

June 2000

From: Pat Foley, RVCOG

Date: June 21, 2000

Attendees: Tim Alford, Jim Buckley, Jon Deason, John Ferris, Teresa Hogan, Mike Mahar, Jean Milgram, Wade Six. **Absent Members:** Patty Claeys, Mark Bailey, Jani Hale and Michael Montero.

Re: CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAC) MEETING DRAFT MINUTES for JUNE 21, 2000

Location: Rogue Federal Credit Union, 1270 Center Drive, Medford, OR

Guests: Twenty-five members of the public.

Project Team: Frank Stevens, ODOT; Gary Shaff, JRH; John Morrison and Pat Foley, RVCOG.

1. Introduction/Approval of Minutes

John Morrison convened the meeting at 5:40 PM. He welcomed the CAC and members of the public and reviewed the agenda. Meeting objectives were: 1) to give feedback on the May 6 project Open House; 2) to review the results of the June 2-3 project Land Use Workshop; and 3) to understand regulatory agency concerns.

Regarding the April 24, 2000 CAC meeting minutes: Jon Deason made a motion to approve the minutes as written. Jim Buckley seconded the motion. The minutes were approved.

2. Project Schedule Update

John Morrison reported that because the Unit I phase of the Highway 62 project is funded it has priority over the South Medford Interchange. Because of that, delivery of the Transportation Technical Report is now scheduled later than planned. At this time a lot of transportation analysis is being done.

Gary Shaff said Federal Highway Administration staff is taking a critical look at the three South Medford Interchange Alternatives. All three alternatives have an affect on Bear Creek.

Gary Shaff said the Couplet Alternative, if selected, is likely to be rejected under Section 4(f) guidelines by the Federal Highway Administration because of environmental impacts to adjacent parkland. The loss of parkland, construction of a new roadway and the need for a new access to the ballpark are major issues. The other two alternatives are viable and have less of an impact on parkland when compared to the Couplet Alternative.

The CAC members expressed concern that the Couplet Alternative might be eliminated on the basis of just the single 4(f) issue.

Among comments and questions by the CAC members were:

- This is an emotional issue. We may be down to two alternatives.
- Does anybody use the park where the roadway could be constructed?
- It is frustrating to think one piece of land can affect the outcome of the future of the transportation system.
- Getting in and out of the ballpark now is an accident ready to happen.
- Increased paved surfaces have an impact on parkland.

- Can we develop parks in other areas to mitigate impacts? 1) Because of two viable alternatives, Federal funding will not allow this. The city of Medford may be able to accomplish this without the use of Federal funds.
- Why are we just now finding out that the Couplet Alternative will be rejected?
- Several members said they were not happy with eliminating the Couplet Alternative (even though they might not like the alternative) simply for a single 4(f) issue.

1. **May 6 Open House Report**

John Morrison reported on the Community Open House held on May 6 at the Medford Armory. It marked the anniversary of the project and the beginning of the EIS phase. Eight hundred invitations were sent out with one hundred fifty people attending. The open house was done in partnership with the city of Medford's Public Works and Planning Departments, the Chamber of Commerce, Rogue Valley Transportation District and the Rogue Valley Council of Governments, MPO, ODOT and the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development. Members from each of the above mentioned groups plus representatives of the project team, Solution's Team and Citizen's Advisory Committee members were on hand to answer questions. Bus tours of the three alternatives were ongoing throughout the open house. The Mail Tribune did a major story on the project/event. There was television coverage by the three local stations. Morrison said with the wide media coverage the workshop went a long way in informing the community on the project. Overall the project was a major success.

2. **Land Use Charrette**

Gary Shaff reported on the Land Use Charrette held on June 15. Participants included members of the community and professional staff from local and state agencies. Thirty people were invited and seventeen attended. The two basic elements of the charrette were: a) to review the kind of land use changes that might occur, and b) review land uses that are planned. The three basic scenarios that emerged are:

1. Regional Commercial Center: Develop commercial uses on Highway 99 and east of I-5.
2. Mixed-Use Concept: TOD as an example.
3. Protection Scenario: Preserve open space to help avoid development in and around the interchange.

Gary Shaff reviewed the three scenarios with the CAC.

