

(Minutes of a Public Hearing by Oregon State Highway Commission on October 25, 1956, relative to routing of a proposed interstate highway through Medford, Oregon)

Pursuant to formal notice heretofore given, the mayors of the cities of Medford, Ashland, Central Point, Phoenix and Talent, the State Highway Commission conducted a public hearing at 10:00 a.m. this date in the Auditorium of the Craterian Theatre, Medford, relative to the Commission's plans to construct a new freeway that will bypass each of these cities, extending with a connection of the existing route of us 99 at a place known as Seven Oaks, approximately two miles north of the City of Central Point, to a connection with the existing route of said highway at a point at a point approximately and one-half miles southeasterly from the corporate limits of the City of Ashland. The proposed route when constructed will become a section at US Route No. 99. The Highway Commission proposes to finance construction of this freeway partially with Federal monies, and accordingly must comply with certain Federal requirements. including Section 116c of the "Federal-aid Act of 1956", which provides that: - "Any State Highway Department which submits plans for a Federal-aid Highway project involving the by-passing of, or going through, any city, town or village, either incorporated or unincorporated, shall certify to the Commissioner of Public Roads that it has had public hearings, or had afforded like opportunity for such hearings, and has considered the economic effects of such a location . ." This hearing also was held to satisfy the requirements of the State of Oregon, particularly those contained in ORS 373.015.

It was the original intention of the Commission to conduct this hearing in the Medford City Hall; however, the meeting place was changed to the Craterian Theatre at the request of the Hon. Earl M. Miller, Mayor of the City of Medford, because in his estimation the City Hall would not accommodate the large number of people who it was anticipated would be present. The Mayor of each of the cities concerned was notified of the change in the meeting place and was requested to bring the information to the attention of the local citizens so they could arrange to be present and express themselves regarding the project should they so desire.

Present at this hearing, representing the State Highway Department were the following:

Ben R. Chandler, Chairman
Chas. H. Reynolds, Commissioner
W. C. Williams, State Highway Engineer
Forrest Cooper, Deputy State Highway Engineer
R. L. May, Jr., Acting Chief Counsel
Frank D. Morgan, Division Engineer, Roseburg
H. B. Glaisyer, Secretary

Also present, representing the U. S. Bureau of Public Lands. were Mr. C. G. Polk, District Engineer, and Mr. E. H. Cowan, Principal Highway Engineer, both of Salem.

There were about 500 people present representing the cities affected by the proposed improvement.

Chairman Chandler called the meeting to order at 10:00 a. m, and explained the purpose of the hearing. At his request, the state Highway Engineer, Mr. W C. Williams explained details concerning the several routes that have been investigated as follows: Hillcrest Route, Genessee Street Route, Hawthorne Park Route, and West Medford-Oak

Grove Route. He exhibited a map on which was shown in colors the locations of each of these routes. He pointed out that the Hillcrest Route is common with the Genessee Street Route and Hawthorne Park Route from Blackwell Hill to a connection with the Crater Lake Highway at which point the routes diverge, the Hillcrest Route bypassing the City of Medford about two miles to the east and continuing southerly to a connection with the Genessee Street Route just north of Ashland. The Genessee Street Route and the Hawthorne Park Route, he said, are alternates that pass through the City of Medford, and the West Medford-Oak Grove Route commences at Blackwell Hill and extends southerly to a connection with the Genessee Street line opposite the City of Talent, by-passing the cities of Central Point and Medford to the west. He mentioned that all of the routes investigated are approximately the same length, the Hillcrest Line being 25.67 miles long, the Genessee Line 25.75 miles long, the Hawthorn Park Line 25.68 miles long, and the West Medford-Oak Grove Alternate Line 25.36 miles in length, compared with 23.72 miles, the length of the existing highway between common points. He estimated the cost of constructing each route as follows:

<u>Hillcrest Line</u>		<u>Genessee Line</u>	
Construction	\$16,580,000	Construction	\$15,500,000
Right of way	1,763,000	Right of way	2,795 000
Total	\$18,343,000	Total	\$18,495,000
<u>Hawthorne Park Line</u>		<u>West Medford-Oak Grove Line</u>	
Construction	\$16,327,000	Construction	\$19,245,000
Right of way	2,396,000	Right of way	\$ 3,252,000
Total	\$18,723,000	Total	\$22,497,000

