

US 97 Wickiup Junction (La Pine)

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Project Components:

- Realign US 97 to the east of its current location and build a railroad overpass to the south of the existing at-grade crossing.
- Connect Burgess Road to the realigned US 97.
- Develop a long-range access management plan that controls access to the state highway but provides for circulation within La Pine.



The at-grade railway crossing on US 97 at Wickiup Junction, La Pine, Oregon.

Why this Project is needed

US 97 is a critical part of the State's transportation system, and is classified as an expressway in the project area. Keeping roads in good condition and providing for safe travel are critical parts of the Oregon Department of Transportation's (ODOT) mission.

The at-grade railway/highway crossing on US 97 at Wickiup Junction is the only at-grade crossing on US 97 in the entire state. Drivers on US 97 who are not familiar with the area do not anticipate having to stop for trains. Nor are they anticipating have to stop for school buses and vehicles carrying hazardous materials that are required to stop at railroad crossings regardless of whether a train is approaching or not. These create an extremely unsafe situation on the highway. This safety problem has forced local school buses to avoid this section of the highway and to have to travel out-of-direction to complete their routes.

Currently there are on average 8-12 trains per day passing through Wickiup Junction. This is expected to increase by 8 percent per year.

The traffic volume on US 97 through the project area is currently at 9,000 vehicles per day, and is projected to increase to 13,800 by the year 2024. The traffic volume on Burgess Road at its intersection with US 97, immediately south of the railroad crossing, is currently at 4,615 vehicles per day and projected to be more than 6,000 per day by 2024. Traffic volumes are increasing as more development occurs in the La Pine area. The increase in traffic intensifies the need to improve safety at the railroad crossing.

How ODOT proposes to solve these problems

ODOT is partnering with Deschutes County and the City of La Pine to develop a solution for the safety problem at the BNSF/US 97 railroad crossing at Wickiup Junction. A number of alternatives were explored but the selected near term solution is to realign US 97 to the east of its current location and build a railroad overpass just south of the at-grade crossing. New connections will be built for Burgess Road to the realigned US 97 (see the selected alternative map attached).

In developing this solution, there were a number of goals and objectives identified by the agencies and the public that were considered. These included:

- Provide a transportation solution that safely accommodates projected travel demands for all users and modes 20 years into the future.

