

# Proposed U.S. 30 Safety Corridor Public Comment

While there seems to be a definite need for better traffic control in the specific area under examination (Scappoose to St. Helens), nothing is being addressed in the area from the Multnomah/Columbia County line to Scappoose. As the far south Columbia County area grows in numbers the traffic on and off Hwy 30 at the Bonneville Drive intersection continues to grow. Recent increases in the number of housing units in this area increases the chance of accidents. In my observations over 20 years living here, there needs to be a significant effort to slow traffic in this 45 mph area. Police traffic patrols in this area are not even close to being sufficient.

Drivers in this area of Hwy 30 routinely travel at speeds of 55 mph or more, often creating hazards for those of us that exit the main highway at the Bonneville Drive/North Portland Road intersection. Please help us in this area by considering greater control efforts.

While driving this stretch of Hwy 30 just yesterday in the dark and rainy conditions, I notice the highway lane markings to be woefully inadequate. Why can't this part of Hwy 30 have the reflectored markers on all lanes and the fog line just like Multnomah County has provided along its stretch of Hwy 30? Darkness and often heavy rains make it virtually impossible to see the lane markings.

Scappoose Resident

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Just a personal observation. I was returning from the airport late Monday evening. Hwy 30 from Linton to Scappoose is brightly lit by reflectors in the pavement. But in the proposed safety corridor, there are very little reflectors. I realize the data shows that most accidents happen in the daytime but I thought this was a strange to have no reflectors.

South Columbia County Chamber of Commerce

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I am on the Columbia County Traffic Safety Commission representing bicyclists and walkers. I was told the sweeper is broke down a few weeks ago. The only part of highway 30 from St. Helens to Cornelius Pass that isn't swept is from Achilles road to Scappoose. (Both sides). In making this a Safety Corridor it would seem that this would get a higher ranking to make it safe for everyone, bicyclists have to ride closer to traffic when the gravel is not swept. Any help you can give us would be much appreciated.

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## **Education;**

The plan should include that somebody visit local high schools, at least twice during each school year. Those visits should cover the statistics about crashes and deaths, the purpose of the safety corridor, and general defensive driving and good driving practices. Does the education system of Oregon still have driver education? (It did when I was in high school).

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## Engineering

### Signals:

During the meeting on December 6 Mr. Kim mentioned some technical difficulties related to signals. Related to his comments I have a couple of suggestions.

**Time the Signals in Scappoose** (like 15<sup>th</sup> Street in Longview, WA, and like many of the streets in Portland).

For the last 30 to 40 years 15<sup>th</sup> street in Longview Washington has had signs posted that say “ Lights Timed for 26 MPH.” And indeed if one tries to go faster than 25 to 30 mph. they get stopped by the lights. On the other hand, traffic moves pretty smoothly through that corridor (from the Lewis and Clark Bridge all the way to Kelso). This should be the case in Scappoose. The current situation in Scappoose is that there are mini-traffic jams through Scappoose EVERY evening. Timing the lights from Havlic Road to Scappoose-Vernonia Highway for 30 – 40 mph. would alleviate much of that congestion, (the current posted speeds are 45 and 35).

**Install “Prepare to Stop when Amber Flashes” signal systems.**

I have seen these signal systems rural Canada, I think that they are very effective. (According to brief research on-line they are used in other states in rural United States as well). The basic system is a traffic light, and a certain distance (about 1000' (?) ) before the light is a sign that says “Prepare to Stop when Amber Flashes.” The yellow light flashes when the light is **going to** turn red (it is linked to the sensor in the road and the light); as opposed to the flashing ambers that flash all the time currently on highway 30, which drivers ignore).

The lights that I have seen in Canada are timed very well. When the light flashes it means that there is no way to “beat the light.” Drivers become accustomed to this system, and know that if it flashes they have to slow down and stop. On the other hand if it isn't flashing one can keep going 50 mph. Again, the ones that I have seen in rural towns in Canada, in my view, work very well.

I would recommend installing these types of lights in Scappoose, Columbia City, St Helens at Deer Island Road and Bennett Road, Clatskanie, Westport, Knappa, and the first light entering Astoria. I think that these systems work very well and should be considered all over rural Oregon; perhaps you can begin installing them in safety corridors and branch out from there.

