March 2000

From: Kathy Helmer, RVCOG

Date: March 20, 2000

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

Re: CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAC) MEETING MINUTES for MARCH 15th, 2000

Location: Rogue Federal Credit Union, 1270 Center Drive, Medford
Guests: Thirty members of the public.

Project Team Present: Alex Georgevitch, ODOT; David Mayfield, URS; Gary Shaff, JRH; John Morrison, RVCOG; Kathy Helmer, RVCOG.

1. Introduction/Approval of Minutes
John Morrison convened the meeting at 5:35 PM. He welcomed CAC members and members of the public and reviewed the agenda. Meeting objectives were to:

1) gain a better understanding of access control issues;
2) discuss multi-modal and land use issues; and
3) discuss CAC comfort with the project and their level of understanding. The CAC approved the draft minutes of the last meeting as written.

2. Project Activity Report

David Mayfield provided an overview of project activity. He relayed that the Solution Team had discussed the neighborhood impacts of Alternative #2 (Single Point Urban Interchange at Garfield/Ellendale) and whether or not it would be worthwhile to carry that alternative forward into the Draft EIS process. The Solution Team decided that they did not have enough information on the alternative to decide, and that it would be wiser to continue considering all three alternatives.

David stated that the project was at a watershed point where more design work would be performed on thethree alternatives. The purpose of this phase was to describe the level of impacts of all alternatives to a point where a choice could be made among them. This would be a period of technical studies, during which no big decisions would be made. This study process would continue for the next six months. It would include both a 2020 and 2030 planning horizon. Air quality studies would be conducted to identify any potential "hot spots" from congestion that could negatively affect human health. Noise studies would also be conducted to determine the affect of noise from the facilities on residences. Both indirect and direct impacts would be studied. An example of indirect impacts would be those to the downtown area. Bus and multi-modal aspects would also be studied.

John Morrison asked if monthly CAC meetings would be required during this study process and David replied that that was a decision for the CAC to make. They might want to consider meeting every other month.

Mark Bailey asked if the presence of a "hot spot" would eliminate an alternative from the process. David answered that efforts would be made to design "hot spots" out of an

alternative, but if that weren't possible, then the alternative should be dropped. Wade Six asked if the "no build" alternative would also be evaluated and David responded that it would.

3. Access Control Issues

Meeting attendees viewed a special video on Access Management. Alex Georgevitch, an ODOT access management engineer, explained that the video had been produced by ODOT to help the public better understand access management and its benefits. He reviewed the relationship of accidents to lack of access management, noting that 50% – 70% of all access-related accidents occur where residential driveways intersect with busy streets. Wade Six noted that a right turn deceleration lane would be valuable near the entrance to the old K-Mart plaza area. Alex noted that adequate spacing of signals and access points was not currently available at that site.

Jani Hale noted that the access to the Credit Union Building from Hwy 99 was interesting; it made you feel as if you were doing something illegal. Alex noted that that type of access was termed a "pork chop". He said that raised medians are now seen as the most effective means of controlling access.

Alex described the benefit that Florida experienced when it created a high level of access management on a five-lane road with an existing Level of Service of D. They went from 23,892 trips per day to 33,500 trips per day. It would have been necessary, otherwise, to widen the road. He emphasized that this kind of management protects the public's investment in infrastructure.

Jon Deason noted that businesspeople never see access management as a benefit. Alex responded that businesses, in general, depend on the volume of traffic on their street. They assume they need higher access, however, he noted that a gas station located at the intersection of Hwy 99 and S. Stage Road has a location with managed access and they are very happy with the way traffic is funneled into their area. David noted that the EIS process would study the way in which access management would affect business.

Alex noted that a new Access Management Rule would go into effect on April 1. This would provide specific spacing standards for interchanges. He noted that Alternative #14 (One-Way Couplet) presented problems with respect to the location of Alba. Alba would have to be closed under this new rule. Alternatives #2 and 11 would meet the new spacing standards. John Ferris asked how people would access the hotels and businesses on Alba if it were closed. David Mayfield responded that it probably would not function commercially. This would be a cost to the project.

