**June 1999**

**From:** John Morrison, Rogue Valley Council of Governments (RVCOG)

**Date:** June 20, 1999

**Attendees:** Jim Buckley, Jon Deason, John Ferris, Teresa Hogan, Michael Mahar, Jean Milgram, Michael Montero, Jane Podolski, and Wade Six. Members absent: Tim Alford, Mark Bailey, Patty Claeys, Rich Fogarty, Linda French, Jani Hale.

**Re:** Minutes of the June 16, 1999, meeting of the South Medford Interchange Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC).

**Location:** RVCOG Senior Services Office, 2860 State Street, Medford.

**Guests:** Greg Holthoff, Environmental Services, ODOT.

**Consultant Team Present:** David Mayfield, URS Greiner; Frank Stevens, Solutions Team Leader, ODOT; John Morrison, RVCOG; Kathy Helmer, RVCOG.

## 1.0 CALL TO ORDER

John Morrison opened the meeting at 5:40 PM. Jon Deason presided as the CAC Chair. John Morrison reviewed the meeting agenda. The meeting objectives were to:

A. Review the seven alternative concepts and develop recommendations for the Solutions Team;
B. Review draft evaluation criteria and develop recommendations for the Solutions Team; and
C. Identify community outreach ideas and opportunities.

## 2.0 APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Minutes from the previous meeting were approved as written.

## 3.0 REVIEW OF DRAFT ALTERNATIVES CONCEPTS

Dave Mayfield introduced the draft concepts, explaining that the Solutions Team discussed 13 alternatives concepts at their June 2, 1999 meeting and voted to keep six for further consideration. Six or seven will likely be forwarded into the analysis stage. After consideration of the results of the analysis, two or three will move forward to the EIS (Environment Impact Study) phase. Mayfield noted that a seventh draft alternative was added since the last Solutions Team meeting, namely a one-way couplet concept, developed by Mayfield in response to comments made at the Solutions Team meeting. In addition to that, CAC member Jim Buckley brought a concept to Mayfield before this CAC meeting. Mayfield will forward that idea to project engineers.

Mayfield led the group through a review of all fourteen (14) alternative concepts, explaining why each had either been saved for further consideration or put aside. The main focus of the Solutions Team was to determine if each alternative could potentially solve the transportation problem at the interchange. The following comments were made on the draft alternative concepts:

- Alternative 1: This was corrected to include the Garfield/Ellendale extension. This alternative features a single point interchange that raises the level of service. An example of such an interchange is the Market Street interchange in Salem. A corridor study area was added at South Stage Road. The actual road would be located somewhere in that study area. Establishing the study area gives flexibility as to where it could cross Bear Creek, wetlands, etc. Once this corridor area is studied, it may be qualify as an alternative to be built in the future, contingent upon an UGB (Urban Growth Boundary) amendment or Land Use Goal exception.
- Greg Holthoff clarified that the draft alternatives are not being considered as definitive; they are being considered on more of a "mix and match" basis. Dave Mayfield noted that modeling would be done on an array of alternatives to see which ones work best to solve the transportation problem.
- Alternative 2: This eliminates the interchange at Barnett, making it a crossing bridge only for city traffic. The interchange moves to Garfield/Ellendale. The new interchange is a single point interchange that eliminates signaling, provides more capacity, takes up less space, and is more efficient than a diamond interchange. This also reduces the problems during construction time. Ellendale is not signalized and becomes an arterial.
- A question was raised about the pros and cons of moving the interchange to the south. One was that it was important to minimize the impact to South Gate. With respect to the impact on existing commercial development, Mayfield said that the assessment of the impact is part of the analysis stage, the next step. We are currently identifying projects that can potentially solve the transportation problem.
- Alternative 3: This had some good ideas, but it was dropped. It included the Garfield/Ellendale extension and crossing the interstate with South Stage Road.
- Alternative 4: This provides only one-way traffic on Barnett and surrounds the Fred Meyer store so that customers can't access the business. This alternative was dropped; it was very unpopular due to the potential for severe impact on area businesses. John Ferris asked why the impact was considered. Mayfield replied that there was a huge economic price tag. Ferris commented that the impact on the Manor in a previous alternative might be equally as costly. Mayfield said that all such impacts would be assessed in the next phase; at this point, the transportation value is of main interest.
- Alternative 5: This has a one-way couplet, using Barnett and an extended Stewart Avenue. It is not transit friendly and has some potential historic area impacts. It was improved by shortening the couplet on the west end of Barnett. Jim Buckley noted that this alternative would pose problems for truckers trying to access major shipping points, such as Sabroso and Bear Creek Corporation.
- Alternative 6: This came out of the Transit Oriented Development (TOD) study and is related to the type of land use planning developed in the Southeast Medford Plan. It did not solve the transportation problem, however, so it was dropped, but elements of land use planning will remain a part of the process as other alternatives are examined. Mike Mahar suggested that the alternative was a traffic reducer and critical to smart development.
- Alternative 7: This includes a Biddle Road extension and a Garfield/Highland/Sunrise extension. Frank Stevens noted that this makes Biddle to Garfield a single route. It was created to accommodate the Stewart to Barnett traffic movement. This alternative was not popular, but it was forwarded to the next phase.
- A question was raised about how wide the Highland/Sunrise extension would be. Mayfield answered that if it were the only north-south route established in the city, it would have to be up to five (5) lanes in some places. If other cross-town routes are established, it will not have to bear all the traffic. Mike Montero commented on the

