



Meeting Date: Friday, Nov. 4, 2005

Purpose: Project Development Team Meeting

Distribution: Project Development Team Members, public

From: Vicki Guarino, Rogue Valley Council of Governments

Date Prepared: Friday, Nov. 4, 2005

PDT Attendees: Jim Raffenburg (for Steve Hodge), Tanya Henderson, Jeff Hunter, Dorothy Upton, Jerry Marmon, Tracy Rico, Eryca McCartin, Angela Findley, Vicki Guarino, Jason Sheadel, Connie Kratovil, Rowdy Bates, Jon Jordan, Jim Huber (for Laurel Samson), John Vial, James Burford, Scott Smithline.

PDT Absent: Ray Lapke

Other Attendees: Del Robertson

1. Call to Order/Review Agenda/Approve Minutes

Vicki Guarino, RVCOG Facilitator

Vicki Guarino called the meeting to order at 9 a.m. She reviewed the agenda and asked for changes to the minutes of the previous PDT meeting. The PDT approved the minutes as presented (Tracy Rico said she did not receive the notes and would send any additional comments if she had any changes. None were received). Jim Huber, Grants Pass planning director, introduced himself and said he was taking Laurel Samson's place at this meeting.

2. CAC Update

Rowdy Bates, CAC

Bates said the CAC considered the PDT's decision to drop East CAC 2, a design the CAC had voted to retain in the study. After the CAC heard all of the information regarding problems with the design, they understood the decision. Also, there is no support for the bridge structure option at Ringuette. The CAC agreed with the PDT that the structure would be intrusive. He said the CAC also discussed need for a left turn into the college's western entry. Some members questioned the need and safety of a median break at this location, but no recommendation was made. A handout describing the problems associated with East CAC 2 was distributed to the PDT.

3. East Section Refinements

Connie Kratovil, Angela Findley, Parsons Brinckerhoff

Kratovil reviewed features of the East 1 concept, noting that it is the same as last month. She continued to East 5, now East 5A, with a bridge over Allen Creek and a bridge over Ringuette. She reminded the committee that its concerns about the structure at Ringuette led to development of East 5B, which has a bulb-out at Ringuette. A map of East 5B was distributed to PDT members. This design minimizes the difficulty of access, visibility and cost associated with the bridge. Jerry Marmon said the CAC agreed that the bulb-out minimizes many negative impacts. The CAC generally agreed that the structure – East 5A – should not be forwarded. In discussion it was noted that the analysis could take in both concepts, but if there is no support for structure, then probably it shouldn't be forwarded into the environmental document. Kratovil gave a detailed explanation of how both the bridge structure frontage road and the bulb-out option at Ringuette would work. She noted the pros and cons of both Ringuette alternatives. Eryca McCartin said next steps of the analysis will address access and fine points of design.

Josephine County Commissioner Jim Raffenburg had just arrived at the meeting and said he was taking Steve Hodge's place. He said he was not familiar with the project and asked for a recap of the process because he had not been briefed. However, he said he was concerned because he sees huge impacts to county owned property. Marmon recapped the process, describing the alternatives. Raffenburg noted impacts to parks department offices and the fairgrounds. He asked if there had been any county involvement in the planning. McCartin offered to meet with Jim to brief him on the project. John Vial said the state would pay for all property the project takes, and regretted the awkwardness of the commissioner's position because Hodge had been involved all along. Jon Jordan noted the wrecks and fatalities on the highway, and said the project committees have been through a lot to try to make the road safer. He said Raffenburg needs the background of what the project has been trying to do to make the roadway safer.

