**November 1999**

**From:** Kathy Helmer, Rogue Valley Council of Governments (RVCOG)

**Date:** November 22, 1999

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

**Re: DRAFT MINUTES FOR THE SOUTH MEDFORD INTERCHANGE CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAC) MEETING ON NOVEMBER 17, 1999**

**Location:** Rogue Federal Credit Union, 1370 Center Drive, Medford

**Guests:** Fifty-five members of the public attended, namely: Gordon and Bea Bentson; Matt Claflin and Roseann Claflin; Laurie, Bon and Bob Dysart; Kristy and Russ Dysart; Rick Silva; Edgar and Karen Hee; ClaudiaViets; Leo and Veda Gries; Jon Allard; David Bolen; Margaret Burns; Barbara Davis; Loretta Harrell; Norbert Lieberg; Elaine Turcke; Beckie Dynell; Jim Kosloske; Bob Rolls; Eustaquio Irazoqui; Robert and Elizabeth Kirk; Joanne and Robert Wickman; Susan Buda; Derek Adams; L.W. Fowler; Jodi Hangartner; Joe Henry; Ellen Eichamer; Dian Mirkovich; Lu and G.J. Vobora; Ivend Holen; Joan Molatore; Paul and Elsie Williams; Phoebe Noyes; Dolores Scheelen; Charlie and Susan Hand; Scott McKay; Tom Roberts; Angela Warren; Veronica and Miles Newman; Barbara Griffin; Charlene Leigh and Sharon Ostrander.

**Project Team Present:** Frank Stevens, Solution Team Manager, ODOT; David Mayfield, URS; John Morrison, RVCOG; Kathy Helmer, RVCOG.

## 1.0 Call to Order

John Morrison opened the meeting at 5:35 PM. John welcomed the members of the public and explained the Public Comment Period. He reviewed the meeting agenda and objectives. The objectives were to:

A. Review CAC input on the evaluation process provided to the Solution Team;
B. Gain further understanding of the Solution Team's development of the evaluation process;
C. View the South Medford Interchange Project Video;
D. Review and comment on Outreach/Public Comments.

## 2.0 Approval of Minutes

The draft minutes of the October 20, 1999, CAC meeting were approved, as written.

## 3.0 Feedback to the Solution Team on Evaluation Criteria

John reported on activities over the past month related to this topic. Jon Deason had reported to the CAC on the Solution Team process to weight the criteria. David Mayfield had mailed CAC members a request for feedback on the criteria. CAC feedback on the criteria had been delivered to the Solution Team at their October 6 meeting.

Jani Hale asked if there would be other opportunities to provide feedback to the Solution Team on the evaluation criteria. John suggested that she forward comments to him such

that they could be shared with the Solution Team. David Mayfield noted that the Solution Team had adopted the criteria, but there would be another step when the Solution Team could re-evaluate the evaluation criteria.

**4.0 Report on the Solution Team's Evaluation Process**

David Mayfield reviewed the Project Mission Statement, emphasizing that the focus of project was to solve congestion problems at the Interchange. He reviewed the history of the project to date, noting that the Solution Team had first developed a set of goals.

Based on those goals, the set of evaluation criteria had been formed. Thirteen (13) alternatives had been identified during a design workshop in which Solution Team members and some members of the CAC had first toured the study area and then brainstormed concepts. Based on input and an engineering rating of how well the alternatives could contribute to solving the transportation problem, the number of alternatives was reduced to seven (7). David referred attendees to his October 22, 1999 memo "Identifying and selecting a Preferred Alternative".

The project is now at the computer modeling step. The seven alternatives, plus other components suggested by private individuals and the city of Medford, are being tested for their ability to solve the congestion problem. David explained that there might be some mixing and matching of alternatives' components, resulting in some alternatives being changed.

Other alternatives might be dropped, based on this analysis. The project needs to reduce the number of alternatives to two or three, before moving into the Environmental Impact Study.

