



Highway 62 Corridor Project

Date: November 1, 2006
From: Pat Foley, RVCOG
Re: **PROJECT DEVELOPMENT TEAM (PDT) MEETING
MINUTES for October 26, 2006**

PDT Members in Attendance: Donna Beck, Brian Dunn, David Elliott, Mark Gibson, Dale Lininger, Jerry Marmon, Dan Moore Suzanne Myers, and Mike Quilty

Members Absent: Nick Fortey, Skip Knight and Kelly Madding

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

Staff: Terry Kearns, URS; Gary Leaming, Chris Zelmer and Susan Landis, ODOT; Kim Parducci, JRH; Gary Shaff, Gary Shaff & Associates; Mike Arneson, Harper-Leavitt Engineering; Pat Foley, RVCOG

Guests: 4 members of the public

1.0 Welcome and Approval of Minutes

Terry Kearns, URS

Terry reviewed meeting objectives which are to: 1) hear updates on meetings and presentations, 2) discuss reduction of alternatives, 3) make recommendation to PDT and 4) review Bypass Lane Use Alternative.

Terry said we are at the stage of the process where we need to decide which alternatives should be moved forward and studied in depth in the Environmental Impact Statement.

The September 28, 2006 PDT minutes were approved as presented.

2.0 Meeting Updates

Terry Kearns, URS

Terry gave an overview of meetings where staff gave a presentation.

1. October 10th Jackson County Commissioners
The intent of this meeting was to provide a briefing on the project. Terry explained the remaining four alternatives and went through a step by step briefing on the area north of Vilas Road which is located in the county. Concerns expressed by the commissioners are;
 1. They wanted to know about the traffic model used. They were interested in knowing if it included factors such as the Eagle Point WalMart and the Phoenix Home Depot developments. They are included but the basis of the model was the Comprehensive Plans of each of the jurisdictions.
2. October 11th MPO Technical Advisory Committee
This committee did not have a lot of questions. They did ask how the Split-Diamond option operates.
3. October 12th Medford City Council
Terry gave the same presentation given to the county commissioners with the exception that the area from I-5 north to Vilas Road was the focus. The City Council put forth a recommendation to that the CAC and PDT drop the Texas Turnaround and the Existing Highway alternatives. Suzanne Myers added that three councilors were not at the meeting, including Skip Knight. Their biggest concern was having an option that would displace the fewest number of businesses and residences.
4. October 24th MPO Policy Committee
Terry gave an overview of the project: where we are today and what are the alternatives being looked at. There were no questions while Terry was present. Later in the meeting there were comments made. Pat summarized the comments. Sharon Ely commented that the Bypass Alternative seemed to have the least impacts and is concerned about the phaseability of the Texas Turnaround. John Morrison said that he did not know enough about the current and future traffic needs and costs, but feels that the Bypass with the Split Diamond appeared to have the least impacts. Skip Knight and Glen Anderson are in support of the Texas Turnaround. Al Wilstatter commented that his fear with this long-range outlook is that it's built with obsolescence to begin with. Dan Moore said that Art Anderson is in favor of the Bypass with the Split Diamond.
5. October 25th Highway 62 CAC
The CAC passed a recommendation for the PDT to drop the Texas Turnaround and the Existing Highway alternatives. The vote was unanimous. Each CAC member was asked to state the reasons for dismissing each alternative. The primary reasons given were because the economic and social displacement was too great.

Terry reviewed the final tally of Open House comments. Comments in favor of alternatives are: 6 for the Bypass, 33 for the Bypass with Split Diamond, 1 possible for each the Existing Build and the Texas Turnaround.

3.0 Discussion of reduction of alternatives

Terry Kearns, URS

Terry K. reviewed the purpose and need of the project with committee members. He showed the latest detailed alternative maps and explained traffic movements and property impacts.

- Bypass Alternative
 - Poplar would be grade-separated with series of backage and frontage roads for access
 - Bypass follows Medco Haul Road
 - The main part of Highway 62 is access controlled
 - Interchange at Vilas Road
 - Directional interchange at Agate Road
 - Bypass uses Agate Road alignment around White City connecting to Hwy 62 at Dutton Road.
 - There are two north terminus options that are to be studied.
 1. Option 1 has environmental issues (EFU)
 2. Option 2 impacts the VA Dom., takes buildings and closes north entrance.
 3. A suggestion was made by Commissioner Gilmore to combine the two options. This is a design refinement.

Questions/Comments:

Mike Quilty: Mike asked how access is provided to buildings (i.e. Federal Law Enforcement Center) on the airport property along the Medco Haul Road. Terry said the next step will be to show an access point at this area.

