



Highway 62 Corridor Project

Date: August 24, 2006

From: Pat Foley, RVCOG

**Re: PROJECT DEVELOPMENT TEAM (PDT) MEETING
MINUTES for August 24, 2006**

PDT Members in Attendance: Brian Dunn, David Elliott, Nick Fortey, Mark Gibson, Dale Lininger, Kelly Madding, Jerry Marmon, Suzanne Myers, and Mike Quilty

Members Absent: Donna Beck, Skip Knight and Dan Moore

Location: Jackson Co. Public Works Auditorium, Mosquito Lane, White City

Staff: Terry Kearns and Martha Richards, URS; Debbie Timms, Chris Zelmer, Bruce Marlow and Susan Landis, ODOT; Kim Parducci, JRH; Gary Shaff, Gary Shaff & Associates; Pat Foley, RVCOG

Guests: 4 members of the public

1.0 Welcome and Approval of Minutes

Terry Kearns, URS

Terry convened the meeting at 9:05 AM. The meeting objectives were reviewed: 1) Hear Land Use Subcommittee Recommendations, 2) Review Split Diamond Traffic Analysis and 3) Update on Owens/Cardinal Avenue Interchange. He then asked if there were any changes or additions to the July 23, 2006 minutes. The minutes were approved as written.

2.0 Citizens Advisory Committee Update

Terry Kearns, URS

The CAC's last night's agenda covered the same items as the PDT's agenda. There were several members of the public who gave input. Members of the public representing businesses in the southern terminus area commented on economic job loss. Jerry Marmon added that many felt the uncertainty of when things were going to happen is hard on business and planning for the future.

3.0 Split Diamond Traffic Analysis Presentation

Kim Parducci, JRH

Before Kim began her presentation, Terry said that at last night's meeting there were comments stating that improvements that are currently constructed at the interchange are going to be thrown away with the Split Diamond concept. He went on to say that it has been determined, during the concept drawing most, if not all, of the improvements can be kept. This concept would add improvements to the system.

Kim Parducci started by explaining that the CAC and PDT have seen traffic analyses on how the southern terminus operates for all three remaining alternatives. The presentation today will revolve around how the southern terminus works with the Split Diamond in conjunction with the Bypass. Kim Parducci explained that TPAU model runs have developed traffic projections until 2030 for all of the build alternatives. These projections have been used to specifically see how the Split Diamond will affect the Bypass. Kim displayed two maps of the southern terminus area which depicted where the majority of traffic originates.

- Map 1 – Traffic Percentages **from I-5 Interchange** Area to Highway 62
 - 33% from west side of freeway
 - 14% from northbound I-5 off ramp
 - 12% from southbound I-5 off ramp
 - Combined interchange traffic 26%
 - 11% Biddle Road area south of Highway 62
 - 20% Poplar Drive
 - 10% Bullock Road

- Map 2 –Traffic Percentages **from Highway 62** (north of Poplar) to I-5 Interchange Area
 - 34% to west side of freeway
 - 29% to southbound I-5
 - 13% to northbound I-5
 - Combined interchange traffic 42%
 - 13% to Biddle Road
 - 04% to Poplar Drive
 - 07% to Bullock Road

The next map Kim showed was specific to the Split Diamond.

- Map 3 – 2030 Build Bypass with Eastbound access from existing Highway 62
Map shows existing structures and new construction needed to accommodate the Split Diamond.

At the last CAC meeting the team was asked what percent of the traffic is expected to divert to the Bypass with the Split Diamond connection. The findings show that forty-nine percent (49%) of the traffic on the corridor in the future is expected to divert to the Bypass with Split Diamond. Kim went on to explain the traffic patterns in connection with the shown alternative.

Expected v/c ratios projected for 2030 are:

- 0.82 at intersection of southbound I-5 off ramp and Highway 62 with dual right turn – currently operates at 0.75.
- 0.71 at intersection of Highway 62 and northbound I-5 on ramp with free left turn – currently operates at 0.72.