Mr. Williams also gave information as to the economic effects of each route and land usage along them, maintaining that the Hillcrest Route will require 1,050 acres of land for right of way over the entire distance from Blackwell Hill to the point south of Ashland. of which acreage 111.8 represents orchard land, 848 acres other agricultural land, 32 acres classified as commercial or area subject to industrial development, and residential 58.5 acres. At this point an unknown person in the audience interrupted by inquiring as to how many homes would be taken by the Hillcrest Route. Mr. Williams replied that about 25 or 30 would be taken but the number would be effected either more or less by proposed interchanges.

Chairman Chandler interposed that it might be well to defer further interrogation regarding the several routes until the Engineer has completed his explanations, when all would be given an opportunity to ask questions that they have in mind. The Commission, he said, is not advocating any particular line, but is here today simply to get expressions from local people, and from the information that is recorded. The Commission will later determine, along with the U. S. Bureau of Public Lands, who is represented at this meeting by Mr. C. G. Polk, District Engineer, the route to be used: however, the Commissioner's decision in the matter will not be made until the Commission has carefully considered all of the matter that is presented at this hearing.

The State Highway Engineer then continued with his explanation by advising that on the Hawthorn Park Line, only 1.3 acres of orchard land and 941 acres of other agricultural land will be taken, and that only 50.6 acres of residential properties are involved. On the West Medford-Oak Grove Line, he said, there is a total of approximately 1,000 acres involved, - 150 acres of orchard land, 81 acres of other type of land, and only 3 acres of residential property, this line being outside of the

residential area. This concluded the Engineer's explanation. The meeting was then turned over to the local groups.

Mr. John Graff inquired as to the relative widths of the proposed rights of way from beginning to end. The Engineer replied that rights of way will be uniform along all routes - approximately 300 feet wide except in the residential portion of Medford and where interchanges are to be constructed. At these points, he said, the exact width of the right of way has not of yet been determined. Mr. Graff questioned the right of way costs as mentioned by the Engineer. He expressed the feeling that such costs cannot be a factor in the determination of the routes as now planned.

Chairman Chandler at this point asked those desiring to speak to step to use of the microphones that were provided in the aisles.

Mr. Otis J. Frohnmeyer, Attorney, stated that he represents a group of land owners, property owners, and tax payers who are interested in the selection of the Hawthorne Park or Bear Creek Routes. The preference of this group, he said, is for such routes; however, as a second choice they favor the Genessee Street Route, but they are opposed to either the West Side Route or the Hillcrest Route. He called the following persons who spoke in favor of the Bear Creek Route:

(1) Mr. Howard E. Bash, President of the Fruit Growers League, representing 290 fruit growers in the Bear Creek Valley, who stated that the economy of the valley depends on two basic resources - lumber and agriculture. He expressed their feeling that due to the gradual restrictions of the lumber industry, the future is more and more going to depend on the conservation and expansion of agricultural resources. He advised that considerable acreage already has been taken by subdivisions, and in their estimation any further withdrawals should be viewed with concern. The actual loss of the acres of orchard land, he said, is extremely important but that does not affect the true loss is fruit production. The problem of operation, he added, is emphasized in bisected areas and is particularly important in the orchard districts where interference with natural irrigation contours poses severe problems. He declared that the orchard acreage today is less than it was twenty years ago, and he expressed the feeling in view of these considerations that that they are justified in protesting the Hillcrest Route and in recommending the Bear Creek Route.

(2) Mr. W. Ben Tucker, County Agriculture Agent, who stated that Jackson County has only a limited amount of acreage devoted to agriculture. Only 2 percent of the total of 1,802,888 acreage in the county, he said, is listed as farm acreage and of that acreage only 5 percent is crop land. He also said that the Bear Creek Route has a natural barrier on one side that would aid materially in lessening the damage that might be done. He pointed out that the Hillcrest Line will run diagonally through all of the property and will leave triangular pieces on either side of the highway, which owners cannot operate without considerable hazard: also, it would increase the cost of operating the land and would affect the type of agriculture that could be carried on.

