



Date: March 5, 2012

NR number: 12030515

For more information: Tom Strandberg - (541) 963-1330

## U.S. 395 Freight Improvement Project planned for 2012

UKIAH, Ore. - The Oregon Department of Transportation will be launching a two-year pilot project this summer to temporarily lift length restrictions for some freight carriers along the John Day – Pendleton Highway (U.S. 395). The route is currently restricted for vehicles towing trailers in excess of 48 feet in length between Pilot Rock and Mt. Vernon due to numerous sharp curves and a narrow roadway.

The \$500,000 U.S. 395 Freight Improvement Project will be constructed in two phases. Phase one will realign the sharp curve at mile point 64.5-B. Phase two will install Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) components between mile posts 50 and 60-B to warn motorists when over-length vehicles are in the corridor. The pilot project is intended to accommodate safe movement of 53-foot trailers and help boost the local economy by giving freight carriers more options for transporting goods along this critical north-south route.

“This highway segment remains, largely, unchanged from its original alignment when it was built in 1934,” said ODOT Project Leader Ken Patterson. “Unfortunately, it doesn’t provide the road width or flatter curves required for many of today’s longer commercial vehicles.”

The route is length restricted primarily because the longer vehicles have to cross the center line to maneuver around some of the sharper curves. Currently, if two trucks pulling 53-foot semi trailers were to meet at the sharp corner located at mile post 64.35-B they would experience a collision, as each vehicle must cross several feet into the opposing lane to navigate the corner. The construction phase of the project will widen this critical curve, eliminating the need for long vehicles to cross the center line.

The other most challenging section prompting the U.S. 395 length restrictions consists of a stretch of sharp corners between mile posts 50 and 60-B. Here, the highway closely follows Camas Creek through numerous switch-back curves and around large rock walls. Video used to document an over-length vehicle test run highlighted this ten-mile stretch as an area for potential collision, in the event two extra-long vehicles met at the same corner.

“In this highway section the test run vehicle occasionally crossed the center line, but not as severely as the mile point 64.35 curve that will be modified,” said Patterson. “Because it’s not feasible to realign all the problematic curves where the highway follows Camas Creek, road sensors and signs with flashing lights will be installed at both ends of this ten-mile segment. The sensors will send a signal to the flashing beacons at the opposite end of the corridor to alert travelers an over-length vehicle is in the area. The lights on the signs will turn off when the vehicle leaves the section.”

As part of the permitting process to allow restricted vehicles on the highway, commercial trucks will also be required to alert other truckers via citizen’s band radio when they are on the route.

After revisiting why the length restrictions were originally put in place, carefully examining the test run video and engineering fixes to the most problematic areas, ODOT feels this pilot program will allow safe passage of a limited number of over-length trucks along the U.S. 395 length restricted corridor.

“Safety for all travelers is our main goal at ODOT,” Patterson said. “If, however, we can safely remove some restrictions to help reduce economic impacts to Oregon businesses, we want to look into that.”

A select few carriers will participate in the pilot project over the next two years while ODOT monitors over-length traffic in the restricted corridor. A determination will be made later regarding modifying or lifting the freight restrictions for all freight carriers.

To help inform local residents, business owners and other users of the U.S. 395 corridor, public meetings will be held in April or May at Ukiah and John Day. Separate media announcements will be issued prior to those meetings.

Persons interested in hearing more about this project or the public meetings are encouraged to contact Ken Patterson at (541) 963-1365, or via email at [Kenneth.E.Patterson@odot.state.or.us](mailto:Kenneth.E.Patterson@odot.state.or.us).

ODOT has been working closely with the South East and North East Area Commission on Transportation (SEACT / NEACT), the Eastern Oregon Regional Solutions Team (RST) and local freight carriers on the project. The SEACT and NEACT consist of local representatives who help identify and prioritize transportation needs for the eastern Oregon area. The Regional Solutions Teams is a partnership between Oregon higher education, state and local government, and other stakeholders. It works at the

local level to help integrate various state agency activities and funding to ensure projects are completed in the most economical and streamlined process possible.

## ODOT ##