

## **October 1999**

**From:** Kathy Helmer, RVCOG

**Date:** October 7, 1999

**Attendees:** Solutions Team members present: Frank Stevens, Mark Ashby, Michael Burrill, Greg Holthoff, Mark McQueen, Brian Dunn, Joe Strahl, Dan Moore, Reeve Hennion, Lisa Owens, Mark Gallagher, Julie Brown.

Solutions Team members absent: Robin Marshall, Jim Oldland, Laurel Prairie-Kuntz, Skip Knight.

**Re: SOLUTION TEAM MEETING MUNUTES FOR OCTOBER 6, 1999**

**Location:** ODOT Conference Room B&C, 200 Antelope Rd., White City.

**Guests:** Lis Cooper, Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT); Jon Deason, Chair, South Medford Interchange Project Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC); Eric Jacobson, Dept. of Land Conservation and Development; Edgar Hee, citizen; Bon, Laurie and Bob Dysart, citizens; Jackie Johnson, citizen; Phoebe Noyes, citizen; Norbert Leiberg, citizen; Tom and Pat Oldenburg, citizens; Clark Stevens, citizen.

**Consultant Team Present:** David Mayfield, URS Greiner; Ram Kulkarni, URS Greiner; Gary Shaff, JRH; Kathy Helmer, RVCOG.

### **1.0 Call To Order**

Frank Stevens called the meeting to order at 9:07 AM.

### **2.0 Approval of September Minutes**

The minutes of the September 1, 1999 Solution Team meeting were unanimously approved as written.

### **3.0 Public Comment**

Frank Stevens introduced the guests present, welcomed members of the public and invited public comment. Edgar Hee spoke, saying that citizens were there to put their concerns on record. Their concerns related to the accuracy of the computer modeling since it was critical to the decisions to be made and to quality of life and fairness evaluation criteria. He said they were starting to see criteria relating to quality of life and that the weighting of those criteria was still of concern. The neighborhood association has adopted the name "Citizens for the Preservation of Established Neighborhoods".

### **4.0 Feedback from CAC**

Jon Deason, CAC Chair, reported to the group on progress by the CAC. He noted that the CAC represents the public and links the public to the Solutions Team. Many citizens have attended recent CAC meetings. While there had been some concerns about accomplishing meeting agendas, the public participation had been excellent. Jon noted that residents from the Groveland neighborhood had been well represented, but that there were lines (alternative concepts) running through other neighborhoods, such as Portland, Garfield and Hawthorne Park, which would be just as disruptive. He said that the CAC was trying to take a broad view and that the group needed to come up with solutions that dealt with the majority of the community.

## 5.0 Evaluation Criteria

David Mayfield led the group in a discussion of evaluation criteria. With respect to (Social) Goal #6: Minimize disproportionate impacts, the group considered criteria related to percent increase in neighborhood traffic, using the categories of 0% - 50% increase, 50% - 100% increase and more than 100% increase in traffic. The group considered these criteria with respect to different types of road designations, e.g. local streets, collectors, etc., and business versus residential settings. The group decided that this criterion would be appropriately used in residential neighborhoods; it would not be applied to business neighborhoods. Additionally, it would be applied only to those streets currently experiencing at least 500 trips per day. This figure represents 50 households at an average of 10 trips per day.

Discussion then turned to (Planning) Goal #10: Provide long-term, sustainable solutions that allow parties to plan for the future. Members felt that the phrase "plan goals met" was a gray area subject to interpretation. Solution Team members discussed using the Regional Transportation Planning goals, Oregon Transportation Plan goals or VMT and volume/capacity. They brought up the idea of counting the potential number of goal exceptions required by an alternative concept or the changes required in the city's or county's comprehensive plan. One member noted that the purpose of Goal #10 was to ensure that the transportation facility would meet the demands of build-out on the lands planned to 2020. It was noted that the Regional Transportation Planning (RTP) Goals look at both land use and transportation impacts. Some were concerned that local jurisdictions' comprehensive plan goals wouldn't be reflected in the RTP Goals, but the group agreed that RTP goals would provide the proper measure. The number of RTP goals met or not met would be counted.