Wade Six suggested that the old K-Mart shopping center could have one driveway with a right hand deceleration lane. He said that patrons could exit from the northwest corner. David Mayfield noted that in Alternatives #11 and 2, Barnett was no longer an interchange area under state control. Barnett would be a city street and this type of question could then be addressed to the city.

4. Introduction and Discussion of Land Use/Multi-modal Issues

David noted that Mark Gallagher, Interim Planning Director for the City of Medford and a member of the South Medford Interchange Solution Team, was present at the meeting. David said that this was an opportunity for CAC members to share any recommendations they might have regarding multi-modal planning and the three alternatives.

Gary Shaff provided a set of maps to CAC members which showed all three alternatives and aspects of Medford's Comprehensive Plan zoning designations in the Interchange area. One highlighted vacant residential lands; the next, vacant commercial lands; and another, vacant industrial lands. He noted that much of the land in the interchange area was designated as commercial, with little or no high-density residential land. The map of vacant residential lands showed that two alternatives would require a lot of right-of-way from residential parcels west of I-5. He asked the group what kinds of land use changes might be appropriate.

He spoke briefly of the Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) project and how the zoning of vacant parcels might be changed to support this concept. Such changes would not be part of the project; they would be a separate set of recommendations. Mark Bailey said that any one of the alternatives would merit a review of land uses. He suggested that urban residential zoning in the interchange area seemed incongruous. David noted that the TOD concept at the old K-Mart shopping center might work well with Alternatives #2 and #11. Jani Hale noted that the urban residential land off Center Drive was currently a Little League baseball field and she was not comfortable with the idea of losing that to the Interchange. Mark noted that it was hard to look at a zoning map and know what was really happening there; it was hard to decipher the amount of property that was being affected by the project. Gary suggested that the baseball field was about 40 acres. Jon Deason said that the ball field had been built by Babe Ruth in the 70s, as a temporary use granted by the property owner.

John Ferris said that the project had not been and still was not addressing pedestrian issues. David responded that bike paths and pedestrian facilities would be built on Alternatives #11 and 14. He suggested connecting them with the Greenway. It would be more confusing with Alternative #14, and the design team was looking for ideas. He noted that the needs of pedestrians and bicyclists were already unmet on Barnett.

Jani said she was envisioning something like an enclosed bike and pedestrian path for Alternatives #2 and 11 across the existing Barnett bridge. It would be attractive, inviting people to come into the area. Wade Six said that he would like a clear, physical separation for safety, perhaps a barrier between the two.

Mark Gallagher noted that when the lands in question had been brought into the Urban Growth Boundary, the city had not spent a lot of time on determining zoning. Gary suggested that the group's recommendation might that the City review the land uses in the areas impacted by the interstate facilities.

John Ferris asked if the project team had any ideas about how to create the separation and how to provide for bikes and pedestrians. David said he would mail information on this to the CAC. Gary noted that the Oregon Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan was a great resource for such ideas. Jani noted that Portland had applied some aesthetic attention to these questions near the Lloyd Center area. Wade noted that such designs, creating incentives to use alternative modes, could bump up the allowable Floor Area Ratio. John Ferris said that Katie Mangle had spoken about bike and pedestrian aspects at the second project meeting and a return visit might be helpful.

5. CAC Comfort Level

John Morrison asked Chairperson Jon Deason to lead the group in a discussion of their comfort level with the project process and their degree of understanding. Jon Deason began

this discussion by noting that the CAC was in a difficult position, caught between a highly technical project and a highly charged emotional project. He noted that the CAC had not had time to have lengthy discussions like this. He said that the CAC was a good committee because the members were diverse. He suggested that the CAC continue meeting and learning throughout the next phase. He said that he was comfortable with where they were, part of the reason being he had spent much of his life dealing with technical issues that he had not totally understood.