David Elliott: David asked what are the impacts to businesses on Agate and what does the access look like. Mike Arneson explained that major roads, Antelope Road, Avenue G, will have access over or under the Bypass. The Bypass will also have to go over the railroad tracks. There can be other under crossings for businesses. There will be changes to access patterns.

Terry pointed out that the issues with the north terminus are common to all alternatives.

- Bypass with Split Diamond
 - This alternative is essentially the same as the Bypass Alternative. The difference is how it connects to I-5.
 - Does not join back up with the existing Hwy 62
 - Has a Split Diamond interchange connecting Bypass to I-5
 - Connection will be elevated

Questions/Comments:

David Elliott: What is the worst case scenario regarding accidents on the Split Diamond? Mike Arneson said the worst case is that one of the bridges could be blocked. That exists today. Traffic would be rerouted.

- Existing Highway
 - Controlled access, frontage and backage roads
 - Interchange at Vilas, Delta Waters, directional interchange at Hwy 62 and Agate
 - Poplar grade-separated
 - Improvements to Crater Lake Avenue

- Texas Turnaround
 - Four lanes of highway
 - Parallel access roads on either side of expressway, one-way roads
 - Poplar grade-separated
 - Slip ramps for off / on to access roads
 - Interchange at Vilas, Delta Waters, directional interchange at Hwy 62 and Agate

Terry K. referred the committee to the updated goals and objectives and explained that the first filter was the Purpose and Need. He said the evaluation criteria was applied to the 4 remaining alternatives and using the evaluation criteria, the Bypass and the Bypass with the Split Diamond rank more favorably than the Existing or the Texas Turnaround due to operational efficiencies as well as the number of impacts. He presented bar graphs of partial property takes, complete property takes, and numbers of buildings impacted for each alternative.

Questions/Comments:

Suzanne Myers: She asked why the Bypass Alternatives has residential impacts. Terry said there are some residences north of Vilas Road.

4.0 Recommendation to PDT

Terry Kearns, URS

Project Staff recommend that the CAC and PDT dismiss the Texas Turnaround and the Existing Highway Build alternatives based on the following:

A comparison of the alternatives' ranking in the evaluation criteria shows significant differences between those two alternatives and the Bypass alternative in regard to:

- Opportunities to provide Multi-Modal improvements
- Number of parcels partially impacted
- Number of parcels completely impacted
- Number of residential buildings impacted
- Number of commercial buildings impacted

Any action taken on an alternative has to be done based on the Goals and Objectives. The first filter was the Purpose and Need. Other factors can enter in to the decisions. The CAC has made a recommendation to the PDT to dismiss the Existing Build and Texas Turnaround Alternatives from further study.

Discussion:

Mike Quilty: He asked if the Existing Build and Texas Turnaround Alternatives are more expensive. Terry replied yes. He added that cost is always a big factor but we did not make it a part of the Evaluation Criteria.

Brian Dunn: Regarding operational issues, the problem with the Texas Turnaround and the Existing Build is that if one of the interchanges has a problem everything is shut down. With the Bypass options you have another facility. There is a huge risk factor. He feels that the Bypass gives a lot more options. Brian feels that the Bypasses have long term options.

Terry said that people have asked about the capacity of the alternatives. There are two things used to measure capacity; 1) how many lanes are used, and 2) what speed do they operate at. The Existing Highway and the Texas Turnaround have two lanes moving from east to west: two lanes of access roads (4), four lanes of freeway which is a total of eight lanes. The Bypass uses Crater Lake Avenue (2 lanes), Highway 62 five lanes and Bypass with four lanes and Lear Way to Vilas two lanes for a total of thirteen lanes. The Bypass has significantly more capacity and probably more flexibility because it will be accessed controlled.

Brian Dunn: Regarding phaseability, if the Texas Turnaround or the Existing is built you will have a lot of construction going on for a long time which will impact travel and business.

Terry said that at this point the PDT has a recommendation before them from the staff and the CAC to drop from further study the Existing Build and Texas Turnaround Alternatives.

Mike Quilty made a motion to accept the recommendation of staff and the CAC to drop the Existing Highway Build and the Texas Turnaround. Donna Beck seconded the motion. Terry said that Nick Fortey emailed comments which states that he is in favor of dropping the Existing Highway and the Texas Turnaround primarily because of land use impacts and the associated displacements.

Vote: The PDT voted unanimously to accept the motion to drop the Existing Highway Build and the Texas Turnaround.

Terry asked each member to express their reasons for dropping these alternatives.

Dan Moore: He agrees with the recommendation for the reasons presented and the impacts are too severe on the Texas Turnaround and the Existing Highway. He supports the Bypass Split Diamond.

