



# US 97: Wimp Way Traffic Safety

## *Frequently Asked Questions*

Last updated: September 30, 2009

There has been much interest, comments, and questions recently regarding traffic safety at the intersection of US 97 and Wimp Way. Our first concern within the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) is public safety, and we appreciate opportunities for involvement from all of our stakeholders on this subject. Please keep in mind that we have many stakeholders from all walks of life and ranges of need and interest, and we do our best to create a proper balance of decision making for all.

Here are answers to frequently asked questions:

### ***Are local residents at Wimp Way and Ice Avenue, residents at Crooked River Ranch, emergency services, and school bus route issues being considered in the decision to close Wimp Way?***

Yes, we've sought direct feedback from all affected residents, emergency services, and school district representatives. Here is what we've heard:

Early on during development of the project, some of the residents along Wimp Way and Ice Avenue informed ODOT staff that they generally supported closing Wimp Way to reduce the number of vehicles that some said traveled at unsafe speeds along the public roads in their area. However, during the Summer of 2009, some residents have stated they support leaving Wimp Way open.

Residents of Crooked River Ranch generally are opposed to closing Wimp Way and want improvements at the intersection, as a convenient means of accessing US 97 and an alternative for avoiding the traffic congestion at Lower Bridge Way.

Culver School District Transportation Department staff much prefer keeping Wimp Way open as an alternative, given congestion at Lower Bridge Way.

The Jefferson County Sheriff's Office wants us to keep Wimp Way open to reduce their emergency response time to and from the Crooked River Ranch area.

The Deschutes County Sheriff's Office is okay with closing Wimp Way.

The Redmond School District is okay with closing Wimp Way even though it will mean a longer travel distance (and time) when there are children to be picked up on Ice Avenue or Wimp Way.

***Could improvements (e.g., lighting, turn lanes, sight distance, turning restrictions) have been made at the US 97/Wimp Way intersection, instead of full closure?***

It is possible. However, we recognize that even with improvements at this intersection, the safety problem will continue to worsen over time as traffic volumes increase. The growth of traffic moving between Crooked River Ranch and US 97 is expected to increase, exposing the location to more traffic conflicts and potential crashes. So an important issue to address has been whether or not our limited resources should be focused on interim yet costly improvements to the existing intersection; particularly given the fact that there are other public road alternatives for property owners in the area, and given the fact that sooner or later this access will need to be closed under any scenario.

***By closing Wimp Way this would likely mean traffic will want to access the highway at the US 97/Lower Bridge Way intersection which already has congestion and safety problems. What sort of improvements are you planning there?***

Improvements being considered and proposed include: the addition of a right turn lane from Lower Bridge Way that is separated from the left turn movement to separate and improve right turning and left turning traffic onto US 97; improvements for the sight distance of vehicles turning from Lower Bridge Way onto US 97, and from US 97 to Lower Bridge Way; relocation of the entrance to Terrebonne Estates development (Morning Glory Drive) further west of US 97 to improve safety for approaching eastbound traffic on Lower Bridge Way; and elimination of dangerous “through” movements across US 97 (11<sup>th</sup> St. to/from Lower Bridge Way); and closure of the Barberry Lane approach (600 feet south of Lower Bridge Way) to US 97 to minimize traffic conflicts for vehicles turning on and off US 97. A drawing showing the improvements is available on the project website at:

[http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/REGION4/US97\\_CRBtoRedmond/LowerBridgeWay\\_8\\_2008.pdf](http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/REGION4/US97_CRBtoRedmond/LowerBridgeWay_8_2008.pdf)

***Won't the traffic diverted from Wimp Way make congestion and safety worse at Lower Bridge Way?***

The amount of traffic currently using and forecasted to use the Wimp Way access to US 97 is small enough, particularly compared to the amount of traffic at Lower Bridge Way, that the affect of any diverted traffic will only be minor, both in the short and long-terms.

Just as with Wimp Way, in the long-term we will face the need to close the “at-grade” intersection of Lower Bridge Way and US 97 with alternatives including highway access through a “grade separated” interchange with ramp connections. Such plans are well beyond the scope of our current project, but stay tuned as we intend to address these long-term questions through a refinement planning effort for US 97 between the O’Neil Highway and Crooked River Gorge. This process should start in the near future.

**Won't the number of vehicles waiting to turn left onto northbound US 97 from Lower Bridge Way and those vehicles turning left onto westbound Lower Bridge Way from US 97 continue to increase, particularly with closing Wimp Way?**

Our Traffic Section has completed an analysis and the data for the length of the line of cars waiting to turn (known as queue length) is in the following table:

US 97 @ Lower Bridge Way	2007	2009		
	Existing	No Project	Project complete incl. Wimp Way Closed	Project complete, if Wimp Way left Open
Eastbound Left Turn Queue* (Ft), Peak Time	235 Ft 7 am	431 Ft 7 am	72 Ft 7 am	39 Ft 7 am
Northbound Left Turn Queue* (Ft), Peak Time	193 Ft 5 pm	224 Ft 5 pm	146 Ft 5 pm	122 Ft 5 pm

\* Queue lengths shown represent the maximum stacking lengths expected for a typical day during the Peak Time shown.

**Given the probable closure at Wimp Way for safety, and given it won't occur until 2009, could some short-term safety improvements, such as signing, be installed now?**

Yes. Intersection-ahead signs with a "Wimp Way" rider were installed in January 2008. The signs were placed approximately 400 feet both north and south of the Wimp Way intersection.

**What about installing additional lighting at Lower Bridge Way?**

While considering replacing the existing lighting or installing additional lighting, we looked at recent crash history at this intersection and we were unable to attribute crashes to poor visibility experienced at night. We also looked at the crash history before the existing light was installed, and those crashes did not indicate that poor lighting was a contributing factor.

For the entire ODOT as an agency, we are continuously looking for ways to reduce power consumption. Specifically we have been reducing illumination throughout the state in locations where there does not appear to be a direct benefit of lighting toward traffic safety. While we understand there is a preference for keeping existing or installing additional lighting, we also must consider the cost of installation, maintenance, and energy requirements and balance this cost with any benefit.

We have also discussed the question with Deschutes County staff, and there is common agreement that lighting improvements at this location should not be made.

***Could a new connection to US 97 be made through the Ogden Wayside for Crooked River Ranch residents?***

This is possible, but would be a very difficult task to achieve. As noted by several who have commented regarding Wimp Way, Crooked River Ranch is projected to grow to as many as 8,000 residents. This population increase could create several thousand more automobile trips per day - destined for US 97 - than we see today. Such an increase in vehicle trips would create detrimental impacts to the Wayside itself, as well as traffic impacts at the US 97 -Wayside intersection. Also, the right-of-way (property) for such a connection would also require approval of both the Oregon State Parks and the BNSF Railway.

***Is it time to consider and discuss alternative routes to Crooked River Ranch, such as a route directly to the north (or other directions) within Jefferson County?***

This is a good time for such consideration and discussion, particularly in light of the projected growth of Crooked River Ranch. Many have commented that there is only one way in and one way out of Crooked River Ranch - this route is NW 43<sup>rd</sup> Street.

The Central Oregon Area Commission on Transportation (COACT), made up primarily of elected representatives of Central Oregon Counties and Cities, is a good forum to discuss long-range transportation plans for Central Oregon – including the areas such as Crooked River Ranch. Improving and developing a local system parallel to the state highways is a regular point of discussion for COACT, and a new connection within Jefferson County has been a commonly referenced example in the discussion.

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