(3) Mr. Cliff B. Cordy, County Horticulture Agent, who spoke for the Bear Creek Route from the horticulture standpoint. He pointed out the acreage loss and the crop loss that would result were the Hillcrest Route adopted. He estimated the annual crop loss from 175 acres in the valley at \$210,000.

(4) Mr. Jack Hoffbuhr, Manager, Medford Irrigation District, who spoke from the irrigation standpoint, stated that the Hillcrest Route crosses their main canal seven times,

and that such route will introduce many problems in the functioning of their operations, which will not be the case were the Bear Creek Route adopted.

(5) Mr. Paul Culbertson, President, Medford Irrigation District, who stated that the District has 1,860 users who will be adversely affected by the selection of the Hillcrest Route. He advised that their present water supplies are inadequate, and that a serious maintenance and distribution problem will result were that route adopted.

(6) Mr. Walter A. Hoffbuhr, Manager, Talent Irrigation District, who pointed out how the Hillcrest Route will affect their district. He mentioned among other things that such route will disrupt their plans for using water and will necessitate resumption of pumping operations and sprinkling. The Bear Creek Route will not so affect their district.

(7) Mr. David Holmes, Director, Talent Irrigation District, who stated that adoption of the Hillcrest Route will materially affect the taxation and assessment rate for the acreage in their district and for the people concerned. He alleged that the district will lose between 400 and 500 acres of irrigable acreage were such route selected, which loss, he added, they cannot afford, because there already is a shortage at such acreage in the Valley.

(8) Mr. B. M. Tuttle, representative of the Rogue Valley Traffic Association, who advised that they are packers and shippers of pears in the district, as well as growers of pears in substantial amounts. He endorsed the testimony of Mr. Bush and Mr. Cordy, and gave as his feeling that the selection of the Hillcrest Route will result in heavy losses to them. He expressed himself emphatically in favor of the Bear Creek Route.

Others speaking in behalf of the Bear Creek Route were:

(9) Mr. Robert A. Duff, City Manager, Medford, who stated that it will cost about \$430,000 to convert Barnett Road to standards suitable as an access road between the freeway and Riverside Avenue in Medford, of which amount \$270,000 is the estimated cost to improve the portion lying within the city limits of Medford.

(10) Mr. Paul B. Running, County Engineer, Jackson County, who gave figures on the cost to the County to rebuild certain county roads to accommodate access travel. He particularly mentioned the Barnett Road, the county's portion of which, he said, will cost about \$180,000. He estimated the cost to improve the Fern Valley Road leading into Phoenix at \$60,000, and the cost to improve the Valley View Road, which is the north entrance to Ashland at \$90,000,

(11) Mr. Dan Adams, Mayor of the City of Phoenix, who advised that the City of Phoenix has unanimously voted to recommend the Genessee or Hawthorne Routes. The access road, he said, would be much shorter and more convenient for the people of Phoenix, and the loss of business would be much less with such closer access. He mentioned that Bear Creek is a natural barrier, as would also be the freeway.

(12) J. Rodney Keating, County Judge, Jackson County, who advised that the County Court adopted a resolution favoring the Bear Creek Route. He presented a copy of the resolution for the records and files of the Highway Commission.

(13) Mr. Otto A. Ewaldson, President, Jackson County Chamber of Commerce, who gave seven reasons why the Chamber of Commerce is in favor of the adoption of the Bear Creek Route. He presented to the Commission a brief, in writing, containing those seven reasons in support of his oral presentation.

(14) Mr. Karl Miller, Mayor, City of Medford, who stated that the City Council has no definite recommendations to offer with respect to any of the routes that are under consideration. He read aloud and presented a prepared statement outlining the problems that the city will be faced with by adoption of each of the routes that are being discussed.