He noted that the evaluation criteria were intended to help the Solution Team objectively measure whether or not alternatives were successfully meeting the goals. The Team ranked the evaluation criteria; this ranking denoted how important each was in the decision-making process. From this ranking, each alternative would receive a score. David reviewed how the criteria had been ranked.

Jani Hale noted that the Mission Statement focus was on the Interchange area and there was very little emotion related to the Interchange itself. She said that what the group was really talking about was neighborhoods impacted by the solution to the Interchange. She said that the make up of the Solution Team was important.

David responded that the need for greater emphasis on neighborhood and social values had been the major point of CAC feedback to the Solution Team. He pointed out goals and evaluation criteria that addressed neighborhood values. In particular, the criterion weighted 76 (under Goal #6) rates traffic impacts to neighborhoods. Other criteria under Goal 6 relate to neighborhood concerns. Environmental Goals 15 – 16 overlap with Social Goals, since noise levels, air and water qualities relate to the quality of life. Jim Buckley asked about the origin of the 8,000 feet and David replied that it had originally been based on GPS, but the number had been reduced during discussions at a Solution Team meeting.

Mike Montero suggested using local examples to illustrate the meaning of numbers used in criteria. For example, it was difficult to understand the impact of 4,000 trips per day without a local reference. It was suggested that Siskiyou Boulevard might have approximately that many trips per day.

David noted that the number of evaluation criteria dealing with social values also increased the importance of such issues in the decisionmaking. Mike Montero underscored that idea by explaining that while specific categories might have lower weights, in the aggregate, they could “weigh in”. David noted that while several environmental goals ranked relatively low, there were so many that they would rank higher as a group.

Jean Milgram asked how the criteria would be used and how the actual math would look. David explained that the weighting (from 90 – 33) would be added to data that would then give a final number. He stressed that this final number would only be an aid to decision-making. The Solution Team would be able to undertake “sensitivity analysis” to identify the criteria tipping the scales and making the alternative particularly significant. James Buckley asked about the origin of the data, noted above in the equation. David replied that much of it was stored in the project’s geographic information system (GIS) database, and that some of it was currently being generated by the traffic computer modeling.

Mike Montero noted that an alternative that didn’t perform well in the modeling would not make it into the next step of the process.

Teresa Hogan asked if the alternatives would be modeled as a package or as “bits and pieces” and David said that alternatives would be broken down to identify significant parts that effectively contributed to solving the problem. The point would be to optimize the performance of components. David also noted that the modeling would assist in understanding if there were a need for a larger project, apart from some of the low cost alternatives under consideration.

Jon Deason said he appreciated the “chicken and egg problem”. The project had to have alternatives before the model could be used. Unfortunately, the model had been delayed. In response to a question about why the model had been delayed, Frank Stevens explained that time had been dedicated to revising the model and bringing it up to a Best Practices standard. There had been some concerns regarding model assumptions and calculations. Previously, the model could not show peak hours. What had resulted from these revisions was a much better tool for the project. Jon Deason noted that several major transportation projects in the area also needed to use the model and that there was a backlog of demand. Frank noted that he had been working with RVCOG on the model and he had confidence in the skills of the people working on the model. Things would be moving ahead quite quickly now. An additional benefit of the model would be its ability to project traffic to the year 2020.

Tim asked if the project would move ahead even if the model were not available and David said no. Some results should be available for the 12/1/99 Solution Team meeting. The CAC will receive model information at the same time as the Solution Team.

## 5.0 Project Video

All attendees viewed the video. John had a copy of the video for each CAC member and said he could provide each member with more copies to share with interested people.

## 6.0 Public Outreach

John Morrison described the two neighborhood mailings that had been completed since the last CAC meeting. Each mailing consisted of a cover letter, information on how to learn more about the project, a 2-page summary of the project, a complete set of maps of the proposed alternatives, and a feedback form to complete and mail back. These mailings were documented in Kathy Helmer's memo of November 15, 1999. The Portland Ave. area mailing consisted of 942 letters to property owners and people renting property in the area. The Garfield Ave. area mailing consisted of 563 letters to property owners and renters.