importance of livability in the city. Frank Stevens noted that a five lane route would not be pedestrian friendly.

- Alternative 8: This serves east-west traffic flow. There are some heavy impacts to South Gate. It extends Crater Lake Ave. through Portland Ave to reach Siskiyou. A question was raised regarding why it ended at Siskiyou. Mayfield replied that it would be extremely expensive to continue, given the park impacts. This alternative was not very popular, but it was forwarded.
- Alternative 9: This was dropped. There was a concern that this would simply relocate traffic and could cause additional problems. Frank explained that changes in traffic patterns could cause air quality problems in new areas; the project should avoid creating new areas with failing air quality. Mike Montero spoke to the fact that air quality is the number one consideration here, the controlling factor in this equation. Frank noted that improving air quality on a regional basis could help the situation.
- Alternative 10: This one adds sidewalks, bike paths and traffic lanes. It was not forwarded to the next step, but these features would be part of a solution package if Barnett remained the interchange location.
- Alternative 11: This has a Garfield/Highland/Sunrise extension, as well as two new interchanges, one at Garfield/Highland and one at South Stage Road. This will be modeled with two intersections to understand how important it is to include South Stage Road. Barnett would no longer be an interchange. A question was asked about whether this would have a greater or lesser environmental impact. At this point in time, there is no answer for that question. That is part of the next phase of analysis. Mike Montero suggested that all alternatives including South Stage Road should keep the route south of the Manor plans. David asked the group to keep in mind that South Stage Road would first be studied to see how well it solves the interchange problems. Wade Six said that if the goal was to meet today's transportation needs, he couldn't see how the South Stage Road could help that situation. It is too far into the future. Mayfield explained that this alternative has been rather controversial in the community and that by subjecting this alternative to modeling, we can determine the effect it would have and see what would actually happen. Frank Stevens said that modeling goes twenty years into the future. The model can give you the impact now and in twenty years. Greg Holthoff said that when this alternative is run through the modeling process, it might show the South Stage Road only as an over-crossing. Mike Montero said that cars go to destinations and as systems get built, people will always go to those destinations. They need alternative ways to get there. Stevens noted that the Columbus Avenue to Hwy 258 connection would be built soon, adding greater connectivity.
- Alternatives 12 and 13: These were dropped since they were both just single pieces of other alternatives.
- Alternative 14: This is a response to the need for a one-way pair concept. Barnett becomes 1one-way, eastbound. Alba becomes one-way, westbound. The Solutions Team has not yet reviewed this alternative. Jim noted that this has impacts to both business and residential. It would be expensive to disrupt the area, including the old K-Mart property. Dave agreed that there are many of the same concerns with this alternative as with the Biddle extension.