The LOS (Level of Service) projected for 2030 are:

- LOS D at Poplar – currently at LOS E
- LOS D at Delta Waters – currently at LOS between E and F

With the Split Diamond the intersection at Poplar would stay at grade and there would not be an interchange at Delta Waters. Kim said that all alternatives have good elements and each has some downsides. The good thing about the Split Diamond is that you do not have the impacts to businesses between Poplar and Delta Waters. There are more impacts around the interchange area. This is something the group will have to weigh. No matter what alternative is selected there will be impacts.

- Map 4 – I-5 Ramp Terminal Intersections: 2030 Existing Build or Texas Turnaround All of the traffic coming through the interchange area is still here. All of the improvements begin at Poplar. Poplar is grade separated. Expected v/c ratios projected for 2030 are:

- 0.82 at intersection of southbound I-5 off ramp and Highway 62
- 0.91 at intersection of Highway 62 and northbound I-5 on ramp

Discussion:

Regarding the Split Diamond, Nick Fortey said he realizes the importance of trying to minimize the redo work that was recently completed at the interchange. Conceptionally he feels that the team should be looking at the flyover, basically the freeway to expressway connections instead of having the expressway necessarily going through signalized intersections. He feels that this should be evaluated as a benchmark for connectivity purpose, if not for LOS purposes. Nick thinks improvements in this area should be looked at from an operation point of view because of the investment being made. Will the operation be limited by signalized intersections? The impacts should be determined and then weigh them. Clearly we do not want to be limited in the future with signalized intersections. This is a constrained urban area. Rather than trying to fit something in, we need to weigh the overall impacts.

Terry added that the flyover is not a new concept. During Phase I it was considered. The past group thought it was overkill. Brian Dunn said that there are different variations of the flyover. We need to think about whether we want to facilitate a free movement from the south without going through turns.

Mike Quilty said the region is looking at making huge expansions (RPS) to future urban reserve areas (50 year period). None of these plans have been approved. The city of Central Point is looking at being three times larger than today. He understands that this project is planning for 25 years and that NEPA says this project has to be based on accepted plans. But, by the time we are finished with this process the RPS will be done. The group should keep this in the back of their minds when making decisions. There could conceivably be a lot more

traffic coming from the White City and Central Point areas into this intersection. Brian said a lot of the same people are working on both plans.

David Elliott commented that it is important that we try to facilitate as much free movement as we can through the intersection. Terry said this will be a part of the next level of analysis.

Brian Dunn pointed out that there are some environmental constraints at Bear Creek.

4.0 Update: Owens/Cardinal Avenue Interchange

Terry Kearns, URS

Terry Kearns started by reviewing a question asked at last month's PDT meeting: "In order to take traffic off of the existing Highway 62, is an interchange on the Bypass at Owens/Cardinal needed?" He said traffic analysis is very time-consuming and the team is still in the process of looking at Owens but some preliminary results are available. Terry discussed the issues regarding an interchange.

Owens Interchange Issues

- Runway Protection Zone – highway cannot go beyond RPZ
- Interchange Access Management – ODOT would apply same access management standards that they would on any interchange; access along an extended Owens would be severely limited or non-existent
- Lear Way would be the first signalized intersection

Considerations for Owens Road Interchange

- Access management required east to Lear Way
- Interchange spacing standard would require deviation (too close to the Vilas Interchange)
- Possible impacts to airport operations
- Split Diamond Bypass Alternative without Owens Road Interchange would draw 49% of traffic

Terry said it is the staff's recommendation to not study the Owens/Cardinal interchange any further because there is a good balance on the Bypass without the interchange. To include this interchange would tip the scales and draw too much traffic onto the Bypass. Terry went on to say that unless there are objections, he will direct the staff to not study this interchange further. There were no objections.