(15) Rev. George R. V. Bolster, Chairman, Board of Directors, Rogue Valley Memorial Hospital, who urged abandonment of any consideration for the Hillcrest route because of the adverse affect that the adoption of that route will have on the new hospital that they are erecting. It is most essential, he said, that the hospital be located on a site sufficiently removed from industrial operation, heavy street and highway traffic, and other interference factors to merit the sanction and approval of authorities. The hospital, he added, is now under construction adjacent to Barnett Road at its junction with Murphy Road, which site has the unqualified approval of all State and Federal agencies concerned, both in regard to location and freedom from travel, smoke, and other interference factors. Were the proposed Hillcrest Route approved, it would mean that their long-term planning would be negated.

Is closing the presentation of his group, Mr. Frohnmeyer stated that the local hotel owners feel that present highway facilities for serving the public are adequate and that the traveling public should be kept as near those existing facilities as is possible. He also stated that the motel owners are very much concerned because of huge investments which they are fearful will be lost if the Hillcrest Route were adopted. He mentioned the name of Mr. Fred Moreland, restaurateur, who, he said, feels that their businesses will be adversely affected by selection of the Hillcrest Route because motels and eating places will be developed along Barnett Road. He added that the automobile dealers, too, favor the Bear Creek Route, and have adopted a resolution regarding it. He read aloud and presented a copy of the resolution. Summarizing this presentation in favor of the Bear Creek Route, he said that the speakers favor that route because it will follow a natural barrier, will destroy less agricultural and orchard land, and will require the re-establishment of fewer homes.

The first speaker following those headed by Mr. Frohnmeyer was Mr. Frank Ross, who stated that he is an engineer and farmer, and that his land lies along the proposed West Side Route. He said that he speaks for himself and a number of relatives. He suggested adoption of a route above the Hillcrest Line fringing the Valley on the east. He declared that construction of any of the routes that are being discussed today will be a big barrier to their Valley, and he expressed his opinion as an engineer that it is unnecessary to build a freeway through Medford and the Rouge River Valley.

Mr. Dick House, insurance agent, spoke for the Hawthorne Park Route as being the route that will cause the least economic loss. He suggested either the Hawthorne Park Line or placement of the highway on the edge of the Valley as suggested by Mr. Ross, where residents will act not be uprooted and where economic losses will be at a minimum.

Mr. Chester Hubbard, Member of the Highway Committee of the Jackson County Chamber of Commerce, expressed himself in favor of the Bear Creek Route through Hawthorne Park from the standpoint of acreage of residential property that will be taken. He mentioned that the Bear Creek location will take only 15.6 acres of land compared with 36.7 acres along the Genessee Line. He also mentioned that the City of Medford is due to lose a small portion of its park if the Bear Creek Route were to be selected. He suggested the purchase of some land along Hawthorne Avenue, including a few residences and two or three business establishments, as compensation for the loss of the park area. He estimated the cost involved at \$145,300 in today's market.

Mr. C. W. Reames, attorney, Medford, headed a group that opposed the Bear Creek Route. He presented petitions signed by 554 property owners in which the Commission is asked to not place Highway 99 on the Genessee Street or Geneva Street location because of the detrimental effect on the City of Medford, in which they gave as their opinion that the highway should be located either to the East or to the West of Medford, which access roads connections provided for those who wish to enter the City. He alleged that if the highway were routed through Medford it will ruin their City.

Mrs. Mary Ann Wilson, housewife, spoke in behalf of the Bear Creek Route and in opposition to the Hillcrest and West Side Routes. She volunteered to secure petitions in support of her contentions to offset those presented by Mr. Reames in that it would help the Commission to reaching it's decision.

Mr. Trautman expressed his preference for the Bear Creek Route as a natural artery.

Mr. J. C. Barnes, a retired real estate dealer, eighty years old, asserted that the east side of the Valley is not the place for the highway - and the kind of a highway or freeway that the people want because it will bar expansion of the city in the direction that it naturally will go. He visioned a highway elevated sufficiently so that it can be arched over the Creek and join the east side of Medford with the west side of Medford, with a parkway on both sides of the Creek. He declared that such plan will solve the park problem inasmuch as the space under the elevated highway could be developed for the parking of cars and could be beautified as an extension of the existing park.

