



Highway 62 Corridor Project

Date: February 23, 2006
From: Pat Foley, RVCOG
Re: **PROJECT DEVELOPMENT TEAM (PDT) MEETING
MINUTES for February 23, 2006**

PDT Members in Attendance: Brian Dunn, David Elliott, Nick Fortey, Mark Gibson, Skip Knight, Kelly Madding, Jerry Marmon, Dan Moore, Suzanne Myers and Mike Quilty

Members Absent: Donna Beck

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

Guests: Curt Burrill and Shirley Roberts

Staff: Martha Richards, Hang Reede and Terry Kearns, URS; Debbie Timms, Gary Leaming, John Raasch and DeLanie Cutsforth, ODOT; Kim Parducci, JRH; Pat Foley, RVCOG

1.0 Introductions/Approval of Minutes/Update

Terry Kearns, URS

Terry convened the meeting at 9 AM. He then asked if there were any changes or additions to the December 15, 2005 CAC/PDT minutes. Mike Quilty made a motion to approve the minutes. Kelly Madding seconded the motion. The minutes were approved as written.

Rick Levine, Chamber of Commerce representative, has asked to resign from the PDT due to meeting conflicts. Curt Burrill, Chamber of Commerce President, is here to discuss who the Chamber would like to nominate as Rick's replacement on the PDT.

Curt Burrill said that after discussion among members of the Chamber regarding the replacement of Rick on the PDT, it was decided that they would like to bring forward for discussion, Dale Lininger. Dale is presently the Vice-President of LTM and is set to retire in twelve months. He is an active member of the Chamber's Transportation Action Committee and is up to date on transportation issues and has watched this process. It will

not be a difficult step for him to take over Rick's position on the PDT. Curt then submitted Dale Lininger's name to the PDT as a replacement for Rick Levine.

Skip Knight stated that he is in favor of having Dale serve on the committee. Skip has worked with Dale on other transportation committees and feels he is attuned to transportation issues. Dan Moore agreed with Skip.

Mike Quilty made a motion to accept Dale Lininger as a member of the PDT. Skip Knight seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

2.0 CAC Update

Terry Kearns, URS

Terry explained that the CAC is making a recommendation (voted on at the January 25, 2006 CAC meeting) to the PDT to drop two alternatives, the Texas Turnaround and the Couplet. The PDT will be asked to consider this recommendation after the PDT has gone through the Evaluation Criteria.

He went on to say that a Bicycle/Pedestrian Subcommittee has been formed and met last night for the first time. The purpose of this committee is to develop some multi-modal concepts for the reduced set of alternatives. Michael Ronkin, ODOT Bicycle/Pedestrian Program Manager, met with committee to explain what ODOT requires/does not require in relation to transportation projects. Their plan is to make a recommendation for multi-modal concepts to the CAC/PDT in May. Terry asked if there were any PDT members who would like to volunteer to serve on this committee. There were no volunteers.

3.0 Land Use and Access Management Subcommittees

Terry Kearns, URS

Terry informed the PDT that there are two other subcommittees in the process of being formed to address technical issues relating to 1) land use and 2) access management. The Land Use Subcommittee will be addressing goal exceptions and develop a strategy to deal with the goal exceptions. The Access Management Subcommittee's charge will be to work on technical issues related to access. A meeting date or time has not been set for these committees. There were five volunteers from the CAC for each committee. Terry asked if there were members from the PDT who would like to serve on these committees. PDT members who volunteered for the Land-use Subcommittee are: David Elliott, Dan Moore, Suzanne Myers and Kelly Madding.