1. **Overview of NEPA 404 agency meeting**

The project time line was reviewed at the meeting, as was an evaluation of the purpose and need. The meeting included sharing information and ideas between project consultants and agency personnel. The focus was on Bear Creek and the surround areas. An area of discussion was the protection of wetland and endangered species. Runoff from paved surfaces is a concern. In the future runoff water may have to be treated before going into the creek. Also, improvements may have to occur upstream and downstream from construction.

The ballpark and parkland northeast of the present interchange (and where the Couplet Alternative will have a great impact) is a concern.

CAC Comments:

- Move the ballpark to another area. - - Moving the ballpark does not eliminate the fact that the land in question is parkland.
- Why can't we mitigate? - - There are viable alternatives from which to choose. Each impact has to be mitigated, and there are many.

1. **County Fair Participation**

John Morrison reported that ODOT is sponsoring a booth at the Jackson County Fair, which is taking place from July 18 to the 23. A portion of the booth is reserved for South Medford Interchange information. John asked for volunteers to man the booth. They are to let John know if and when they can participate.

2. Public Comment Period

There were twenty-five members of the public present. Their questions and comments are as follows:

- Who makes the decision to eliminate an Alternative? - - The CAC makes recommendations to the Solution Team. The Solution Team makes decisions that are forwarded to the State.
- Recently an area resident's sale of their home fell through when the buyer was informed of possible impacts caused by the project process and resulting implications. How long do we have to wait for an answer and be in limbo? There is no funding available at this time for construction. There is no construction date. Even if there were funding available, the right of way process takes two years.
- It seems that relocating the ball field would be less expensive than some of the other steps you are talking about. - - Relocating the ball field does not solve the parkland issue.
- Rob Patridge, representing Rogue Valley Manor, said that lead-time on meeting notification to affected property owners has been too short. Morrison asked how much time he needs. - - Three weeks to a month ahead of time would be okay, Patridge said. He also indicated he would like more and better maps.
- A citizen asked what are the cost estimates for each alternative? - - Frank Stevens said only very preliminary cost estimates are available. He gave several estimates for construction costs only:
 - Highland Alternative - \$38M
 - Ellendale Alternative - \$45M
 - Couplet Alternative - \$29M

Stevens said right of way acquisition would be in addition and would vary from alternative to alternative.

1. CAC Comfort Check

John Morrison asked the committee for their comments.

Jim Buckley: I heard there was a Business Owner's Meeting. Could we have a summary? John Morrison replied that local business persons around the interchange were invited to a meeting to update them on the process and to hear their areas of concerns. Many stated their businesses are located where they are because of the visibility and access. If that is taken away, they will be greatly affected.

Question: What is the shelf life of the preferred alternative once selected?

Frank Stevens answered three to five years. They would take another look at it to revise and update with population forecasts taken into consideration if project is not constructed.

Question: How long are we going to have to sit on development of the ballpark?

This is a concern because there are 172 baseball teams needing a place to play.

Tim Alford: This process of community involvement is valuable. The impact on people and the value of their homes in the affected areas does concern me. They are put on hold and the right to enjoy their homes is put in jeopardy. They do not know

if they should do improvements to their homes or even if they will be able to sell. What kind of disclosure do they have to make? The bank is in the same situation. Because of the unknown the land on Highway cannot be sold. He is not sure the State is sympathetic to people. I think the State has to listen to them. The time line has to be shortened.

Frank Stevens replied that he agrees with Tim and is sympathetic. ODOT does not have an option. They have to abide with Federal law. Right now extraordinary efforts are being made to get funding for projects.

Question: Doesn't moving the interchange south affect the ability to have a future interchange at South Stage Road?

Frank Stevens replied that they are too close together now. In order to put in a new interchange at South Stage Road it would take a major deviation. The deviation must demonstrate the new interchange would improve the integrity and improve the efficiency of I-5.

Wade Six: I applaud Tim's statement. I am also experiencing frustration. I recommend that the Couplet Alternative be scraped. John Morrison replied that it might be premature to do that at this time. Your comments and concerns will be passed on the Solutions Team. Wade replied that if he thought the Couplet Alternative was the superior alternative, he would fight tooth and nail for it.

Question: When I-5 is expanded to six lanes, won't it be over Bear Creek?

Answer: The Regional Transportation Plan (20 year plan) does not include the widening of I-5. When it does happen, it most likely will be a twin structure with three travel lanes and an extra lane.

2. Adjournment

The next meeting was set for Wednesday, July 19. The CAC will be notified by letter if there is a need to cancel. John adjourned the meeting.