October 2001

From: Vicki Guarino, Rogue Valley Council of Governments

Date: Oct. 18, 2001

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

Re: CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAC) MEETING DRAFT MINUTES for Oct. 17, 2001

Location: Rogue Federal Credit Union Financial Center, Medford, Or.

Guests: Twenty-eight members of the public.

Project Team: Mike Gallagher, URS; Jim Hanks, JRH; Frank Stevens, Gary Leaming, Greg Holthoff, ODOT; John Morrison, Vicki Guarino, RVCOG.

1. Introduction
John Morrison convened the meeting at 5:35 p.m. and announced the objectives of the meeting including a review of the project Draft Environmental Impact Statement Executive Summary and the official public comment process. The CAC approved minutes from the April 18, 2001, meeting with a correction by Mike Mahar of his statement regarding traffic modeling.

Jon Deason asked for direction on the CAC's role during the public comment period for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

2. Public Involvement Update
John Morrison presented an update of public involvement efforts since the last CAC meeting. Projects have included publication and distribution of a newsletter, several appearances on local radio and television, articles in the Mail Tribune, project presentations for numerous community groups in Medford and Phoenix. A new video, South Medford Interchange Simulation 2001, was shown to the CAC

3. DEIS Public Comment Process
Gary Leaming announced that with distribution of the DEIS, a formal comment period has begun. Copies of the document have been mailed to people requesting them. Additional copies of the full document and the executive summary are available from ODOT. Review copies also are available at ODOT, the Medford public library reference desk and the Rogue Valley Council of Governments. The executive summary is posted on the project web site. An open house/public hearing will be held 4:30-7:30 p.m. Oct. 30, 2001, at the Scottish Rite Center, 955 N. Phoenix Road, Medford. The public may make comments at the hearing to a court recorder. Written comments must be filed with Greg Holthoff at ODOT by 5 p.m. Dec. 3, 2001.

John Morrison asked CAC members to assist the public by providing information about obtaining Draft and how to comment on it.

4. DEIS Executive Summary Presentation
Mike Gallagher reviewed key portions of the summary in a report, South Medford Interchange Project (report attached in project file). He said the DEIS looks at three alternatives for the interchange: Highland Alternative, Ellendale Alternative and No Build. Impacts are noted for the primary footprint, which is the best estimate of where new roadways would go. The larger, buffered, footprint extends three meters on each side of the primary footprint and represents the area that might have to be used in some locations. Discussing street system impacts, Gallagher noted that the Highland Alternative would lead to a 70 percent increase in traffic on the section of Highland between Barnett and Siskiyou by 2030. Jim Hanks noted that the stated projections are reported incorrectly. A number was transposed during the traffic analysis and reported in the DEIS on Highland. Total number is about 35-36 percent (with northbound and southbound being close). The Ellendale Alternative would disrupt traffic flow on Ellendale south of Barnett, causing rerouting of local traffic for Hobart and other adjacent streets. Both alternatives add road capacity and relieve congestion.

Land Use Compatibility issues include loss of low income and senior housing with the Ellendale Alternative. This would be a difficult impact to mitigate because it is difficult to replace that kind of housing.

Patty Claeys asked for clarification on the configuration of the Ellendale Bridge and local street access.

CAC members also discussed the street classification impacts. In some cases reclassification would be more or less a housekeeping exercise, but it might also entail access restrictions to aid traffic flows. Jim Hanks noted that impacts include classifying the new streets that would be built.

Jane Podolski wanted to know more about visual resource impacts. Gallagher said impact is greater in the Ellendale Alternative because the bike path would have to run under new bridge structures for some distance. In the Highland Alternative the path would only cross under the bridge.

Jani Hale said the Highland Alternative would put a lot of traffic in the vicinity of Bear Creek Park and she wanted to know what would be done to accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians, perhaps by building an elevated crossing. Jim Hanks said kids typically won't use elevated crossing unless they are compelled to, by fences or other structures to block crossings elsewhere. Also, making such a structure comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act would require either an elevator or excessive ramping. Mike Gallagher noted that Highland is a challenging area for pedestrians now, and that the issues should be raised within the public comment process.

Jean Milgram asked if it would be possible to keep the I-5 northbound on-ramps. Frank Stevens said the ramps would have to be removed because there is not sufficient distance on Interstate 5 to accommodate the merging traffic from both the old on-ramps and the new interchange. Also, keeping part of the old interchange open would cause serious congestion problems at the Highland-Barnett intersection.

