July 2001

From: Vicki Guarino, RVCOG

Date: July 19, 2001

Attendees: Solution Team members present: Pam Lind, Dan Moore, Scott Chancy, Skip Knight, Robin Marshall, Jeff Graham, Mark McQueen, Eric Niemeyer, Alex Georgevitch. Members absent: Mike Burrill, Greg Holthoff, Jim Oldland Brian Dunn, Reeve Hennion, Mark Gallagher, Mark Ashby,

Citizen Advisory Committee members present: Patty Claeys, Mike Mahar, Jon Deason, Jane Podolski, Jean Milgram, Tim Alford, Mike Montero, Wade Six, John Ferris.

Re: SOLUTION TEAM MEETING DRAFT MINUTES FOR July 18, 2001 – Joint meeting with Citizens Advisory Committee

Location: Jackson County Public Works Auditorium, 200 Antelope Rd., White City.

Guests: Bon Dysart, Laurie Dysart, Bob Dysart, Nancy Kincaid (DLCDC), Barbara Davidson,

Eric Stark, Norbert Leiberg.

Consultant Team Present:
John Morrison, Vicki Guarino, RVCOG; Dave Mayfield, Mike Gallagher, URS; Frank Stevens, Gary Leaming, ODOT.

1.0 Call to Order
Frank Stevens called the meeting to order at 12:10 a.m. Minutes of the March 7, 2001 Solution Team meeting were approved without comment. Meeting attendees introduced themselves.

2.0 Public Comment
Frank Stevens asked if there were any citizen comment. Bon Dysart said he couldn't believe how long the planning process has taken. Nancy Kincaid introduced herself as the local staff representative of the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development.

3. **Purpose of the Meeting**
   Dave Mayfield described how the DEIS process leads to selection of a project alternative. The purpose of this meeting is for Solution Team members to decide how they will select an alternative – the tools they'll need to make their decision.
4. **Public Involvement Update**
   John Morrison gave an update of public outreach and involvement efforts. These include production and distribution of two project videos, preparation of a project newsletter and presentations to about a dozen community groups. One video, providing background for the project and descriptions of the proposed alternatives, has been distributed to about 150 elected officials, agency staff, private citizens and is available at Jackson County libraries. The second video, to be done shortly, uses computer simulation to show how traffic would be routed on the new interchange. Overall, the effort is putting out a positive message about the project, which has been well-received in the community. The message contrasts with some negative comments about the project that appeared in the news media a few months ago.
5. **DEIS Update, Review of Project Development Process**

Mike Gallagher said there have been two internal reviews of the Draft and some modifications are being made. Overall, however, the work done on the Highland and Ellendale alternatives is holding up through the reviews, and no fatal flaws have been uncovered. Although both alternatives would have impacts, it appears that all of the adverse impacts of the Highland Alternative can be mitigated. Mitigation for the Ellendale Alternative, however, doesn't appear so clear cut..

Also, the consultant team is preparing applications for the permits the project will require. Considerable attention is being paid to mitigation of 4(f) impacts in anticipation of a rigorous review process. The Highland Alternative would encroach on Bear Creek Park; both construction alternatives would encroach on Veterans Memorial Park due to anticipated widening of Highway 99. On Highway 99, widening in constrained by the railroad tracks lining the west side. Gallagher and Dave Mayfield said the project team is considering ways for the project to enhance Bear Creek Park, perhaps by routing required pedestrian-bike path through the park rather that along Highland Drive. In discussion with CAC and Solution Team members, pedestrian access to Bear Creek Park was discussed, including how to establish safe street crossings. Alex Georgevitch said the City of Medford probably would permit crossings only at intersections, not mid-block, for safety. A pedestrian bridge over the street probably would not be acceptable because the structures generally are not used. Gallagher said many details of the project still are being worked out, and will continue to be altered throughout the course of the project. On Barnett Road, plans call for right-of-way acquisition and widening at the bridge. Frank Stevens said there are no plans now to rebuild the bridge however, because the fund for such a project has been depleted and the structure itself is in good condition.

6.0 Evaluation Strategy for Selecting an Alternative

Mike Gallagher reviewed the evaluation process, the EIS process and decision making through the point of a final decision by the Federal Highway Administration. The decision would be for a concept design, not a detailed plan. A range of impacts would be identified, matching a range of possible design alterations.

Frank Stevens noted that this process is different from traditional road planning processes in that it has involved the public in what typically had been a behind-the-scenes process between ODOT and consultants. This may seem like a slow process to public participants, but actually the project is moving rapidly. Details in the project will continue to change throughout the process.

Gallagher reviewed the goals process, the evaluation criteria and the process of weighting each goal. Because the two construction alternatives are so similar their impacts and the degree to which they fulfill the committee's goals also are similar. Both solve the transportation problem; both are in constrained areas regarding socio-economics and the natural environment.