4.0 Evaluation Criteria

Terry Kearns, URS

Terry started by giving a brief update on the Evaluation Process. They are:

- Linked to Purpose and Need/Goals and Objectives
- Used to screen Alternatives
- Goals and Objectives – have a local focus and state solutions to be achieved
- Criteria – are linked to specific Goals & Objectives
- Measures – respond to the criteria

Using the available measures, Terry reviewed each Goal and the associated evaluation criteria. A handout and PowerPoint Presentation (Draft Evaluation Criteria) showed the measure of each alternative as either 1) meeting, 2) partially meeting or 3) not meeting the evaluation criteria. The Evaluation Criteria were applied to: Corridor Alternatives, 1) Bypass, 2) Existing Highway, 3) Couplet, 4) Texas Turnaround and North Terminus Alternatives, 1) East Bypass, 2) Existing Highway and 3) West Bypass.

Goal I (Multimodal): Ensure solution provides for safe alternative modes of transportation
Measures evaluated with *questions, answers and comments*:

- Connects major origins and destinations.
Terry explained that the Origin and Destination Study showed that there are a significant number of origins and destinations within the Corridor. This information was used in evaluating this objective.

Goal 2 (Environmental) Protect and enhance the natural environment
Measures evaluated with *questions, answers and comments*:

- Decrease or increase regional emissions
In response to an inquiry, Terry explained that the alternatives are compared to each other.
- Number of stream crossings
The number of stream crossings increase with the Existing Highway Alternative because of the frontage and backage roads.
- Acres of riparian habitat impacted
- Number of ESA listed plant species impacted
- Area (acres) of habitat impacted classified by USFWS as “vernal pool critical habitat”
Why does the North Terminus Existing Highway Option have so many acres impacted? There are critical habitat designations that come right up to the highway near the Domiciliary. This area would be impacted if the highway is widened.
- Acres of high, medium, and low wetlands impacted
- Area (acres) of field-verified vernal pool habitat impacted
- Area (ft²) of new impervious surface
- Amount (%) of treatment (quality/quantity) provided for new impervious surfaces
- Impacts to 303(d) listed waterways
- Number of sensitive receptors (residential/institutional) impacted

Goal 3 (Economic) Maintain economic vitality in the corridor
Measures evaluated with *questions, answers and comments*:

- Decrease travel time
David Elliott asked if the decreased time is in respect to today’s conditions or to each alternative. Answer: Each alternative.
- Increase travel time reliability
- Number of partial commercial or residential acquisitions

Terry explained that the numbers represented on the chart are on the conservative side.

- Number of complete residential or commercial acquisitions
Terry said that Environmental Justice issues will be addressed in the environmental analysis.
- Vehicle routing (circuitous or simple)
Skip Knight commented that if you have limited access off of Highway 62 and have unlimited access off of the frontage roads associated with the Texas Turnaround, access to businesses, from an economic point of view, is much better with the Texas Turnaround. Skip went on to say that from the safety point of view, having access to businesses off of Highway 62 as it exists today as opposed to the Texas Turnaround, the Texas Turnaround is much safer. He feels that if you take the existing highway and compare it to the Texas Turnaround, there is no comparison. The Texas Turnaround makes more sense.

Brian Dunn said that there seems to be some confusion. The Existing Highway Alternative is not showing what is there today. We are comparing the proposed alternatives to each other, not to the existing facility. In order to avoid this confusion he suggested that the nomenclature be changed. Terry asked the PDT if there were any objections to changing the name of the “Existing Highway Alternative”. There were no objections.

In regard to the Couplet Alternative, Nick Fortey took issue with the routing rating because there is a lot of direct access from the Couplet that you do not have with the Bypass Alternative.

Terry said that the rankings can be changed.

- Do the individual phases have logical termini?
- Do the individual phases have independent utility?
- Can the project be phased to maximize regional economic benefits?