  Frank Stevens suggested that the Federal Highways Administration would not want to invest in many in-town connectivity improvements. Mike Mahar agreed that Medford needs to improve its street network.

  Stevens noted that Medford Urban Renewal Agency (MURA) has given three to four concepts for modeling to URS Greiner.

### 3.1 CAC Comments on Draft Alternatives

Since the description of draft alternatives took more time than originally projected, the agenda was revised to provide time for CAC members to comment on the alternatives. The following comments were made:

- My main concern is that parks should not be disrupted, especially Hawthorne which is a flagship, historic park in our city. If there are ways to both save the park and put a route through a particular area [below grade, or whatever], we would be open to exploring that.
- I would like to know more about the impact of these alternatives. [Mayfield projects that this type of information will be available by September.]
- I like Alternative 11 for its holistic approach. It provides multiple opportunities. We will be doing something for ourselves.
- I like Alternative 11, too. It looks further into the future, invests in the future. We can mitigate impacts to the parks. There are even some side benefits to being able to enjoy the creek from a different perspective. I'm impressed with this process. The quality of the people involved in this type of process has gone up. That's important.
- Holistic is the only way to approach this problem. I am thinking about the impact on neighborhoods. By the creek, there was a mobile home park neighborhood and on the Sunrise/Springbrook route there are expensive homes. There are impacts everywhere. I am uncomfortable with one-ways. That can add to traffic problems with people making mistakes.
- I am getting enthused. I agree with him about Hawthorne Park. The movement of the interchange away from Barnett, leaving Barnett as an east-west route is good. We need to be open to the extension of Biddle Road. That could enhance the creek. I should tell you that I am opening up a new business on Biddle Road.
- I agree that getting the interchange off Barnett is great. About Alternative 11, do you really get enough value from extending Carter Lake through Portland to Siskiyou? Would the benefits be worth the cost of going through the neighborhood? Could you get it down to two lanes?
- I agree with moving the interchange. Both Ellendale and Highland extensions would be opposed. We should have it on the table, though. People can then compare those alternatives with a Biddle Road extension.
  John Morrison asked the group about its comfort level with the meeting's process. CAC members expressed their satisfaction by nodding. Jon Deason offered the only comment, stating that the last meeting was critical for bringing people to the point of looking technically at alternatives.

### 4.0 DRAFT EVALUATION CRITERIA

The Solutions Team has not yet discussed the Draft Evaluation Criteria. These criteria will be on the CAC agenda in July. As an overview, Mayfield explained the framework for the criteria. Criteria will be used to measure how well alternatives achieve the stated goals. To the greatest extent possible, specific quantitative measures are selected. Then the number tally for each alternative can be compared. Mayfield invited CAC members to suggest additional measures.

Regarding Goal #2, Jean Milgram said that this required population projections. She suggested that the wording be changed to "that will not have a volume-to-capacity ratio", in order to fit the future tense. Jim Buckley noted that a ratio of "1" is full capacity.

## 5.0 OUTREACH IDEAS AND OPPORTUNITIES

John Morrison asked the members to suggest ideas for community outreach methods and presentations regarding the South Interchange Project. He noted that the newsletter is being mailed to a large list of people. The group offered the following ideas:
Copies of the newsletter could be placed at the Department of Motor Vehicles, Schlotski's Deli, Medford Planning Dept., and the Medford City Parks Office.

Give a presentation to the League of Women Voters.

Give newsletters to the local schools for children to take home.

Frank noted that he has been on the radio and he has a monthly ODOT live call-in program on TV.

DEQ will be here for some media work soon; Mike Montero volunteered to distribute some newsletters at that time.

Put the newsletter as an insert into the Mail Tribune. Produce it on less expensive paper for that large distribution. How about doing a full-page insert by combining information on the Hwy. 62 and South Medford Interchange projects?

Frank noted that there is a new ODOT Public Information Officer, Jarred Castle, who could be involved in these outreach efforts.

Neighborhood meetings, such as with the West Medford Coalition and televised city Ward Meetings, are other options.

## 6. SUMMARY

David thanked the group for their comments and ideas. The next meeting of the CAC will be Wednesday, July 21, 1999, at the same time and location.