Jane Podolski said that she needed to better understand the difference between Alternatives #2 and 11. She needed to understand how one was better than the other. Regarding #14, there seemed to be new issues every time with this alternative. It was a major can of worms with expensive problems and no way around them. Regarding the time spent, there would be a lot more to digest and things could be sent to the CAC in printed form in advance.

Wade Six said that he wanted to continue meeting on a monthly basis. He wanted the minutes to show that he wanted the City to review the zoning of the Babe Ruth fields. He said he was happy with what was happening. He would like to run through a model of a right hand deceleration lane by the K-Mart center with traffic diverted to the northwest corner on Alternative #14.

Jean Milgram said that she was having trouble looking at the maps and charts and visualizing what was there. She said she would like another bus trip. She didn't understand the process that would be used to get from three alternatives to one preferred alternative. Even when they were at the point of having one alternative, she would like to look at it, for specific recommendations regarding the impacts on people.

Mike Mahar said that the group should be in a helicopter to line it up and see where it goes. He said that the project was going to come down to problem solving. It is a complex project that needs to keep moving forward. He said he was glad with where the group was. He has gained a lot of respect for the people who figure out these things. He said that meeting every other month would be enough for him, until they reach the point in the project when they need to meet monthly again.

Mark Bailey said that the Solution Team had a very difficult job. The Garfield extension to S. Pacific Hwy seemed to be forgotten on the project maps, but that would affect the people over there. Regarding the bike paths, he did not want them put together with the interstate and he did not want to create conflict with the Greenway.

Jani Hale said that she had first felt overwhelmed with the math and equations. There had been trust issues. She is the fourth generation of her family in the valley and worries about Medford. The decisions that would be made would also be about the city's image. She said she was experiencing an increased comfort level with the process and had a sense of purpose. She said that decisions by the group would affect the image of Medford and that she wanted Medford to be a good place to raise kids. Whatever the group did would have a huge impact on Medford. She said that the project should love and trust people enough to include what's really happening on the maps; the Garfield extension should be drawn on the map. Jani felt that the group should meet on an as-needed basis.

6. Public Comment Period

John Morrison opened the public comment period, asking people to be as succinct as possible, such that many members of the public could speak.

A gentleman said he was a Garfield resident, living in a forty-year old neighborhood. He said that the alternatives were catering to commercial, not neighborhood interests. There was a prediction that the extension would cause 28,000 more vehicles. Alternatives #2 and 11 would increase that by several thousand vehicles. They would get into the neighborhood, by the school and the soccer fields. Why, he asked, had going over the highway turned into this?

Another gentleman said that since the first meeting he attended in November of 1999, there had been no mention of reducing traffic. The project was not going far enough with pedestrian and bike plans. The Greenway was not suitable for pedestrians wishing to travel the city at night. If the population continued growing, more and bigger roads would be inevitable. What the ODOT film did not show was that more traffic was dangerous to people. People needed to stop driving; fewer cars made town safer.

Nelson Powell asked when he could get it in writing that S.Groveland would not be widened by the project. He said his life savings were in his home and that he has to tell people that might be interested in it that an arterial might be built past it. He said he needed to be off the hook from a severe penalty in terms of the value of his house.

One person said that the Babe Ruth baseball field had been a truck park. Through Tex Nash's generosity, the baseball field was put there. He suggested that Siskiyou Boulevard was a good alternative for bike traffic.

A person asked if the state or the city would control the Center Drive and Interstate connector? He was told that the state would control it.

Another person asked if there was a requirement that bikes be included in the design. He said that bike and vehicle traffic were contradictory. It would be better if they were kept on separate, parallel facilities.

7. Adjournment

Before adjourning the meeting at 7:30 PM, John Morrison shared his sense that CAC members wanted the monthly meetings of the group to continue.