### Reflectors:

As Mr. Kim noted in his presentation the reflectors (button road reflectors, and shoulder reflectors) have not been maintained since the section of Highway 30 between Scappoose and St Helens was widened to 4 lanes about 20 years ago. Indeed the reflectors stop at the county line. Somehow ODOT saw to replace the reflectors in Multnomah County but not go beyond the county line. (Should tell you something about how we feel about the “urban rural divide” that the politicians keep talking about.)

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**When is the next safety corridor meeting?** I suggest that you send **early** press releases out the local newspapers (and other press) reminding them of the upcoming Safety Corridor Meeting(s).

Additional Comments / Suggestions:

## Landscaped Center Medians in Developed Areas

I suggest installing landscaped center medians in the areas of the highway that pass through the cities (similar to the center median treatment in Linton, but with more landscaping).

These medians will help slow traffic, mark the center portion of the highway, discourage “cross over” or “out of lane” accidents, provide pedestrian refuge areas for people trying to walk across the highway, well as beautify the section of the highway within the respective towns.

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I live along Highway 30 in the area of Warren, (just off Tarbell Road), and have a couple of comments and suggestions to make regarding this dangerous stretch of Oregon Highway, and possible safety improvements that can be easily made.

First the comment; In my opinion, this stretch of road is VERY dangerous to travel at night, especially in bad weather. It terrifies me to try to make a left turn across the Highway 30 traffic lanes, onto this road at night from any of the major side-streets that lead to the highway. It is almost impossible to see the painted lines in the road at night at these intersections to know where to turn, especially with headlight glare from oncoming traffic. It is also hard to see where the left turn lanes begin when turning from Highway 30 onto these side roads. *None of these intersections are lighted*, and there are no “bot’s dots” ( raised reflectors) on that stretch of highway, (which end just as you enter Columbia County from Multnomah County, just south of Scappoose). If you ever drive between Portland and Scappoose at night you will see what I mean. Once you get North, and beyond Scappoose towards St Helens the road lines just get lost in the dark, especially if it is raining.

I don’t know if enough of the major accidents reported occur at night along that stretch of highway, but I see that as a major concern, at least for me living here and dealing with it on a daily basis.

My recommendations to improve safety along this stretch of Highway 30 is to provide lighting at the major intersections to increase nighttime visibility, (especially in bad weather), and incorporate the use of the raised reflectors (bot’s dots), on the painted line surfaces (which as I mentioned, end just south of Scappoose), which would help in identifying where the traffic lines are at night.

I hope this helps your study, and I thank you for your time.

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I appreciate you taking the time to read and consider my emails.

I have read and read and read studies from Oregon and several other states about safety corridors. The more I read, the more I am convinced that double fines provide no safety benefit. Oregon's own report states that there is little, if any, compelling evidence that doubled fines reduce crashes. While safety corridors are quite effective, every report came to the same conclusion about double fines.

ORS 811.483(1) The Department of Transportation shall post signs in safety corridors chosen by the department indicating that fines for traffic offenses committed in those safety corridors will be doubled.

The way I read this ORS and several other ORSs, doubled fines are a choice, not a requirement. Certainly they are not a Federal requirement. Many states don't use them. If I am reading this wrong, let me know.

I agree that Highway 30 traffic needs to slow down, but it appears it will slow down with the increased signage, awareness, and low cost improvements.

I don't want to be a pain, but I just don't think you will get community support if you keep the doubled fines portion. Since there appears to be no reason to keep it, why not let it go?

Thank you, again, for giving your time.

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I've been reading a lot about safety corridors and the doubling of fines. It appears that there is no evidence that doubled fines reduce crash numbers. Are double fines an option or requirement? It looks like the decision is made state by state and it looked to me to be optional in Oregon.

Though I am surprised at the lack of data on the effectiveness of safety corridors, over all there does seem to be a significant reduction in crashes.

Double fines have a bigger impact on the poor. To a family barely scraping by, a double fine could translate to a child having no winter coat this year or perhaps the inability to pay the fine will lead to a license suspension and an impound of the family car. It is a serious thing to lay a heavier financial burden on those least able to afford it. We all are guilty of letting our minds wander at times while driving a familiar route, so let us not be too judgmental. (Though I tend to be.)

If the double fines are optional, please ask that they be dropped. The safety corridor will be much better received.

Thank you, David, for all your work on Highway 30.