Some who received the mailing had called John and he had invited them to the CAC meeting. Others had mailed back the feedback form or provided comments by phone. John noted that a range of comments had been received. One person wrote that the idea of extending Crater Lake through Portland Ave. to Siskiyou was "outrageous"; others simply wanted to know more. John emphasized that his role was to give people as much information about the project as possible. John referred to the packet of citizen input provided to CAC members at the meeting and noted that some letters had been especially detailed and well thought out.

Regarding other outreach efforts, John had made a presentation for the Medford Rogue Rotary and would also be making a presentation for the League of Women Voters. John asked members to let him know if there were other groups that would be interested in a presentation on the project.

Jani Hale said that she had been impressed with the information that was going out to community members and with the efforts to reach people. She suggested that the group had a chance to alleviate tension in the community by being more inclusive and less "vertical" in approach. She felt that the mailings were a good way to decrease anxiety. She had not understood the equations related to the evaluation criteria.

Mike Montero said that this type of public involvement process was novel to transportation projects in the area. It used to be that projects were designed in Salem and condemnation of property was the first time that anyone heard about a project. Open-ended planning is novel and should make for a better community.

**6.0 Public Comment Period**

John invited members of the public to comment, noting that he wanted those who had not attended in the past to speak first. Their comments have been paraphrased below; efforts have been made to reproduce speakers' choices of words.

Joe Henry of E.11th St. was first to speak. He said that in the 1970s, he had attended meetings about extending Crater via Portland to Siskiyou and that it had been concluded that Portland itself was too narrow. The homes had such small front yards that a widened street would go up to the porches of homes. He noted that if he didn't reside near Portland, he might suggest that the new bridge now going in on Cottage St. should be constructed on Portland. A new bridge could be put over Bear Creek in the area of the ballparks.

Charley Hand of Aloha Ave. said that most people attending the meeting were interested in Medford as a whole. He said that the Mission Statement was excellent; it was David's assumptions that were too narrow. People were afraid to assume what was best. Was "best" accommodating the most growth, or could "best" be interpreted as what served the will of the people? Growth in Medford doesn't just happen, he said. The Comprehensive Plan states that Medford will pursue growth aggressively. In the process that has been described,

growth gets the first cut and then people get theirs. It is upside down. Some of the alternatives that had been pared out might have been good, might have served people.

Bob Rolls asked if traffic on Siskiyou warranted a tie-in from Crater Lake. [David Mayfield responded that information to answer that question would be available in either December or January from the modeling results. Regarding Charley's comments, David said that the project was trying to appropriately size the solution to a population level consistent with County, State and City estimates. Charley Hand suggested that a compromise would be planning for half that growth.]

Lorretta Harrell of Oakview Circle said that she drives all the streets in question and there is a natural flow of traffic through Cottage and Highland. She questioned why other streets and roads were being picked out as new arterials, rather than following pre-existing natural flows.

Susan Buda, a resident and business owner on Portland, said that Portland was too narrow a street to provide access to Siskiyou. Willamette, however, goes all the way to Siskiyou.

Miles Newman of Portland Ave. said he agreed with the others' comments. There were not enough benefits to joining Siskiyou with Crater via Portland. He asked who ultimately would decide? [John Morrison answered that the Solution Team would make the decision within the context of this project.] He also asked if people who lost property as a result of the project would be paid properly. [John explained that there was a process for compensating people.] Miles asked about the time frame for decision-making and he received the answer of February 2001. When Miles asked if it was certain that Portland would change, he was told that the Portland Ave. connection was still a concept under consideration. The computer modeling process would test the usefulness of that concept.

Ellen Eichamer of Lynnwood Ave. said that there is a lot of activity between Highland and Ellendale. Children walk through there to Bear Creek Park and to Hoover School. Her neighborhood is one where people walk a great deal. Putting an arterial on Highland or Ellendale would limit their use of the parks. She said that they put in all the businesses at Southgate and then thought about streets. This was done backwards. The Southeast Plan would put even more pressure on the area with people wanting to get to the stores. This would turn her neighborhood into a rental district.

