

May 2000

From: John Morrison, RVCOG

Date: May 12, 2000

Attendees: Solution Team members present: Mark McQueen; Brian Dunn; Joe Strahl; Julie Brown; Skip Knight; Jim Oldland; Lisa Owens; Mark Gallagher; Greg Holthoff; Jeff Graham; Mike Burrill; Dan Moore; Reeve Hennion; Robin Marshall. Solution Team Members absent: Mark Ashby.

Re: SOLUTION TEAM MEETING MINUTES for May 3, 2000

Location: ODOT/Jackson County Annex Conference Room, 200 Antelope Road, White City.

Guests: Bon Dysart; Laurie Dysart; Bob Dysart; Pat Oldenburg; Eric Stark.

Project Team Present: David Mayfield, URS; Mike Gallagher, URS; Frank Stevens, ODOT; John Morrison, RVCOG.

1.0 Call to Order/Approval of Minutes

Frank Stevens called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM. He welcomed the public, reviewed the agenda and asked for approval of minutes of the previous meeting. Minutes were approved unanimously without change.

2.0 Citizen Input

Frank Stevens asked if there was any citizen comment. Citizen Bon Dysart commented that in listening to Eric Jacobsen of DLCD at the April Solution Team Meeting it seemed to him that Jacobsen's remarks appeared to indicate that Alternative 14 (the Couplet) might encourage people to go downtown. Dysart also commented that in regard to the presentation on bike/pedestrian issues given by Michael Ronkin at the April 19 CAC meeting, it appears that there is a need to control growth at the interchange. There was no further comment.

3.0 Citizen Advisory Committee Report

CAC facilitator John Morrison reported that the CAC heard a presentation on traffic engineering for bicycle and pedestrian traffic by Michael Ronkin of ODOT. Presentation was highly informative and well received by CAC. It did not require a recommendation by the CAC. The CAC also heard a presentation on the ODOT Value Engineering Team report. No recommendation was made by the CAC on the report.

4.0 Purpose of Meeting

Dave Mayfield said the purpose of the meeting was to review Consultant team analysis of the VE Team suggestion to shift the footprint of the freeway overpass in the Highland Option. The Solution Team also would preview what would be covered in the upcoming draft EIS process and how the process would handle major issues raised by the project.

5.0 Review of Project Roles and Responsibilities

Frank Stevens noted that after working on the project more than a year, it was time to review where the project has been and where it is going. He also reviewed the Solution Team's Role and Responsibilities. He indicated that members of the Solution Team are free to express opinions and share what they know, but that all should exercise caution in saying anything that might give the perception that a decision to select an alternative has been

made. He said a recent comment by a Solution Team member led the Mail Tribune to believe a decision had been made. It took hours of time convincing the newspaper that a decision had not been made and that the project team wasn't hiding something. Stevens added that a great deal of research and analysis remains to be done before the selection of a preferred alternative can be made.

Greg Holthoff asked whether the project was going into the DEIS with a preferred alternative. Dave Mayfield replied that we could do that but at this point a preferred alternative has not been identified. The DEIS will consider the three remaining alternatives and the "no build" and all will be studied equally. Reeve Hennon asked when a decision of a preferred alternative could be made. Dave said it was possible to do so any time the Solution Team wanted. Mike Gallagher said he felt it was premature to make the decision now. It would be best to wait until the environmental & socioeconomic analyses were completed. Frank Stevens agreed saying once the data is back, the Team could consider their evaluation criteria.

6.0 Value Engineering Team Report

Kent Belleque and Alex Georgevitch of ODOT discussed the VE Team Report. They emphasized that the VE report should be viewed as a process and a tool, not a decision. They covered who was on the team and what was analyzed. The report found that overall, the Highland option appeared to be the preferred option by the VE Team. Specifically, it appears to better meet the goals and objectives of the project, is expected to cost less, provide better safety, function and operation, will have fewer or less severe environmental impacts and lends itself to meeting such standards for access control. Belleque said both Highland and Ellendale options offer long term solutions; the couplet doesn't and has less potential for effective access management. Both Ellendale and the couplet options are expected to produce higher right-of-way impacts. Ellendale would not be as safe due to access management problems. The couplet doesn't accommodate freeway widening at some point in the future. Belleque said the VE team arrived at its positions by setting up a matrix within which each alternative is analyzed for its projected performance.

Greg Holthoff asked what the Team looked at in consideration of business. Belleque said the Team looked at access and R-O-W impacts to businesses, but not with a great deal of detail. He said ODOT would put a team together to further analyze access. He said issues to be addressed were an alternative alignment for the overpass at Bear Creek, and Barnett Road traffic and Right-of-way impacts, especially in the Barnett & Highland area.