## 6.0 Decision Analysis

Ram Kulkarni presented background on the decision analysis approach. It has been used for more than 30 years with extremely good results. In Los Angeles, the Public Works Dept. used it to plan a sanitary facility. The process allows for meaningful input. Among other uses, it has been used to develop a statewide transportation system and the siting of power plants. Each of these projects involved multiple impacts and the need to balance a variety of concerns and interests. The process results in a tool to help you reach a decision; it does not make the decision. It is driven by value judgements and by technical decisions; it has quantitative and qualitative aspects which are balanced by the process.

The basic steps in Decision Analysis are:

1. Define goals and evaluation measures
2. Identify feasible alternatives
3. Estimate impacts of alternatives
4. Assess value judgments to combine diverse impacts
5. Identify preferred alternative(s) -- Sensitivity analysis

Steps 1 and 2 have been completed, and the group was to focus on the fourth step during this meeting: Assessing value judgments. Ram explained that one benefit of the approach was that the assessment would not be connected to any particular alternative concept.

To assess value judgements, Ram explained that the Solution Team would go through the following steps in the meeting:

- Assess equivalent impact levels.
- Review of potential range of impacts/benefits (what is the best or worst that can happen?)
- Assess the shape of value function (Do impacts worsen at a steady rate?)
- Assess the relative importance of different evaluation measures.

### **6.1 Assessing Equivalent Impact Levels**

Assessing equivalent impact levels was to be applied to evaluation measures with multiple impact categories. For example, evaluation measure #1a counts locations at the freeway interchange and on local streets where design standards are not achieved. The task would be to determine at what point their level of concern for the number of such locations at freeway interchanges would match their concern for the number of such locations on local streets. Ram asked David Mayfield to provide sample answers with the logic behind his numbers, to demonstrate how to reach the appropriate number. David explained that if the given number was 10 for interchange locations and he was hypothetically twice as concerned about interchange locations as local street locations, the number he would give to local street locations would be 20, and so on for the other examples given.

Ram reviewed the process to be used and the ground rules for the process. After members' scores were submitted and analyzed by computer, areas of consensus and difference would show statistically, and the group could discuss their differences and vote again. He noted that consensus was desired, but not mandatory.

Before distributing the voting forms, it was clarified that there were 10 voting Solutions Team members present. Michael Burrill was not present for voting and Jon Deason was not a voting member. A question was raised regarding the relative meaning of low as compared to high impact numbers and this was explained. It was noted that the actual potential impact range had nothing to do with this scoring discussion. Frank noted that there was some confusion regarding scoring and further explanation occurred. Participants were given 6 forms with multiple impact categories. Working independently, each member assigned numbers to multiple impact categories. They gave their forms to Ram to derive statistical information on group numbers.

During the computer analysis, the group discussed the "met, partially met, not met" categories related to (Planning) Goal#10. It was decided to collapse the category into "meetable" and "not met". Goals that were partially met would be considered "meetable". Upon completion of the computer analysis, Ram explained how statistical criteria show whether or not there is group consensus. If there is less than 20% variability, meaning a standard error of less than 20, there is relative consensus. For each form, the range of responses, mean, % standard error, trimmed mean and % standard error on the trimmed mean were presented. The ratio of equivalent impact was determined through this method for each measure.

For two measures, Form 4 (measure 15b) and Form 5b(measure 6d), there was less consensus than for the others. The group decided it was comfortable with the outcome on measure 15b. Regarding measure 6d, one member felt that a 50% increase in traffic could be a significant change. Some suggested discussing the measure, others revoting. The categories were reviewed. One member noted that on a seasonal basis, there is often a 50 – 100% increase in traffic. Another suggested that increases could be well beyond 100% in some scenarios. A member suggested that a revote would only result in moving scores more toward the mean. Most members agreed with that statement.