Dave Mayfield said the issue for the Solution Team at this meeting is to decide how to decide – to identify the decision-making tools that will be needed. He asked members to think about how difficult and complicated it will be for them to reach a decision. A difficult decision would require a more elaborate decision-making process. He described some decision-making options that the team could consider.

Gallagher noted that because of the similarities between the two alternatives in the existing evaluation process, he identified evaluation criteria in which there are distinctions between the two alternatives. In many categories there are no differences in evaluation results between Highland and Ellendale. He asked whether the team wanted at this point to use

existing goals in the upcoming decision-making, using a streamlined process that focuses on the criteria in which the alternatives differ, or develop new goals.
Dan Moore said the team should go with applicable goals – the existing goals in which there are distinctions between the two alternatives.

Frank Stevens said an alternative would be to go back to the beginning and develop new goals and new evaluation criteria. Gallagher noted that evaluation criteria are preliminary at this point in the process, and can be changed. Impacts can change too. Gallagher noted that the acreage of park land impacted by the project has been changing, and will continue to change as the project concept develops and changes.

Mayfield noted that although the original goal-setting process was painstaking, it was valuable in that it drew into focus issues that are important to the community.

Pam Lind questioned the validity of changing project goals at this point in the project, and wondered whether establishing new project goals would be a defensible move. She said she preferred having evaluation criteria remain consistent throughout the project. Mayfield said the goals could be changed without jeopardizing the process because only two, very similar alternatives have survived evaluation so far.

To help reach a decision on whether new goals are needed, Mayfield asked CAC and Solution Team members whether they felt they needed more information about each alternative before making a decision. John Ferris and Wade Six said they needed more information and Six said he had some specific questions. (Later in the meeting, Six asked about residents impacted, specifically the number of low-income residents. He then said he was satisfied with the information from Gallagher.) Dan Moore, Mark McQueen, Patty Claeys, Jane Podolski, Jean Milgram, Tim Alford, Mike Montero, Eric Neimeyer, Scott Chancey, Skip Knight, Alex Georgevitch, Robin Marshall, Pam Lind all said they were comfortable with the existing goals and evaluation criteria, supporting a simplified evaluation tool that focuses on criteria in which outcomes differ between Highland and Ellendale alternatives.

Jon Deason said he was not comfortable, but could see that Highland was the best alternative.

Moore and several others noted that existing criteria would suffice unless some new issue arises through the continuing EIS process.

Milgram said the Highland Alternative appears to be the better of the two build alternatives under the existing criteria, and the No Build Alternative is a poor option.

Alford said the existing criteria are defensible and that the decision to be made is between Highland and the No Build. But looking at the area, No Build is not a good choice because it would have serious detrimental impacts, with loss of public access to the area because of traffic congestion. However, he said he understood the objections of neighbors concerned about traffic impacts of the Highland Alternative.

Montero said the construction process needs to go forward and the No Build would have negative impacts on air quality, and in turn the future of the community.
Gallagher noted that he added an evaluation criterion addressing the impact to the Bear Creek Greenway trail, distinguishing trail impacts from greenway impacts. The simplified evaluation chart notes the Highland Alternative impacting 260 feet of trail; Ellendale impacting 1,010 feet of trail.

7.0 Citizen Input

Frank Stevens asked members of the public if they were comfortable with the process and the course of the meeting.

Nancy Kincaid said she was impressed by the group's original problem solving.

Norbert Leiberg said the entire team was doing good work, and suggested that they all move on to making a decision rather than get bogged down in second-guessing themselves.

Bon Dysart said he was comfortable.

Laurie Dysart said the process has been a learning experience.

Barbara Davidson said it has been good to see so many people putting forth so much time and effort. She said she knows that no decision has been made lightly. The group won't have to defend its work to the public, but rather explain how and why decisions were made. Stevens said he appreciated all of the citizen involvement – that the project is not simply the work of some engineers in Salem.

8. Meeting Critique

Solutions Team and CAC members were asked if they were comfortable with the meeting.

John Ferris said he needs to get more comfortable.

Wade Six said he appreciated having the evaluation criteria distilled down to those that apply to the differences between Highland and Ellendale. However, there never will be a community consensus on the choice.

Jean Milgram said she appreciated being invited to the Solution Team meeting; that it was good to see how decisions are being made.

Jeff Graham said he appreciated the work of citizen volunteers and the level of community support their interest represents.

Montero praised the decision-making process.

Pam Lind said she appreciated having CAC members at the meeting.

Mark McQueen said the process has benefited from the CAC's contributions.

CAC members agreed that they would continue meeting jointly with the Solution Team until the Draft Environmental Impact Statement is published. Montero said that after the Draft is published, citizens probably will have issues they will want to present directly to the CAC. The CAC is expected to have a separate, evening meeting in October, and meet jointly with the Solution Team in September.

The meeting was adjourned at 2 p.m.