Rick Silva of Groveland area said he was disappointed that the project was focusing on city streets although the focus was really on problems at the Interchange. He said he would like to see a survey dealing with the Interchange. [John noted that two alternatives dealt with new interchanges. David emphasized that there was no current information on the actual design of any alternative. If people were talking about the number of lanes or the number of homes that would be taken out by an alternative, they had information that he did not yet have.]

Susan Hand of Aloha Ave. lives near Sunrise. She said that if Sunrise were to become a Crater Lake it would ruin the area's quality of life. Medford has character right now. The character of Medford would go down, it would become Any Town USA, if it accommodated new growth by attacking wonderful neighborhoods. "Shame on you", she said.

Angela Warren of 10th St. and Portland said that she values the history of Medford. She is proud of what has happened on Portland over the past 13 years since she moved there. Two years ago, there were drugs. She has seen a revitalization. People enjoy walking now. They

want a nice quality of life. She asked where these particular proposals had come from. Without a model available, where had they come from? She said that people have to wait their turn to get down Portland Ave. Why did people think that this would solve the city's problem?

David Mayfield said that a lot was at stake in choosing an alternative. Referring to the map of the range of alternatives, he explained the long-standing problem of north-south connectivity in East Medford. The Origin and Destination Study looked at the source of traffic and where it was going. That study revealed that I-5 is serving a substantial amount of local traffic. Much of the traffic enters the interstate at the north interchange and leaves the interstate at the south exit. To resolve "out of direction" traffic patterns, whereby people take circuitous routes to destinations, the city would need better north-south street connections. That was why extensions of Crater Lake were being considered. If it were determined desirable to build along Hawthorne Park, federal law would require proof that there were no feasible alternatives.

Jim Kosloske of Portland Ave. said, "Money talks." He has lived in several big cities with large streets. The way the freeway had been positioned through town, it was a "done deal". He said that development on the east side had caused these problems. The inner, poorer areas would pay the price. "There's no wealth deal on the evaluation criteria," he said. He suggested putting a gate at the end of Barnett and N. Phoenix Road and forcing the people who live in the Southeast Plan to drive a few extra miles in their Mercedes down a new road to the interchange. He felt that the Interchange was only a problem at rush hour. He also suggested that Siskiyou was the most beautiful street in Medford and if Crater Lake were connected to Siskiyou, it would ruin that boulevard. If it were to go to four lanes, all the trees would have to be cut down. He suggested that we needed to decide if we were going to rehab the creek or wipe it out. Willamette and 10th St. are arterials now. There's a lot of noise from the freeway. A row of trees should be planted to block the freeway and its noise. [David Mayfield noted that there was an evaluation measure regarding disproportionate impacts that spoke to the wealth issue.]

Claudia Viets of Keene Way near Groveland said that the Dysarts should be given credit for letting their neighbors know about the project. She hadn't heard from project personnel; the Dysarts had gotten people involved and they should be congratulated for the hard work.

Barbara Griffin of South Keene Way asked if any of the Solution Team members lived in Medford and if any of them were interested in the quality of Medford. She asked if ODOT had the right to condemn property. She has lived in Medford since 1951. She said she felt that the first solution would be to put I-5 in a different place, to roll back time and question where the freeway should be. She asked if it were too late to look at moving the freeway.

Kristy Dysart of Dellwood Ave. said that it was crazy that this project could cost 30 million dollars and then a few years later, ODOT could decide that the freeway didn't work and would need to be moved.

Phoebe Noyes of N. Barneburg said that if the project took Portland and Groveland and destroyed them, the whole city would move east. Another solution was needed. If the city was going to grow, it would need to create new solutions.

**7.0 Adjournment**

Given the length of the public comment period, summary comments were not solicited from CAC members. John Morrison adjourned the meeting at 8:00 PM. If information from the

modeling process is available, there will be a December meeting of the Citizens Advisory Committee.