The PDT talked about whether to drop East 5A now or put in through more analysis. If the PDT takes out the structure, the analysis will compare East 5B to the no-build. In discussion there was concern that the bridge would have a greater impact on business. The length of bridge retaining wall was pointed out on the map. The group identified advantages of the bridge: it leaves larger parcels of developable lands. Also, it may enable the committees to compare and evaluate the relative business impacts. Generally, the bridge gives less access to businesses than the bulb-out. Tracy Rico suggested seeing more analysis before eliminating any more ideas. Vial said continuing to study any alternative that the PDT is not real serious about, puts an encumbrance on landowners. It would give unnecessary anxiety for land owners, especially those with property slated for acquisition, if there is no real interest in building the option. The PDT also was concerned that the public will think the bridge structure is too big, too much like Los Angeles. The bridge seems to create more problems than it solves, several PDT members agreed. Also, there was concern that if the area encouraged big-scale development, the connecting roads for the bridge would fail sooner with that larger growth. Rowdy Bates said the location for county offices is not crucial. It would be easier to move county offices than businesses that have come to rely on highway exposure; county offices could be anywhere as long as they can still function. The PDT agreed to drop East 5A from further consideration because of the reasons discussed.

Angela noted the handouts included an updated decision matrix, which records all of the recommendations and decisions made and the reasons behind those decisions. It is updated as decisions are made.

4. West Section Refinements

Connie Kratovil, Angela Findley, Parsons Brinckerhoff

Kratovil reviewed west section details, beginning with the reasons for dividing the project into two sections, with the dividing line at Dowell Road. A map of the refined West 6 concept was distributed to the PDT. West of Dowell is the rural section where the fatalities have occurred. The east section is the urban area, which is used differently and has different needs. She described the options that have been considered and eliminated. Kratovil also described details of the designs and intersection configuration. Dorothy Upton described traffic counts in the area, noting about 20-30 peak hour trips from the driveways between the college entrance and Midway on Hwy 199. John Vial compared that traffic level and local access need to the safety problem of three or four fatal accidents in that area in the last few years. The conclusion has been that the inconvenience to a few residents is far outweighed by the safety problem and the need to take steps to protect motorists. The U-turns were discussed, and the committee agreed that they are safer than trying to cross five lanes of traffic when making a left turn. Furthermore, if U-turns are not preferred, these travelers can choose to use Redwood Ave to reach their destination.

At the college entrance, the PDT talked about the need for acceleration and deceleration lanes. Upton said the CAC split between those who saw a need for the left-in entry, and others who wanted to continue the barrier so that the entry would be right-in/right-out only. Jon Jordan said the full access is needed for emergency response vehicles. The speed limit on the highway would probably stay at 50 mph, while the average speed through the area now is 62 mph. There also was talk about possibly raising the speed limit for sake of better expressway function. There probably would be a speed study after the project is completed before any change is made.

Marmon also noted a couple of suggestions from the CAC that actually are design details that will be worked out later, including putting up flashing warning lights. Others on the PDT were concerned that there are too many lights and people just ignore them, making the safety situation worse. Also aesthetic treatments will be considered later in the design process.

(10 minute break)

McCartin updated the group on public comments received since the open house and provided information about the signal at Hubbard Lane and the likely phasing of project construction. It was noted that the intersection of Hubbard and Demaray would be at a 90-degree angle to improve safety. Additional public comments since the open house included: extend multi-use bike path all the way to Allen Creek; and create a full frontage road both north and south of the roadway in the west section instead of building the median. Other comments were more design refinements and will be taken up in the design process, including a comment about the need for deceleration/acceleration lanes. She also described the decision process for the signal, including the information and process on which the traffic model is based. Based on current model and growth projections, the expectation is that the signal at Hubbard can be installed in the nearer future rather than at opening year (2009). Meanwhile the project will design the intersection for the future signal. Also, ODOT has begun the budget and planning process to provide funding for the signal so that when the intersection qualifies for the signal there will be funding for it within a defined project. Also the city is planning to improve Hubbard north of Hwy 199 so that it will be a better and more attractive route for traffic. The issue for placing a signal is the amount of through and left turn traffic coming from Hubbard. Right turn movements don't contribute to the traffic volumes necessary for a signal. She also noted CAC discussion about installing a signal at Willow. She reviewed with Upton a number of different street configurations that were modeled in an effort to push more traffic to Hubbard so that it would

qualify for a signal. None of those configurations provided enough change to the traffic flow from Hubbard to meet the warrants for a signal.