### **6.2 Review of Potential Range of Impacts/Benefits**

Ram asked the group to review and consider the appropriateness of the ranges of improvement for all criteria. It was important for the range to cover the total number of possibilities without being too broad. Regarding Evaluation Criterion #6d, the least preferred number was changed to 8,000. For #6f, the total potential businesses with reduced accessibility was changed from 70 to 600 since access management is being evaluated as part of traffic modeling. Regarding #6g, the range was established as 0 (least preferred) to 25 (most preferred). Regarding Evaluation Criterion #8, it was noted that the cost of

right of way can equal or exceed the cost of the construction project. The range was changed to 70 (least preferred) and 10 (most preferred). Regarding 14b, the words "maintained or" were eliminated. Regarding #11, the word "development" was inserted before "areas". In 3a and 3b, the references to v/c and VMT applying to Evaluation Criterion #10 were eliminated, since that measure was changed earlier in the meeting. Explaining that ODOT was meeting with URS Greiner to ensure that alternatives that didn't meet design standards would not be forwarded to the Solutions Team, Frank suggested that the wording in #s 1a and 9c be changed to refer to "design exceptions". With respect to #15a, the words "locally significant" needed to be added before "wetlands".

### ***6.3 Assessing the Shape of Value Function***

Assessing the shape of value function was also to be applied to each measure, the question being whether impacts worsen at a steady rate (in a linear fashion) or do they reach a "critical mass" or point beyond which impact effects escalate dramatically? He noted that impacts typically progress linearly, but that each measure had to be screened for this attribute.

Members were asked to consider the nature of each impact and whether or not each unit of increase would result in an incremental, linear change. Ram asked the group to identify those impacts that would not be linear. A member suggested that some environmental factors, such as impacts on wetlands, might not be linear. Greg suggested asking a wetlands specialist to respond to this query. He noted that the impact of #15b could reach a critical impact level, but that this couldn't happen within the context of the South Medford Interchange Project, due to the recognized regulatory context. Dave Mayfield responded that he did not think that wetlands or riparian impacts would be nonlinear on this project. Julie noted that the RVTD system would break down well before headways were not met at 30 locations; that the number should be changed to 10. She said the function would be non-linear after about three headways not being met.

### ***6.4 Assessing the Relative Importance of Different Evaluation Measures***

Ram asked members to consider how they view the degree of achievement on different goals. They were to decide which measure of all of them they would choose to improve, if they could improve only one, and give this measure a score of 100. In this scenario, 100 would be of the highest priority and 0 of the lowest priority. The number 50 would be half as important as 100, and a zero score would indicate that achieving the goal was of so little importance that it wasn't worth achieving the goal even if it was free. First dividing the measures into high, medium and low categories and ranking them within those categories was suggested as a strategy to aid them in their task. The value they attributed was to be tied to the range of improvements. Members independently assigned numbers and submitted their forms for computer analysis.

After the computer analysis, Ram reported that that there had been considerable consensus on the relative importance of measures, with the exception of 6d, 15a, 15f, and 15g. Three members noted that 6d concerned decreasing the traffic on local streets and that this had little to do with the overall goal of the South Medford Interchange project. One member suggested that the other items concerned wetlands, hazardous materials sites, and impervious surfaces and that these had been rated low since they were highly regulated and would, in that sense, "take care of themselves". Frank noted that David is obligated to screen options with fatal flaws so that they don't come before the Solutions Team. Reeve suggested that the overall ranking be held open for review and comment by the CAC and further discussion by the Solutions Team. It was requested that the list be reorganized according to the ranking and distributed to Solution Team members for their review.

