

US 97: Lava Butte – South Century Drive

Last updated: April 8, 2009

Proposed Project Components:

- Increase traffic capacity of US 97 between South Century Drive and Lava Butte by constructing a four lane highway (two lanes in each direction).
- Separate northbound and southbound traffic with a forested median of up to a maximum width of approximately 100 feet.
- Reconstruct the Cottonwood Road interchange from a partial to a full diamond interchange.
- Eliminate dangerous intersections by constructing alternative access to Lava Lands Visitor's Center and Lava River Cave via Crawford Road and Cottonwood Road.
- Construct roadway shoulders that will accommodate bicyclists.
- Build two structures under US 97 in an effort to reduce wildlife/vehicle crashes and facilitate wildlife movement.



US 97 at entrance to Lava River Cave looking south.

Why is this project needed?

The project is located approximately 10 miles south of Bend in Deschutes County, Oregon. The project is needed because US 97 and other roadway approaches in the project area do not and, will not, meet traffic operations and safety needs. Current lane configuration of US 97 does not provide for adequate capacity for existing and forecast travel demands, nor are there safe ways to access and exit the highway at several key locations in the project area, including Lava Lands Visitor Center, Lava River Cave and Cottonwood Road.

The highway and accesses do not meet current design and operational standards to accommodate existing and forecast traffic volumes. Traffic volumes in certain locations exceed or are forecast to exceed the capacity of the existing highway during peak travel periods, resulting in congestion, delays, reduced mobility, and greater potential for crashes.

How does ODOT propose to solve these problems?

The proposal is to: (1) separate northbound and southbound traffic with a forested median of up to an approximate maximum of 100 feet in width, (2) increase the capacity of the existing two- and three-lane highway to four lanes (two in each direction), and (3) reconstruct the Cottonwood Road interchange into a full diamond interchange (on and off ramps in both directions).

Highway access would be limited to the Cottonwood Road interchange and a right-in access to the Lava Lands Visitor Center and Benham Falls at Crawford Road. In the winter, right-out access for southbound US 97 traffic would also be provided at Crawford Road to allow for recreational uses.

Direct highway access would be removed at Lava River Cave, and the project would provide alternative access with a new access road east of US 97. The new access road would connect Cottonwood Road and Lava River Cave, and cross under US 97 to connect with Crawford Road.

In an effort to reduce the number of wildlife/vehicle crashes and facilitate wildlife movement and habitat connections, structures and fencing to accommodate wildlife passage under US 97 in two locations are being proposed. One of the structures is part of the connection of Lava River Cave to Crawford Road.

Total Project Cost: \$31 million

Key Project Milestones:

Contract Bid Let Date May 2009
Construction 2009 through 2011

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