Regarding project phasing, construction is budgeted to start in 2009. In the west section, Phase 1 work will include the multi-use path, driveway collector, curbs and medians. Sheadel and McCartin described steps that the project is intending to take to improve bike/pedestrian connectivity before the Hubbard signal is installed, including modifying the median island so that there would be room in the island for a bike, and make the islands at Willow and Hubbard walk-through to make the crossing safer. The project will investigate other refinements for bikes and pedestrians also. Phase 2 would include the improvements on Hubbard south of Hwy 199, the Hubbard signal, and the realigned intersection of Hubbard and Demaray. It was noted that much of the area is outside the city's UGB. There is \$12 million total to spend in the first phase, and work will start in the west section because of the fatalities. Phasing details for the East Section will be worked out later. It is unclear when work will start in the east, but some elements are anticipated to begin in 2009. The key is to come up with packages of work that would have independent utility without the entire project being built. This phasing in the east also will give time for the community to prepare. All of the phasing for construction is uncertain at this point. It was noted that completing this environmental process gives the entire project greater credibility for obtaining additional funding. Much about the construction costs will be known in February, but right-of-way acquisition costs can be variable and will be uncertain for some time.

The project committees will wrap up work in 2006. After the environmental process is complete, right-of-way acquisition would start and that typically is a lengthy process.

Vial asked to revisit college entrance question, and the PDT agreed to leave the entrance open for now.

5. Next Steps

Angela Findley, Parsons Brinckerhoff

Findley said the project is to the point of beginning the detailed environmental analysis. Also, ODOT right-of-way and access management groups will start detailing the acquisitions that will be needed and the access that will be provided.

Project committees will reconvene in February to review some of the results of the analysis. The information will be compiled into the NEPA document. Then there will be public review and a public hearing on the document in spring-summer 2006. There probably will not be monthly committee meetings after February.

Marmon asked about interest in a joint CAC-PDT meeting in February, which will be an informational/discussion meeting. The format would let the two committees get together and hear the same information. The PDT seemed to agree to the joint session. The project staff will work out details. PDT members were invited to contact staff at any time.

Marmon thanked the committee for its hard work and rapid progress in eight months.

6. Public Comment

Del Robertson referred to his comments at the CAC meeting the night before.

7. PDT Comfort Check

Vicki Guarino, RVCOG

Guarino said this is a time to check in with each PDT member to see how they are feeling about the process – if they're comfortable with what has gone on, or if they have concerns.

Tracy Rico: Good, and looks forward to the information in February.

Jeff Hunter: Nice to see the progress made.

Tanya Henderson: Good progress.

Jim Huber: Impressed by how much has occurred.

Jim Raffenburg: Asked the group not to misinterpret his statements and surprise. He appreciated everyone's efforts and regretted not keeping in closer touch.

Jason Sheadel: Good, and amazed that members with different priorities could arrive at the same place in the end.

Jerry Marmon: Good

Dorothy Upton: Happy, phenomenal progress.

Angela Findley: Good, but there is a lot of work left to do.

Connie Kratovil: Good and noted that during the CAC meeting public comment period CAC members themselves spoke up to answer public questions and concerns, which shows their sense of ownership and pride in the project.

Eryca McCartin: Good, and said she would meet with Jim Raffenburg to catch him up on the project.

Scott Smithline: Good.

Rowdy Bates: Good.

James Burford: Good.

Jon Jordan: Feels good and appreciates everyone's input.

John Vial: Good.

13. Wrap Up

Vicki Guarino, RVCOG

Guarino said the next meeting of the project development team is expected to be in February and details will be announced. The meeting adjourned at 11 a.m.