Belleque then ran through a series of proposals contained in the VE Team report: 1) Eliminate the access road under Bear Creek Bridge; 2) Replace a proposed bridge at Larson Creek with a box culvert or arch; 3) Use fill in place of walls as shown on some plans; 4) alter the profile of the overpass on I-5 which although it would cost more, would improve sight distance. 5) alter the typical section to use less land; 6) steepen the fill slopes, and; 7) provide for access to property in the SW quadrant of the proposed Highland SPU interchange. Belleque said all the proposals were based on using the Highland option, and while all might not work, some could be used on other options. All totaled, the proposals could save up to \$2,650,000. Dave Mayfield comments that these were all good suggestions, and the project team could move ahead with them using a "worst case" impact analysis approach.

Dave Mayfield then presented a memo addressing a suggestion made earlier by the VE Team to research the possibility of moving the footprint of the SPU proposed for Highland and Ellendale options slightly to the east to create a single bridging of Bear Creek. He said analysis indicated it would cost an additional \$3 to \$4 million and would necessitate

acquiring several additional buildings (10 more for Ellendale; 8 more for Highland. He said this would result in negligible improvements for natural resources except under the Highland option. In the case of the Ellendale option it would actually increase the streamside impact, but for Highland, it would decrease the areas of stream impacts by 111 meters. Mayfield summed up by saying the project team didn't feel the move would be worth doing since it would take additional buildings, and cost \$3 to \$4 million more without substantially reducing natural resource impacts... After discussion, the Solution Team decided the Project Team analysis had sufficiently explored the impacts and benefits of the VE Team suggestion. They voted to accept the URS recommendation to move ahead based on the memo, but with the caveat that if it needs to be revised, it would be done between the presentation of the draft EIS document and the final EIS. The vote was unanimous.

7.0 Moving ahead with the DEIS

Project team member Mike Gallagher gave a presentation on progress in the DEIS phase. He said environmental analysis fieldwork would be starting the week of May 8, 2000. Reporting will be done in the form of technical reports. He said the first step was to meet with the appropriate ODOT staff. He said the team will be working with two scenarios: the basic project footprint – using the estimated location of the Right-of-way and the Worst Case – which analyzes an additional buffer around the project footprint to allow needed flexibility for future design modifications. He then went through the types of analyses to be done.

Traffic and safety – JRH will be doing the work. This sets the tone for other studies and reports (noise, socio-economic, and right-of-way).

Air Quality – Here the focus will be on the intersection where there appears to be a potential increase in air pollution. Will look at CO and particulate levels.

Noise – Depending on the receptor, this includes both interior and exterior noise. Will do noise modeling. Field work will be done at 25 monitoring stations to get a read on existing conditions. The goal is to determine where noise impact will occur and possible mitigation needed.

Socio-economic – Assesses impacts to businesses including access and relocation. Impacts to residential. Impacts relative to environmental justice. Fieldwork will include residential interviews to determine impact on minority and low income populations.

Right-of-way – Assesses displacements impacts, acquisition needs. This will report the impact in the aggregate rather than on individual properties). Energy – What are the long-term savings? Determine the level of detail. It will require more design detail to do more detailed energy analysis.

Natural Resources – Three areas to be done: Wetlands, fisheries, plants. Doing site review and evaluating quality of wetlands. Coho and cutthroat trout may be in the vicinity. Will look for threatened or endangered plants, but don't expect too much here.

Hydrology/Water Quality – Assess impacts on storm water quality and quantity, and the increase in impermeable surfaces. Runoff impacts are an issue, especially compared to the no build and the cumulative impacts with other projects as well. There are flood plain and FEMA issues.

Cultural Resources – this includes housing and architecture, and any possible archeological site recording.

Section 4 (f) documentation – Avoidance of disproportionate impacts. Have to document that alternatives reviewed were not reasonable, feasible or prudent.

Geotech – Analysis of soils and possible flooding potential.

Hazardous materials – Do a "windshield" survey to identify potential hazmat areas.

Land Use – What kinds of induced changes might occur? For example, changing residential to commercial use. This led to a discussion of what was being done to talk to businesses in the area about the process. John Morrison said a meeting was held on April 26 with local business owners to bring them up to date on the latest project developments and to get their comments. Frank Stevens said the Oregon Highway Plan requires an interchange management plan. He said ODOT needs to pull together one for both South Medford and Highway 62 in order to plan for long-term livability and protecting the public's investment. He said ODOT is meeting with DLCD to develop a strategy for a process to determine a land use agreement.

8.0 May 6 Open House

Dave Mayfield and John Morrison outlined the upcoming May 6 community Open House on the project. Will have displays and bus tours of the three alternative areas, plus hot dogs and soft drinks provided by donations. Expecting a big turnout. All Solution Team members were urged to attend.

9.0 Meeting Critique

Frank Stevens then asked each member of the Solution Team if they were comfortable with the meeting and the progress made. Most members expressed comfort with the process and state of progress. Several felt the VE report had been very helpful, but at least one member said more detail on the VE report would be helpful. The group then discussed whether or not to present a statement expressing strong concern to the City of Medford regarding the city council's review of a zone change request for property affecting the Highland and Ellendale alternatives, prior to studying potential impacts of those alternatives. It was decided that staff would forward the statement of concern to the Medford Council.

10.0 Adjourn

Next meeting Wednesday July 12, 2000. (There will be no meeting in June).