Goal 4 (Safety) Ensure the solution is safe for all modes of transportation

Measures evaluated with *questions, answers and comments:*

- Number of access spacing deviations required
- Emergency response time
David Elliott said he does not feel there is enough information at this meeting to evaluate the Northern Terminus Options. He attended the meeting with the White City industrial/business leaders. At that meeting there was discussion regarding the impacts to emergency response times to every facility in the area. He feels that until we know what the connections are going to be, it is impossible to rank these options.
- Impacts to emergency routes

- Goal 5 (Transportation) Provide a solution that addresses capacity and connectivity needs
Measures evaluated with *questions, answers and comments*:
- Provides logical progression of modal movement
 - Number of major connections
 - Provides logical roadway hierarchy
 - Provides separation between local and regional travel
 - Does the facility meet applicable design standards
- Goal 6 (Planning) Ensure the solution is compatible with existing land use and transportation plans
Measures evaluated with *questions, answers and comments*:
- Number of City land use amendments (Corridor Alternatives)
 - Included in the City transportation plans (Corridor Alternatives)
After discussion, Bypass and Existing Alternatives ranking were changed to “partially meets”.
 - Number County land use amendments
 - Included in the County transportation plans
 - Number of City land use amendments (North Terminus Alternatives)
 - Included in the Regional Transportation Plan
 - Number of State land use exceptions
 - Included in the State Transportation Plan
 - Acres of farmland (EFU) and forestland impacts
- Goal 7 (Social) Enhance community livability and quality of life
Measures evaluated with *questions, answers and comments*:
- Potential Environmental Justice impacts (low income/minority)
 - Neighborhood connectivity impacts
 - Direct/indirect impacts to neighborhoods

5.0 Recommendation Discussion

Terry Kearns, URS

Terry said that when the Evaluation Criteria was tallied at the CAC meeting using the rankings depicted as 1) meets, 2) partially meets and 3) does not meet, the Texas Turnaround and the Couplet scored the least. After reviewing the Evaluation Criteria the CAC voted to make a recommendation to the PDT to drop the Texas Turnaround and the Couplet Alternatives from further study. Their main reason for making this recommendation is that they do not feel these two alternatives meet the Purpose and Need Statement.

The CAC feels that all of the North Terminus Alternatives should be evaluated further.

Terry opened the floor for discussion. He was asked, “What are some specific concerns the CAC had in regard to these two alternatives?”

1. The Couplet does not provide a modal separation or meet the Purpose and Need.

2. The Texas Turnaround has significant impacts to businesses all along the corridor.
 - a. Destroys the businesses that are intended to be served.
 - b. Impacts to individual properties are overwhelming.
 - c. The Texas Turnaround has good merits but is not required for this project.
 - d. Oregon does not have design standards in place for a Texas Turnaround. Developing these design standards would be a process in itself.
 - e. The Texas Turnaround is a great idea where you start with an empty area.
 - f. Getting approval is politically impossible.

Skip Knight: He said he did not understand the design standard issue for the Texas Turnaround. URS did the design standards in Texas. Why can't the URS office in Texas supply the standards? He also said that it is his understanding that the width is available on Highway 62 to accommodate the Texas Turnaround. If it can be proven to him that this is not the case, then he may agree with the group. On trips to Texas he has seen how well they work and feels that if a Texas Turnaround will fit into our situation we will have a long term fix, maybe for 50 years out. He does not think it makes sense to build something that may have to be redone in 20 or 30 years. Skip believes the City of Medford has the political will to get things done.

Group Request: Have a color coded map that shows 1) complete takes of physical businesses, 2) partial takes, and 3) vacant land.

Nick Forety: We will need to demonstrate why/or why not the Texas Turnaround will fail, i.e., is this alternative that is going to take out hundreds of businesses verses an alternative that won't.

Brian Dunn: Brian stated that the project's goal has always been to develop designs for a 20 year span. ODOT is not pushing to have the Texas Turnaround dropped. The information being discussed tonight is to try and recapture what was said at the CAC/PDT meeting held in December. We can go ahead and look at the Texas Turnaround. It is going to cost a lot of money for consultants and will stretch the process out for several months. There may be fatal flaws. Getting approval from the City would be difficult. It would be controversial. I just hate spend a lot of time and taxpayers dollars to look at it if there isn't the political will to move forward.