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I looked at the link that you created that provides data in advance of the meeting. On the site, it states that ODOT **will** create a safety corridor...I guess I thought that was to be decided by the committee. I still am not convinced that that is what is needed. My fear is that all that will happen is that fines will double, citizens will be ticked and no real solution for Bennett Road will be devised. It seems backwards to me. Why wouldn't ODOT do a safety audit first and then if speed is a factor in these accidents, impose the corridor? The signage is going to cost at least \$150,000, based on what Sue said at the last meeting. It seems like that money would be better spent on some targeted research. If I'm not mistaken, all of the fatalities have taken place at intersections. Maybe reducing the speed of oncoming cars might ameliorate this, but I don't know that the case has been made for that. I'm not sold, David, and I'm sure my ignorance of the process creates these doubts. In a nut shell, why not do the safety audit first?

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I am writing in want to a traffic control device to be installed at the site where my best friend Kristina Brixey just died. I know that there are a many other details that require for you immediate attention and all of her friends appreciate a couple minutes of your time to read our pleas. I know that Kristina is not the first deal life taken, nor do i anticipate for this to be the last time. The pain that we all went through from her death was devastating and can relate to others' losses as well. I only ask that there be something done soon before another family has to go through this grieving process.

It means so much Mr. David that something be changed to help keep the public safe from harm.

Thank you for your time and consideration!

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I would like to see a traffic light put in at the intersection of bennet rd. and hwy 30 in Warren, OR. It is a busy intersection and traffic travels very fast on the highway. There is no traffic signals in Warren to aid people in turning left onto the highway. All of the streets in Warren are connected so if there was just one light at one road it could be used by a lot of people that live in the area. I recently lost a close friend of mine at this intersection and I hope changes can be made before another person loses their life.

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Please install a traffic light at Bennet Rd and Hwy 30 in Warren. What is the death quota before something has to happen?

I support a traffic light here. It is just too dangerous and people still are not slowing to the speed limit.

As most accidents on the stretch of highway under discussion seem to be caused by people pulling out at Bennett Rd. I don't see how a safety corridor & increased fines is going to help. It seems that drivers involved in accidents are not doing anything illegal or citable -it's an unsafe intersection, not an unsafe highway. I travel this piece of road (as do you) frequently and although there are some speeders, that really isn't a huge issue. I think the issue is that people

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pulling out onto the highway need a protected way of doing so. Just my two-cents. Thanks for listening.

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Dear Senator Johnson,

I am an opponent of the Highway 30 Safety Corridor proposal that will encompass from MP 17-70.

This proposal on the surface has the potential to slow traffic, make people aware of obstruction/stopped traffic and make intersections safer. Fatalities, serious injury and property damage over the course of the period of the study is without question unacceptable. Any accident resulting in death or injury is unacceptable.

However, even a cursory examination of the statistics indicates that engineering flaws in the original design of the highway are a major contributor to the cause of accidents, in my opinion.

The first question that springs to mind is: Are flaws in the highway design setting drivers up to have accidents. I believe they are.

The most glaring statistic is the number of accidents that occur on straight roads. From Columbia City to the Rainier City Limits in either direction are blind spots at major cross road intersections. There are few if any turn lanes. There are no slow traffic lanes, except westbound at Trojan, and it is too short to be of any significance. There is no place to pass slower traffic otherwise. Impatience is probably the number one complaint voiced by drivers who are jammed up at less than speed limit speeds, and then being passed by drivers in a hurry, with insufficient clearance to pass safely in the face of oncoming traffic.

My wife as the Post Master of Clatskanie for 6-1/2 years traveled Hwy 30, from our home at Gardenview Drive, in Warren, a distance of some 40-miles daily, 6-days a week for the first 3 years of being appointed to that job. One of our main considerations in purchasing a 5th-wheel travel trailer, was to live in Clatskanie during the week, so she would not have to travel that road, as it was so dangerous. Beyond Clatskanie on Hwy 30, to a point where the 4-lane begins there have been a considerable number of fatal accidents because of people pulling onto Hwy 30 from side roads, for the same reasons I previously stated.

In my view, the public good would be better served by a highway modernization project addressing these flaws, instead of a band-aide approach proposed by ODOT in just slowing down traffic doubling fines. While the cash flow to the State and County coffers will improve, the basic problems will remain and increase as population growth adds more traffic to an already full-capacity 2-lane bottle neck "situation".

The economic impact to businesses in shipping goods, receiving expendables and transporting employees to and from population centers along this route will be significant and no mention was made to what impact will result. I'd be interested to know what that impact will be, before a final decision is made.

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There are other good and substantive arguments that can be made in opposition to this half-measure in final cure to a major problem, but I respectfully submit that the imposition of a "traffic corridor" is just not the answer either the Public nor the Authorities will be satisfied with, should it be implemented.