Break

5.0 Land Use Subcommittee Report

Gary Shaff

Gary Shaff presented the Land Use Subcommittee's report, "Land Use Assessment of Highway 62 Avoidance Alignments". He started by saying that the subcommittee's charge was to take the three existing alignments and develop avoidance alignments. He went on to explain the subcommittee's purpose.

Subcommittee's Purpose was to:

- Identify avoidance alternatives that would not require a Goal exception
- Evaluate range of avoidance alternatives and provide CAC and PDT with reduced set

- Review induced land use impacts
- Identify impacts on rural lands and mitigation measures to ensure compatibility

Gary said that the 3 alternatives under study, Bypass, Texas Turnaround, and Existing, each would require a goal exception(s). These alternative(s) conflict with statewide planning goals 3 (agricultural lands), 4 (forest lands), 11 (public facilities) and 14 (urbanization). These are designated under the statewide planning goals (state law) by local governments. A local government can opt not to apply the statewide planning goals because of extraordinary circumstances unique to the property that do not otherwise apply to most.

Using PowerPoint maps Gary showed impacts associated with current alignments and then maps of the avoidance alignments with an explanation of changes.

Bypass Land Use Impacts

- Bypass impacts lands zoned EFU (Goal 3) and Open Space (Goal 4)
- Interchange ramps are outside Medford UGB requiring exceptions
 - **Avoidance alignment concept – Bypass No.1**
 - Vilas interchange shifted southwest to remain within UGB
 - Bypass alignment shifted east to avoid open space and agricultural lands
 - **Avoidance alignment concept – Bypass No.2**
 - SPUI interchange at Vilas
 - Bypass alignment shifted east to avoid open space and agricultural lands

Existing Highway Build Land Use Impacts

- New backage road must be designed to minimize impacts to Open Space and EFU lands
- Interchange ramp is outside Medford UGB requiring exceptions
- Crater Lake Ave. realignment will require exceptions
 - **Avoidance alignment concept – Existing Build No. 1**
 - Alignment shifted west at Vilas to avoid the need to realign Crater Lake Ave.
 - Vilas interchange is a SPUI

Texas Turnaround Land Use Impacts

- Turnaround ramp is partially located on EFU land and outside the Medford UGB requiring exceptions to Goals 3 (agricultural lands), 11 (public facilities, and 14 (urbanization)
 - **Avoidance alignment concept – Texas Turnaround No. 1**
 - Shift turnaround west to keep it within UGB and avoid EFU lands

North Terminus Bypass Option Land Use Impacts

- Alignment would impact EFU lands (Goal 3)
- Interchange would be located outside White City UCB and on EFU lands requiring exceptions Goals 3, 11 and 14
 - **Avoidance alignment concept – North Terminus Bypass No. 1**
 - Shift interchange southwest to remain within UCB
 - Keep entire alignment within UCB
 - **Avoidance alignment concept – North Terminus Bypass No. 2**
 - Shift alignment south to keep it within the UCB
 - Use an intersection instead of an interchange

→**Avoidance alignment concept – North Terminus Bypass No. 3**

- Use Avenue G and existing Hwy 62 instead of creating new bypass alignment

Subcommittee Recommendations

- CAC and PDT should review avoidance alignments for “reasonableness.”
- ***Reasonableness*** avoidance alignments should be analyzed in the DEIS either together with, or in lieu of the original alignment(s).
- ***Unreasonable*** avoidance alignments should be dismissed using objective (preferable) and subjective measures; facts, findings, and conclusions should be documented in as much detail as possible.