Wade Six noted pros and cons to both alternatives, but wanted to know if jobs impacts were analyzed in terms of the value of wages. If wages were considered, an alternative with a greater number of job losses might have a lesser impact in terms of earnings lost. Mike Gallagher referred Six to the DEIS. Six also asked if maintenance cost differences were significant between the two alternatives. Stevens said that because these would be new

installations, maintenance costs for the first 20 years or so would be minimal. Hanks said that because Ellendale involves larger structures, it would carry somewhat higher expenses. During discussion of impacts on existing and future development and right-of-way acquisition, Jani Hale asked about the future of the low income housing on Ellendale, which led to a discussion about the possibility Rogue Valley Manor would redevelop the area, resulting in a loss of the housing regardless of the alternative selected. On the other hand, impacts to the park in the Highland Alternative would be permanent. Mike Gallagher said the DEIS has to consider uses in place now, not what sorts of development might occur. However, the document notes that land uses in the area could change from residential to commercial. He also noted that ODOT has a rigorous right-of –way process used to set land values.

Regarding impacts on neighborhoods, jobs, business access and environmental justice, neighborhoods and businesses can be expected to suffer under the No Build because of worsening traffic congestion and air quality. The Highland Alternative would create some traffic barriers to the park, but Ellendale creates barriers to neighborhoods in addition to encroaching on low-income and senior housing. Mike Montero wondered whether FHwA would accept a Solution Team decision for Ellendale. Mike Gallagher and Greg Holthoff said there are strict rules regarding environmental justice issues, so the project would have to mitigate the loss of the low-cost housing on Ellendale. The availability of comparable housing in Medford would be a problem. Mitigation also would have to address the loss of the neighborhood atmosphere.

Regarding pedestrian uses, Frank Stevens noted that sidewalks along Barnett would be widened and bike lanes added. Jim Hanks noted that closure of the interstate ramps would make crossing I-5 on Barnett easier.

Jean Milgram asked about the impacts the Ellendale Alternative would have on Highland Drive. Jim Hanks said traffic would increase on Highland, however no improvements (sidewalks, bike lanes) would be built on Highland. Jon Deason said he was concerned about the impacts on the Highland-Siskiyou intersection. Hanks said Medford is considering building a traffic circle. Milgram said it doesn't seem right that the project, the Highland Alternative, could cause significant traffic increases at the Siskiyou intersection, but that it would be the city's responsibility to solve the problem. Hanks said the area comes under the city's authority and ODOT can't decide matters for the city. Jim Buckley said the project wouldn't create reasons for motorists to travel north on Highland; that most people would be turning at Barnett. Wade Six noted that the Costco area is a major destination and that it's possible the city will link Highland and Delta Waters Road. Such a project would transform Highland into a major thoroughfare.

Addressing cultural resources, Gallagher noted that the state Historic Preservation Office has concurred that the project will have no adverse impact on Veteran's Park.

Regarding noise impacts, a large barrier would diminish noise problems associated with the Ellendale Alternative. A barrier would not be feasible for the Highland Alternative.

Air quality would worsen with the No Build option, likely putting the area out of conformance with standards, which could lead to development restrictions. Both build alternatives would comply with air quality standards.

Water resources issues are answered in the DEIS, with all bridges designed so that they would not cause a rise in water levels in a 100-year flood.

In comparing biological impacts of the two alternatives, Gallagher noted far lesser impact with the Highland Alternative.

5. Public Comment

Scott McKay was concerned about the additional traffic on Highland north of Barnett, and wanted to see efforts made to discourage motorists from continuing on Highland north of Barnett.

Barbara Griffin thanked CAC members for their work. She wanted the addresses and names of homes and businesses impacted by the alternatives. John Morrison said the list would be provided to her. She said the process seems pre-disposed to the Highland Alternative, which is said because it will hurt families using the park.

Darla Junkers wanted to know if the project is funded and if the project will be large enough to accommodate traffic. Frank Stevens said the project is fully funded, and that the project is designed to accommodate anticipated traffic through 2030.

Audrey Casey, of Four Seasons Apts. said access would have to be provide to the buildings along Highland.

A woman living near Pierce Road said the project seems set to cause a lot of harm to the Highland area. She said building a new interchange at S. Stage Road would better distribute traffic. Jim Hanks said S. Stage was carefully considered with a bypass across east Medford. The option was viewed as being far too invasive on city neighborhoods.

6. Adjournment

John Morrison adjourned the meeting at 7:30 p.m.