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## Critique of US 30 Safety Corridor Working Group Meeting December 6, 2010

This meeting was to present the reasons for needing a safety zone on route 30 between Scappoose

and the City of St Helens. This meeting was setup by ODOT. The original thoughts of the communities were that ODOT had already decided to put this safety zone in. As the meeting went forward it was clear that this was in fact the reason for the meeting. The one telling procedure that demonstrated this was a call by the ODOT presenter to the working group to vote on giving the project a go ahead. This vote was to be taken before the public had a chance to comment on the safety report.

Another factor pointing in this direction was that the public input time was limited to 10 minutes, with a speaker allowed 3 minutes to speak, 3 1/3 people to speak.

A portion of the presentation was a description of finding out how many trained emergency personnel were available in the safety zone area. A simple call to the state fire marshal would have given ODOT this number instantly. Also the highway patrol routinely uses this service and has this type of information. It was brought out by a nurse present, that a helicopter at a local hospital is in-place presently and has been routinely uses there services. These are a few examples of presentation time wasted on presently know information.

When the question about the collection of fines, which would double in the safety zone, who would receive the money, was brought up, the subject was quickly changed and not answered.

A gentleman asked about the state survey concerning the railroad was brought up, for this survey effects the safety plan in St. Helens as well as the safety zone two three things were found, the survey results are in draft form, the draft is not available to the public yet and the safety group had not seen it yet.

A finding that ODOT did present that was most important and had a number of possible causes was that many of the accidents on route 30 were drive-off accidents. Basically for no apparent reason the driver went off the road, across the road, or into something. These happen mostly during the day with good road conditions. They seem to be caused by the driver being focused on the road 50 yards ahead of the vehicle not 500 yards ahead. Because of these accidents ODOT was not in favor of placing stop lights at intersections where there is difficulty entering or leaving route 30. The condition of have a vehicle that had gone a long period of high speed driving having to come to a quick stop in a safe manor was something ODOT had no answer for. This is exactly the condition the many toll booths on high speed road face everyday. The solution is to make the driver aware of the coming stop. The toll booth solution is to have warning lights, flashing lights, changing information signs and across the road sound strips.

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These solutions were not in the ODOT presentation nor did they have any possible solutions to offer at the meeting.

The only suggestions that ODOT made to solving the safety problem was a safety zone where higher fines were the answer. The location of this safety zone was indicated by passive signs.

Another part of the answer for improving the safety on route 30 was to increase the number of state police that patrol this highway. To increase this number ODOT indicated that it might have money to pay for over time for the highway patrol. This is a very bad idea. Working people for over time more than two hours a day for fourteen days will cut their efficiency by sixty percent. This has been well documented industrially. The numbers of people who will leave the force, have family problems goes up dramatically when they are worked over time for a lengthy period of time.

The answer to the patrol manpower problem is to have a stable number of people in the department, not a number that is determined by the amount of money left in the budget after everything else has been paid for. This is a legislative problem not solve by ODOT overtime money.

In all the meeting pointed out that ODOT has already decided what to do and Columbia county residents are going to pay for it.

## Columbia County Transportation

Columbia county needs an improve transportation system. This includes the river, the railroad and the road. As an important facet of this is safety. The safety facet should not be the gate that closes off the industrial, residential, and recreational growth of the county. The location of these structures interacting with each other there has to be an integrated design to the system. Many of the events that the state has under taken has reduce the growth of Columbia County all in the name of some political state good. The closing of one of the safest the nuclear power plant in the country, cost the loss of jobs with high income, loss low cost electrical power for industrial growth, and the impression that high tech was not wanted in Oregon. The non-decision on the LNG off loading facility seriously hurts Columbia County as well as the state. The loss of this facility will cause energy needing industry to go some where else, increase the cost of home heating to those who are already here and reduce the number of high paying jobs. This is a state action. By limiting river, rail and road transportation Columbia County will stay a back water. The USA needs deep water ports to expand its export business, the Columbia River is ideal, Columbia County has more river front that most states and yet

the State of Oregon through politically, poorly researched projects has limited our growth.

Another state project was to stop logging old growth forests to protect the spotted owl. It now turns out that any owl is the cause of the decrease in the spotted owl numbers not logging. How much income did Columbia County loss on that state program.

This so far ill defined and poorly planned safety program for route 30 has all the earmarks of another road block in the way of Columbia County's growth all in the name of safety, good name, needed, but a bad program by design.