Alignments requiring a Goal exception should not be advanced to the DEIS unless:

- The PDT finds the avoidance alignments are unreasonable, and
- All build alternatives require an exception, and
- Exception alignments are refined to minimize the need for Goal exceptions (by reducing impacts to farm and forest lands and siting interchanges within Medford’s UGB or White City’s UCB, or
- The inclusion of an exception alignment is necessary to document its merits while acknowledging that an exception may not be justified

Discussion:

Gary was asked what is the definition of “Open Space.” Gary answered by saying that “Open Space” applies to certain protected lands that come under statewide planning Goal 4. The actual use of EFU lands in the area was discussed. It is the opinion of some members that these lands are not suitable to grow agricultural products. Gary said that the group is obligated to meet the statewide planning goals. Gary went on to say that if the Bypass alignment is constructed as conceived at this point, the interchange ramps that are located outside of the UGB would require an exception to the Public Facilities Goal (Urbanization) because interchanges are considered an urban facility.

Gary said the subcommittee looked at approximately thirty (30) alignments. They were able to eliminate all but seven. When selecting an alternative, it is important to document why an alternative is sustainable (not sustainable) under legal appeal. The standard for rejecting an alternative is not simply preference. You need to document why it does not meet the Purpose and Need or is unreasonable.

Mike Quilty asked Kelly Madding, “Where Medford’s proposed UGB would end under the RPS project? Will it be moving north where it would alleviate the need to move the interchange?” Gary said this is a factor that the land use subcommittee struggled with. The RPS has not been adopted and the committee had to work with what is on the books now. Jerry asked Nick, “Because we are required under NEPA to take all of the required land use actions prior to FHWA issuing a ROD, and we know this project will be phased with the portion of the corridor construction under discussion will be off into the future, is there any leniency in not taking these land use actions prior to FHWA issuing the ROD?” Nick said in most cases the actions have had to be taken. He is not sure how you would write the document when you are evaluating the alternatives against a standard that could conceivably change. This is something that we could think about.

Suzanne Myers was asked where Medford was on adopting the expanded UGB. She replied that the City has to prove a need for commercial and industrial lands. The studies will be completed in one to two years.

Whether Medford will prove a need for expansion in this particular area along Highway 62 in three to five years is questionable, but in twenty years is more likely.

6.0 Public Comment

Terry Kearns, URS

Rod Witham: Rod owns Witham Truck Center. He addressed traffic flow numbers. He wanted to know what percentage of the traffic flow is trucking. The staff said they would follow up on this question and do the analysis. He is against the Split Diamond. The truck center is the largest and finest truck dealership in southern Oregon. Other dealers reply upon their parts department to get their trucks back on the road as fast as possible. He went on to say that there is nothing that gets into the Valley that doesn't arrive by truck; food, cars, furniture, bedding, produce, etc. The Split Diamond will eliminate a parts and service facility that is the closest to the freeway in southern Oregon that allows the trucks to get off and get back on to the freeway with a minimum impact on the city of Medford and the County. He asked the group to think seriously before they destroy this business. Even though this design is not approved at this stage, he sees many things that have been totally ignored by most of the people that are going to make the selection. Trucks that are eighty thousand pounds plus, seventy five to ninety feet long, are going to be directed from the west to make a sharp bend to go northbound. All of the traffic from Highway 62 is going to be diverted down the same ramp. He does not feel this is going to work because it will only take one car with a flat tire on a single lane or a wreck on a double lane to block the road which will cause the traffic to back up on to Highway 62. The ramp going westbound on to the freeway is the same. He said the team should check with the Fire Marshal. Because the off ramp from the north is so close to the first signal you are going to cause the same problems that were to be addressed with the construction that was just finished. People that have been in the trucking business see these problems so much quicker than the average person and some of the engineers. The Engineering Department uses equipment that designates circles that would be fine for a seventy foot truck. There are trucks out there that are a hundred five to a hundred fifteen feet long. The weight, eighty thousand pounds is not the maximum weight. This is the maximum normal weight. Trucks can have permits which allow up to one hundred twenty thousand pounds.

Rod went on to say that he is not wedded to his business. But, if you create more problems than you are improving, it will go down in history against you. ODOT and the City need to seriously study this.

