semis enter for deliveries and that will become impossible.

Frank Surma: He said he owned property in the area and spent money and time making it a nice piece of property along Crater Lake Hwy. He noted that this alternative will damage it severely and hurt all the businesses. He commented that if the state wanted to own it more than he did he would have to accept that but this will certainly damage the economic viability of his property.

Marty Bauer, Portola Properties, owner of the property occupied by the John Deere dealer: He said he would like to start by apologizing for the letter he distributed because there was some data very different from what was presented tonight. He thought that speaks to how rapidly the project was being thrown together. He noted that on Monday he was told that the access point would be a right in right out only and tonight it is free access in either direction. He added that Ted Dole remarked how the numbers have changed about the percentage of through traffic pulled off and it has been said that this is a temporary fix but he felt strongly that this was not temporary for any of the property owners. His understanding was that this corridor would be set aside as a commercial corridor, reduce traffic, access would be improved and as stated by property owners the value of their property is the access and visibility it gives to the businesses. He asked members to keep in mind that these businesses exist because they serve the public and the corridor provides easy access and convenience to the public. He felt that these options would essentially take them out of the retail business and they would be severely impacted by either option. He asked Chris Z. if the bypass road could be constructed for a million dollars a mile and Chris Z. replied that would be just for minimal construction. Marty B. asked what the distance was from the proposed terminus to Corey Road and Chris Z. said a little over a mile. Marty B. asked why ODOT would terminate at the proposed location that will cost in the vicinity of ten million when the alignment could be taken to Corey Road for a million or two to complete the original concept. Chris Z. felt that cost did not tell the whole story there would be needed structures. Marty B. commented that people were willing to give right of way to ODOT. As a property owner he objected to either concept, it would destroy the whole area and the concept of the Hwy 62 corridor as a commercial area from White City to I-5 and it was not temporary.

Donny Boyd: He owns the John Deere dealership and said the reason the businesses are located there is because it is retail property and that is what their businesses are. He was upset because he was not contacted about the meeting and stated that other business owners were not contacted either. He said it was dealing with their livelihoods with severe economic impacts and he felt strongly that they should have been contacted. Tim F. emphasized that the owners of the property were contacted.

Bill Smith: He owns the building that Adair Homes is leasing and he said he was not contacted and would have appreciated knowing about the meeting. He did not know about it until his tenant told him about it. It concerned him that decisions were being made and people whose lives will be affected were not being listened to. He said tonight we are hearing about people being affected by this and he had not heard one person tonight complaining about traffic being backed up on Hwy 62. He commented that if ODOT was representing those people they were not present tonight. He thought ODOT needed to listen to the people who are in attendance investing their time and talking to ODOT. He commented that ODOT needed to go back to the Haul Road or abandon the project.

Ted Dole: He said in 1995 his property was the largest piece of light industrial property available between White City and Vilas Road. He has invested significantly more than a million dollars in the property and that did not include his master plan for the property.

Man from audience: He owns 1.6 acres. He said he did not like the options and if it goes through he is done: not able to rent or use it. He felt if the project was to go through just to get the available money now really upset him. He thought it should end at Vilas Road.

Kent Gutches added that the businesses all have a big investment in this area and feel that ODOT was taking that away.

Carl Humphries: He owns property where Trailer and RV property is and did not hear about this meeting until his tenant came by today to let him know. He said the free flow option will kill those businesses, could not even use as storage and all investment has been on facing the highway. He thought the Haul Road was the done deal and it sounded like it would probably cost less than to pursue the interim options. He is in favor of doing nothing if these are the only options. As far as the common good, he commented that all businesses are struggling now and anything that will be done will affect the whole picture. He thought it to be common sense to run to Corey Road and not disrupt all the businesses.

Man from audience: Asked if there could be a cost estimate done of going down the Haul Road with the right of way donated versus the cost of the proposed options.

7.0 CAC/PDT Recommendation

Terry Kearns, URS

John V. said that one of the difficult challenges when you do interim projects is the throw away costs of building a facility that will not be used in the future and an issue that needed to be explored further was analyzing the throw away cost of impacts to businesses and better understanding the costs to businesses. He added that before he could make a recommendation of where to terminate the north terminus he would like to see a full study and presentation of the Vilas Road connection and an impact / cost comparison of a Haul Road alignment.

Mike Montero commented that \$23 million of the funding is Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) funding and is not held to the hard deadline as the earmark funds. He said the challenge is the region likes the funding but not the issues it has brought to us. He noted that no matter what alternative north of Vilas Road that the committee recommends it will require a goal exception, a process that takes time and until ODOT is further into the design process the numbers we see are educated theories, we don't really know. He urged the group to exercise patience and vigilance in asking those hard questions, no one wants to be part of a decision that displaces businesses, the alternative should be the one with the least amount of impact. He suggested looking at the Vilas alternative again and look at some timing options with the STIP funding. He would like to have this analysis before members are asked to make a decision.

Terry K. asked John V. for clarification about the Medco Haul Road alignment and John V. said there were prior alternatives that stayed on the Haul Road and he thought they could be revisited of why they were taken off the table. Audience member presented a map dated August 4, 2008 developed by ODOT or possibly Chris Hardy Engineering, they were not sure.

Don R. said he remembered discussions about running down the Haul Road but was not sure if there ever was a map. He asked how much of the Haul Road right of way ODOT currently owns and Chris Z. replied up to Vilas Road. Don R. wanted to see if the alignment could be run all the way to Corey Road and what changes would be made on Vilas if it terminated there. He could not recommend either option, too disruptive to businesses.

Susan R. noted that a lot of members have the same questions and she sympathized with the business people saying she could not vote for either one of the options. She stressed that the committee needed to be extremely sensitive not only in today's economy but always in the business economy of what we are doing to these businesses. She acknowledged that it was very difficult to recover from this and thought the group could take another really hard look and figure something else out.

Brian D. suggested that maybe the tradeoff could be in the cost of four lanes and just getting two lanes up to Corey Road whether the alignment is on the Haul Road or another road.

Terry K. informed the committee that normally at this time he would have a comfort check with CAC and PDT members but felt it was fair to say that they all felt pretty uncomfortable. Members agreed.

Al D. said there were some members that were not at the table tonight and he thought it would be terribly important for their input if the committee wanted to look at some other alternatives. He added that time was of essence and in trying to make a more thoughtful judgment of how this might be done the legislators who appropriated the hundred million dollars and gave the time table needed to understand the pressures and potential impacts they have created. He noted that the legislators and/or staff people needed to understand the potential interface they need to help facilitate with the DLCDC and other agencies and would like to see some indication of their attendance at the next meeting.

8.0 Next Steps

Terry Kearns, URS

Terry K. said staff will come back with answers to the committee questions. The next meeting is scheduled for December 2.

9.0. Adjournment

Terry Kearns, URS

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.