Mr. Mel Krows spoke against the Bear Creek Route because, he said, people would be constantly subject to poison from monoxide gases that would infiltrate the whole east side of the City. The health of the people of Medford, he added, demands that the highway be located elsewhere than along bear Creek. He advocated the by-passing of the City and he discounted the alleged losses of fruit acreage.

Mrs. Richard Schuchard, housewife and mother of five children, asked the Commission to consider the problem from some standpoint other than the monetary values involved, and place the highway where it will not bother anyone. She prefaced her remarks with a request that the highway be routed where thousands of children will not be subjected to dangers as they will be were the highway located along Bear Creek.

Colleen Hope mentioned that the City has a large tract of land that is being operated as a Victory Housing project. She suggested that this property be developed as Hawthorne Park, so the present park will not be missed were the highway located across it. Her idea was that the State should purchase the property along Hawthorne Park, estimated at \$148,000 to compensate the City for right of way taken from the Park area.

Mrs. Ruth Eden, Member, Medford Planning Commission, spoke in behalf of residents along the Genessee Route who believe that their homes will be rendered unlivable because of the noise and gas fume that they will be subjected to if that route were selected. She stated that she is not recommending any particular route, but is objecting to the selection of the Genessee Route. She asked those present whose ideas coincide with hers to arise: --about fifty people responded.

At this point Chairman Chandler remarked that the Highway Commission desires to adjourn this meeting at 1:00 p. m, so it can have lunch before proceeding to a scheduled meeting at Klamath Falls this evening.

Mr. Kenneth Denman, Attorney, Medford, declared himself against any route that will pass through the City of Medford. He gave as his opinion that the new highway should be routed outside of the City and he advocated a route closer to the foothills where right of way costs will be the least. He said that he resides on Geneva Street just east of the proposed Genessee Route, but none of his property will be taken for highway use. If the highway must go through Medford, he said, the Bear Creek Route will be the safest one and will injure less people. He added that such will be the case were the Genessee Route selected. Mr. Denman quoted the former State Highway Engineer, Mr. R. H. Baldock, to the effect that "Whenever feasible these highways should bypass the towns". He mentioned bypasses that have been provided around Salem, Cottage Grove, Roseburg, and Gold Hill, and those contemplated around Eugene, Central Point, and Ashland. He said that with this picture in mind it is hard to understand what peculiar circumstances exist that give a sound basis for not bypassing Medford. He called attention to two kinds of objections which should be considered in the selection of a route, viz, damage to individuals and damage to the future of the City, and he pointed out features of each proposed route for comparison purposes. He presented a brief in support of his oral remarks and petitions signed by numerous local people requesting that this freeway be located outside of the city limits of Medford, and urging a location either to the East or West of the City.

Mr. Donald E. Faber, Mayor of the City of Central Point, offered three proposals from the Central Point City Council and the City Planning Commission as follows..

1. That a plan be considered and thoroughly investigated to construct the freeway up the west side of the Valley from the Dardanelle to Ashland.
2. That surveys be made to determine feasibility of swinging the highway further to the east, from the Willow Springs junction, to pass through the low Valley land in the Gibbons acreage area, thence to the east of the Medford airport.
3. While the City prefers that the new highway miss Central Point by a greater distance than has been proposed, if it finally must follow the line just to the east of the City, both the Planning Commission and the City Council ask that two frontage roads be provided paralleling the highway where it passes Central Point.

Mr. Faber presented a copy of a letter dated May 22, 1956 from the City of Central Point to Mr. Tom Edwards, Division Engineer, outlining what the City Council has in mind.

Mr. Jack Stewart, owner of the Bear Creek Motel on US 99, one and one-fourth miles south of Medford, urged adoption of the Bear Creek Route. It was his contention that the freeway should be constructed as closely as is possible to Medford so as to provide the shortest and nearest access to the City for the benefit of tourists who want to stop over night in Medford.