Jim Coombes: Jim represents Fred Meyers. He works for the real estate department. Jim has attended the Highway 62 meetings for the last three or four months. Three years ago he also participated in a work shop during Phase I. As one of the many businesses along the existing Crater Lake corridor, the only alternative that would work for Fred Meyers and many other businesses would be the Bypass with the Split Diamond. He appreciates that the Split Diamond needs to be worked on to handle trucks. Using the Split Diamond preserves many more businesses than funneling all of the traffic from the Bypass into the existing road. By doing that, the grade separation at Poplar, the impacts at Delta Waters to the surrounding businesses, would be very great. The backage roads are confusing. These roads would

impact the local businesses along the existing road. The Bypass with the Split Diamond allows a good percentage of the traffic to move through the area. Fred Meyers supports the Split Diamond.

Rod Witham: He said that this year we are delivering approximately one hundred thirty Class A trucks to Highway 62 and also to Cross Creek (located on Blackwell Hill). These vehicles are bringing produce right into the town.

7.0 Next Steps

Terry Kearns, URS

Terry reminded the PDT that they are nearing the end of the alternative analysis process. There are three corridor alternatives with terminus and seven avoidance options. Terry Kearns said he has asked Mike Arneson to look at the seven avoidance alternatives. There have been changes in other corridor alignments, Split Diamond, Existing Build and the Texas Turnaround. The Evaluation Criteria needs to be updated to reflect these changes. An updated Evaluation Criteria worksheet will be presented at the September meeting. At the September meeting we will be looking at the south terminus alternatives as well as the avoidance alternatives. Terry said the CAC may want to consider dropping some of the alternatives. He does not think the staff will be asking for this decision in September.

He said there will be two public open houses in September: September 18th at the Winema Girl Scout Auditorium and September 19th at the White City Rogue Family Center. The intent of these open houses is to inform the public about the range of alternatives being considered and to get their input. At the October meeting the reduction of the range of alternatives will be considered. There may be a need for a November meeting.

8.0 PDT Comfort Check

Kelly Madding: She is comfortable with the materials presented. Kelly had heard that the Jackson County Board of Commissioners are interested in the Highway 140 connection from White City to Exit 35. One thing that has come up is the issue of an interchange at Highway 62 so that trucks could be able to get onto Highway 140 connection in the future. She assumes this would happen after the Highway 62 Corridor Project. She is mentioning this issue because she keeps hearing about the Highway 140 connection. Terry said that the team can make sure that whatever is done will not preclude the connection from happening.

Suzanne Myers: She is good. She asked if there was a chance that an update could be given to the Medford Planning Commission in the near future. Terry said that the team is planning to give presentations to Medford and Jackson County after the open houses. Debbie Timms will coordinate these meetings.

Nick Fortey: Nick is comfortable with the process. He is a little nervous about drafting some of the alternatives at this stage. We need more information, such as how the Split Diamond will operate. There is confusion between the alternatives and the sub-options. Some of these options are significant. Need to know functionally how the options will work.

- Mike Quilty: He is pretty happy with where the process is. Mike is concerned about meeting the goal exceptions and losing track of where we are. He is frustrated that we are in a planning process (RPS) for the Valley's future in 50 years and have to ignore that when we are designing a project that is supposed to provide transit for us well into that period. He wants to make sure that what we do allows the movement of needed future freight.
- David Elliot: David is good. He wants to make sure we are sending flyers out to businesses for the open house as well as residents especially in White City.
- Dale Lininger: Regarding the Highway 140 connection, he asked "What was the outcome of the earlier study?" Terry responded that it was looked at in the context of whether it would solve the problems in the Highway 62 Corridor. It was found that it would not draw enough traffic to solve the problems in the Corridor. Dale said he feels comfortable on the steps taken to date. He appreciates the comments made by Rod Witham and Jim Coombes.
- Brian Dunn: Brian is fine.

9.0 Adjournment