## **7.0 Review of Alternatives**

David Mayfield discussed the set of alternatives received from public input, along with the review memo from Jim Hanks, JRH. He asked members to decide if alternatives should be included in the modeling process. Regarding the map labeled #15, it was decided that it was very similar to alternative #7 and there did not seem to be any advantage to having it modeled. Number 16 had the fatal flaw of placing the interchanges too closely together. Number 17 did not alleviate traffic at the Interchange. Number 18 offered some new ideas. While it rated low for out of direction travel, it had less impact on neighborhoods. The group agreed that two local connectors from this alternative should be retained for computer modeling -- a Murphy extension and an extension of Alba that connects to Portland Ave. Regarding next steps, Dave noted that analyses would proceed with the information from the decision analysis process. The computer modeling of alternative concepts would not have been completed by the next meeting. When the modeling was done, the results would provide pass/fail information on alternatives and be accompanied by recommendations for making some concepts work better.

## **8.0 Meeting Critique**

Frank led this segment of the meeting, emphasizing that Solution Team members needed to be comfortable with all steps in the process. He encouraged them to ask questions throughout the process, as needed. He asked Solutions Team members to comment on the day's meeting and the following comments were made:

Initially it was complicated, but as it went along I understood it better. This was a good meeting.

I enjoyed it. We're getting some tangible things done.

I was amazed we got through it. I'll be interested to see how it works out on paper.

It was a harrowing experience, kind of painful, but I got it.

I wouldn't have wanted to miss this. It was an interesting process. It's great to develop scientific criteria before you have the alternatives. (Frank noted that this will change the way the group looks at alternatives.)

This was a fascinating process. I admit to skepticism when we started. I'm not surprised at the level of agreement.

It was kind of confusing at the start, but I am more comfortable now. What we need to discuss is, what is the role of this analysis when it is time to decide on alternatives? (Dave said that it would help the group get from 6-7 alternatives down to 2-3 alternatives.) I never doubted the value of this process, but I kind of struggled with the process. I appreciate the patience you showed. It might have been helpful to better understand what the process meant and how it would be used.

When I read the last CAC meeting minutes, I was impressed by the level of public participation. Some of the weighting I did today was influenced by their participation. I think today's process was great.

Frank noted that when 2 –3 alternatives go into the DEIS process, this analysis would detail the benefits and impacts of different alternatives. He invited others present to comment on the meeting. Jon Deason said how valuable it had been to see the Solutions Team in action. He had been impressed to see how to quantify what could otherwise be "mushy" information. He said he was anxious to see what the model would say. He could tell that the

Solutions Team was going to listen to the CAC. He noted that he would need some help explaining the decision analysis process to the CAC at their next meeting. (The next meeting of the CAC will be held at the Rogue Federal Credit Union on Hwy 99. People should enter by the Employee Entrance on the south.)

Mrs. Oldenburg, a citizen, said she had appreciated the effort the group had put into the process that day. She hadn't realized how much time and effort was going into the process. It was a complicated process and she said she would keep coming to meetings.

Mr. Leiberg stated that it was an excellent group of consultants and team members. He asked what was being modeled and Dave said that the modeling was complex and referred him to the RVCOG memo of 9/14/99 for all the facts.

Lis Cooper, a specialist in Process Improvement with ODOT, said she was very impressed with the way the process combined the technical and the subjective. She complimented Ram on the job he had done and the members on being open about sharing their reactions. It was indicative of their having created a good work environment and their ability to work as a team.

Gary Shaff, JRH, shared how impressed he had been with the contributions made by all members and the consultants.

Kathy Helmer said she was amazed that they had completed the day's agenda and what a tribute that was to both the consultant team and the Solution Team members. She had sometimes heard members expressing the need for more discussion as part of the process. Dave thanked the group for working so hard and Ram thanked the group for their patience and for sticking with the process. He was impressed by the degree of consensus within the group.

Frank noted that the quality of the people on the team was responsible for the quality of meeting outcomes. Earlier in the project, the process had been slower and that had built the base for this ability to work together.

## **9.0 Adjournment**

Frank adjourned the meeting at 4:10 PM. The next meeting of the Solutions Team will be held at the same location on November 3. It will be a half-day session.