

**US 97 @ Wickiup Junction
Open House Summary
November 20, 2008**

A public open house was held Thursday, November 20, 2008, from 6-7:30 p.m. at the La Pine Senior Center in La Pine, Oregon. There were twenty-two (22) who signed in another three (3) who attended but did not sign in.

Maps of the two phases of the proposed improvement at Wickiup Junction being analyzed in the Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) were presented and discussed. An information paper, comment forms and maps were made available for attendees.

Rick Williams gave a project update and explained the options being analyzed in the Draft EA. This was followed by a question and answer, and comment period.

Questions and Answers

Q: The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) owns some right of way east of existing US 97. If it is not used what will happen to it?

A: ODOT will keep the right of way until a long-term plan for US 97 is developed and it is certain that it will not be needed. If it is not needed, then the land will be access and be disposed of. The local jurisdiction will first be given an opportunity to acquire the land, followed by adjacent land owners, and finally the general public.

Q: Have you thought about putting in a turning lane for trucks heading north on US 97 turning into the truck stop?

A: That is something we might consider in the design to help the flow on US 97.

Q: What is the bypass to the east not be considered with this phase?

A: It was considered earlier and could be part of a long-term strategy for US 97. But right now this project is focusing on the safety issues surrounding the at-grade railroad crossing, and the intersection of US 97 and Burgess Road. We can solve those problems without putting a bypass to the east of this area. And funding is a limiting factor; the chances of getting the funding for a bypass at this time is fairly slim.

Q: Is there funding to do what you are proposing, at least for the first phase?

A: There has not been funding identified in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) as yet. But it does have a great deal of support from the Central Oregon Area Commission on Transportation, the BNSF Railway, the rail division of ODOT and the freight industry. We expect the first phase of the project will have funding identified as the environmental analysis nears completion.

Q: When do you think the first phase will be built?

A: Again, it depends on securing funding. Once the EA is completed, a decision is made, and funding is secured, it will take 12-18 month to acquire any needed right of way, complete the

final highway design, and develop contract documents. Because of the bridge structure, it is likely to take two years to construct.

Q: There is talk about a state and national stimulus package that would provide money for infrastructure improvements, like roads. Will this help get this project built sooner?

A: A lot of that will depend on the state legislature and Congress, and how soon and how much funding is included in any legislative packages. Additional funding will help us make needed improvements, like at Wickiup Junction.

Q: Are you considering the impacts US 97 is having on deer populations?

A: That is something that ODOT in partnership with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Forest Service and others are considering. We are currently doing a wildlife movement study along US 97 and OR 31 to try and determine migration routes.

A project from Lava Butte to South Century Drive will be using this information in the project design to help wildlife migration, particularly mule deer.

More information about the project and the mule deer migration study can be found at: http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/REGION4/US97_Lava_Butte_South_Century_Drive/US97LavaButte_SouthCenturyDrive.shtml.

Q: What are the current and projected traffic counts in the project area?

A: Current the average daily traffic, or ADT, is 9,400 vehicles per day. In 2032 we expect the ADT to be 13,600 vehicles per day. The 2032 traffic counts are what we use in the project designs as we want improvements to last for at least 20 years.

Comments

We received one written comment from the Chief of La Pine Rural Fire Protection District that talked about the need to provide safe access from Burgess Road to US 97 in order to travel north to the hospital. He also suggested maybe making Huntington Road one way heading south and US 97 one way heading north.

When Rick asked the attendees about support for the proposed solution, most people thought it had a lot of merit. One person thought the solution did not go far enough and that ODOT should be looking at a bypass to the east as the long-term solution.

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.