



Federal Highway Administration

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

For

US 97: Lava Butte – S. Century Drive Project
The Dalles – California Highway
Deschutes County, Oregon
Key No. 13981
Federal Aid # NH-OTIA-S004(120)

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has determined that this project will not have a significant adverse impact on the human environment. This FONSI is based on information provided in the Environmental Assessment (July 2008) and the attached Revised Environmental Assessment, which have been independently evaluated by the FHWA and found to adequately and accurately discuss the need, environmental issues and impacts of the proposed project and appropriate mitigation measures. These documents provide sufficient evidence and analysis for determining that an environmental impact statement is not required.

The Build Alternative has been selected for implementation. This project is located on US 97 between Lava Butte (Mile Point 149.24) and S. Century Drive (Mile Point 153.05) east of Sunriver in Deschutes County, Oregon. The project will relieve existing and forecast congestion and enhance safety and mobility for highway users by reconstructing the Cottonwood Road interchange and improving the two- and three-lane sections of US 97 to a four-lane, divided Rural Expressway. The project will: (1) separate northbound and southbound US 97 traffic with a forested median of up to an approximate maximum of 108 feet in width, (2) increase the capacity of the existing two- and three-lane highway to four lanes (two lanes in each direction), and (3) reconstruct the Cottonwood Road interchange into a full diamond interchange. Highway access will be limited to the Cottonwood Road interchange and right-in access at Crawford Road. In the winter, right-out access will also be provided at Crawford Road to allow for recreational uses. Direct highway access will be removed at Lava River Cave, and the project will provide alternative access to Lava River Cave with a new access road east of US 97. The access road will connect Cottonwood Road interchange and Lava River Cave, and cross under the highway to connect with Crawford Road (which provides access to Lava Lands Visitor Center and Benham Falls).

The project will provide structures and fencing that will accommodate wildlife passage under US 97 in two locations to enhance wildlife mobility and habitat connectivity conditions. Decommissioning forest access roads will mitigate loss of habitat in the project area. Minimization of visual resource impacts will occur through design of roadway features including a wide forested median, material selection, and revegetation. The project will avoid impacts to intensively used recreation areas and known sites eligible or potentially eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. No residences or businesses will be displaced by this project. There will be no disproportionate impacts to low income and minority populations. Clearing activities are expected to be completed outside of restricted seasons.

Construction is expected to begin in the summer of 2009 and be substantially complete before the end of 2010. Estimated construction cost for the project is \$31 million. Right-of-way will not need to be purchased, but approximately 120 acres of easement for the new roadway and median will be obtained from the US Forest Service (USFS). Following environmental approval from FHWA and ODOT appropriation of funding, ODOT could design and construct all or part of this project.

The FHWA takes full responsibility for the accuracy, scope, and content of the attached Revised Environmental Assessment.

December 22, 2008
Date

Michelle Ewart
Federal Highway Administration Official, Oregon Division, Salem,
Oregon