Terry was asked if it was possible to show if the Texas Turnaround would actually facilitate more traffic (after 20 year build out) than other alternatives. Terry went on to say that the Texas Turnarounds have been built in empty areas. They have never been retro-fitted into an existing corridor. In Oregon, because of the land use laws, it may be difficult to put in this type of infrastructure in a developed area.

Mike Quilty In Oregon we do land use planning backwards. You can't build structures in empty lands because you might bring in more population. It always costs

us more money to go through areas that are already constrained by existing businesses.

In order to compare the business impacts for each alternative, the group asked to see the large maps. A break was taken in order to retrieve and review the maps.

BREAK

Terry reconvened the meeting by stating that it is his perception that the PDT is not ready to act on the CAC recommendations. He asked each PDT member how they felt about the CAC recommendation to no longer consider the Texas Turnaround and Couplet in the rest of the EA and to keep all of the north terminus options on the table for the time being.

Suzanne Myers I know what I personally think but it could be worthwhile to pursue the discussion a little longer. I suggest we postpone a decision.

Brian Dunn It would be helpful to get a handle on what kind of information is needed to make the team comfortable in order to make a decision.

Kelly Madding I would like to see the criteria refined to show which businesses and residences are total takes.

Terry has this information and will bring it to the next meeting. He said that this set of impacts is not going to help the PDT make their decision on the Couplet. The Couplet revolves around a different set of arguments.

Kelly Madding I am comfortable in eliminating the Couplet. I think the issue is between the Existing Alternative and the Texas Turnaround. My intuitive sense is that the Texas Turnaround will take out too many businesses. I would like to see a color coded map that shows which businesses would be impacted and how much. This would help me and I think it would help Skip make a decision. Also, I would like to see a graph with number of impacts to back up the map information.

Terry said he felt this was a good idea and that URS would work on it.

Dan Moore Dan asked for a summary on how each alternative met the criteria. He also would like to see an impact comparison summary between the Existing Highway Alternative and the Texas Turnaround.

Mike Quilty I am perfectly happy to see the Couplet go away. The Texas Turnaround may fit but there are many difficulties. Because it works for some reasons other than businesses having to relocate and land acquisitions, maybe a little more can be done so that we can justify the decision to drop it. We need this data to show the public.

Terry asked Mike if his primary concern is quantifying the number businesses impacted.

Mike Quilty Yes I would like that. I also feel that there is no room to expand the Texas Turnaround. With the Bypass, if you buy enough right-of-way in the beginning you have the potential to add lanes in the future.

Terry does not feel there is not enough space for the Texas Turnaround but if there is the political will to wipe the corridor clean, then you can expand it anytime you want.

Based on comments heard, Terry asked the group if they would like to have a motion made to drop the Couplet Alternative.

Nick Forety I am hesitant to drop the Couplet. I am concerned that somebody is going to look at this alternative and say it has less business impacts than other alternatives and not look at the other criteria. I would feel more comfortable if we could do a sketch planning level exercise which shows (1 that here is what the Couplet can accommodate and (2 here is what you can expect for traffic performance. I think that will show that it may have less business impacts but it is not going to perform at an acceptable level. I think we need more information on both of these alternatives.

Brian Dunn Brian cited examples of couplets in Medford, Talent and Phoenix (Highway 99) as systems that do not work well. These couplets do not allow for swift movement of traffic.

Terry Kearns said we are 18 months into this process. There is no need to rush it. If you need more information then we will bring it to you.

6.0 Other Business

Terry Kearns, URS

Terry briefly reviewed what was presented to the CAC at their meeting yesterday. Review of the Southern Terminus Option and refinements to the Northern Terminus Options which were developed as a result of the meeting with White City leaders. These two items will be on the next PDT agenda. He said there probably will not be a CAC meeting next month.

Debbie Timms said the Project Management Team is in the process of setting up meetings with the South Terminus business owners. These meetings are scheduled to be held in April. The Team is also planning on giving an update on the project to the White City Planning Commission.

7.0 Adjournment