Mrs. Robert Kagy stated that she is in the agricultural business on the west side of the Valley. She endorsed the arguments presented by the residents of the Hillcrest area, advising that those arguments fit the west side area marvelously because both areas are under irrigation. She urged adoption of the Bear Creek Route.

Mr. Fred Moreland, restaurateur, spoke in behalf of restaurant owners. He alleged that the route of the highway completely out of the City will create a definite hardship on cafeteria operators.

Mr. Fred Baker, property owner, spoke for a location back of the Hillcrest Line, where, he said, a beautiful view of the City of Medford may be obtained and where it will not affect irrigation systems and orchards. He added, "If we are going to have a freeway through here, let's have a nice big freeway, and let's get it out of town where it belongs".

Fred Taylor, Ashland, expressed concurrence with the remarks of Mr. Baker. The routing of the highway through the City of Medford, he said, is the wrong answer to the problem. He added that business interests in Medford have no more "right to holler" about their business than do the people in Salem, Grants Pass, and Ashland, where bypasses already have been constructed or are planned.

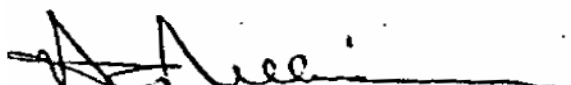

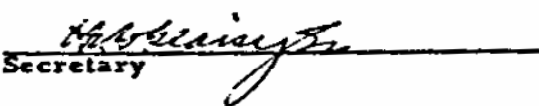

Dick House inquired if people write to the Commission expressing their views on this matter, where should their letters be sent. He was informed by Chairman Chandler that the State Highway Department belongs to the people, and that their letters should be addressed to the Highway Commission. State Highway Building. Salem.

An unidentified gentleman from the Seven Oaks district stated that he owns land in that district. He expressed preference for the route which passes through Medford where the least acreage of agricultural land will be taken. Homes, he said, can be replaced. But that is not true of agricultural ground.

Chairman Chandler concluded the hearing with the following statement: We have had a long session here today, about three hours, and notes have been taken of all arguments presented. Studies of the project will be conducted and the information gained today will be given careful consideration in these studies. The Commission, and the Engineers, be added, have several years in which to continue these studies and to make complete surveys, so the people affected will not be disturbed for at least five years, because this project is part of the thirteen-year construction program for Federal and State monies. He thanked the assemblage for the courteous way in which the conference has been conducted and for the courteous treatment that has been afforded the Commission. He mentioned that the preponderance of opinions expressed at this meeting appear to be unfavorable to the Hillcrest and West Side Routes, and that the Genessee or Hawthorne Park Routes are those most desired. However, he added, the Commission will not make a decision today. He declared the meeting adjourned at 1:00 p. m.

Following adjournment, the Commission and party had lunch at Medford and then motored to Klamath Falls for an informal meeting with representatives of that community.

October 25. 1956

 State Highway Engineer	 Chairman
 Secretary	 Commissioner

(A selection from the minutes of the Oregon State Highway Commission on January 22, 1957, concerning the final choice of the proposed interstate highway route through Medford)

The Engineer reported that five routes for the Pacific Highway bypass around the city of Medford have been carefully studied as to cost and feasibility, and two routes have been considered worthy of consideration - one being the Genessee Route, and the other the Bear Creek-Hawthorne Park Route. Either of these two routes, he stated, would serve the city of Medford to good advantage and each is roughly parallel to Bear Creek. The West Medford line and the High line were eliminated because of high cost. The Hillcrest line, although comparable in cost with the Genessee and Hawthorne Park lines, has the disadvantage of disrupting many orchards and other agricultural lands and would not adequately serve the city of Medford. The Hawthorne Park line, he continued, offers less disruption to homes and farmland than the Genessee route, although the cost is approximately 2% higher. After very careful study of all information available it appears that the Bear Creek-Hawthorne Park line will provide the greatest good to the traveling public and to the Medford area commensurate with its cost. He recommended that it be adopted. The Commission approved his recommendation by adopting the attached resolution relative thereto marked "EXHIBIT J-1", which resolution by this reference is made a part hereof with like effect as though extended in full herein. The Commission also approved a news release stating the reasons for adopting this route.