Suzanne Myers: She supports the motion for two reasons. She is representing the Medford City Council's point of view that the others have too many impacts to existing businesses and residences. Secondly, from a future urban development point of view the other options present too large of a barrier to good urban development.

Dale Lininger: The impacts are significantly higher than the alternatives that were not dropped. I think that we have to look at the total impact.

Mark Gibson: He basically agrees to what has been stated already and to the recommendations that have come forward that the impacts would be far greater. He supports the Bypass. He has concerns with the Split Diamond.

Brian Dunn: He feels that the reasons mentioned regarding the goals and objectives, economic, social and displacement impacts show a big difference. He feels that the risk issue is big with anything on the Existing alignment, for what we are trying to accomplish, will cause a problem at some point to meet the purpose and need. He likes the separation of local and through traffic. When you get on an interstate many problems are caused by local people using it. This gives us an opportunity to have a separate facility. You also have parallel facilities to service everything else. You are breaking out the functions of the facilities. He thinks that phaseability is a big issue also.

Jerry Marmon: He seconds everything that has been said. ROW and commercial impacts are too great in particular when we start expanding our facilities into residential areas. The Evaluation Criteria speaks for itself. Better multi-modal opportunities with the Bypass options. Local jurisdiction opinions are pretty clear. ODOT is not in the habit of pushing projects forward that have no local support. The Bypass allows the city of Medford to redevelop Hwy 62 as they feel that it should be. A couple of things that need more work on, we need to focus on the industrial areas to figure out how the access will work. He added that Mr. Hanlon submitted a letter to the CAC and PDT.

David Elliott: He is comfortable with moving forward with CAC recommendation. He feels that two alternatives that are moving forward have the most flexibility in design. They are attractive as far as the multi-modal standards. Unfortunately, he feels the Texas Turnaround is an attractive design; this is just the wrong place for it. This a perfect example of trying to drive a square peg into a round hole. One of our objectives is to provide an enhanced safety transportation for the corridor; he does not feel that does it in this particular instance. This is a fatal flaw.

Donna Beck: There is not much she can add. Everybody is pretty much in agreement that this is the way we need to go. She agrees with the recommendation. She always felt that the Texas Turnaround was too big and ponderous. She is not sure which of the two remaining she likes the best. They both have less expansion.

Terry added that one of the next steps is to generate facts about the differences between the remaining alternatives.

Mike Quilty: Mike agrees with eliminating the Existing Build and Texas Turnaround. The urban forum and the geographic constraints we have based on the airport and the existing businesses place the impacts of trying to fix that area goes way too high. It doesn't take and allow much for expansion past the completion date of this project. The others meet the needs; have a lot less impact on residential owners and businesses. He has concerns with the two alternatives going forward because of the way they impact businesses particularly at the south end. He is concerned with Exit 30 because we keep chopping it up and moving it a little bit and adding pieces to it. It starts to look like Frankenstein's monster. We need to take a look at that to see if that needs to be realigned to an area that gives us a little better access in the future.

Terry said we are at about 5% design. Within the next month the engineers need to bring the concepts up to a level where they can answer general concept questions for you. Everybody will be brought together on November 15th. Terry is asking for a design freeze in mid-December. After the draft statement is completed and an alternative is selected, they will be

able to advance the design. The CAC and PDT will not meet for awhile unless something significant comes up while the environmental analysis is being prepared.

On November 15th there will be a joint CAC/PDT meeting. Mike Arneson will walk the groups through the designs that are to be studied.

Break

5.0 Review of Bypass Land Use Alternatives

Gary Shaff, GSA

Terry suggested that two meetings be held on November 15th (same meeting materials) to accommodate people's schedules. It was decided that the first meeting will be from 4 pm to 5:30 pm and the second meeting will be from 6 pm to 7:30 pm. An email will be sent to all parties.

Terry started that there are two land use avoidance alignments remaining on the table. The staff and the CAC are making a recommendation to the PDT on these alternatives.

Gary Shaff presented the land use avoidance alignments for the Bypass Alternative. Mike Arneson developed designs for the avoidance alignments that could compare with the original Bypass alignment. He reviewed the Land Use Subcommittee recommendations.

- Selected avoidance alignments should be reviewed by the CAC and the PDT for "reasonableness".
- If reasonable, avoidance alignments should be considered within the DEIS either together with, or in lieu of the original alignment(s).
- If unreasonable, document the facts, findings, and conclusions in as much detail as is possible using objective (preferable) and subjective measures.
- Alignments requiring an exception should not be considered within the DEIS unless
 - The PDT finds that avoidance alignments are unreasonable, and
 - All build alternatives require an exception, and
 - Exception alignments, if they are carried into the DEIS, are redesigned to minimize their impacts on farm and forest lands, and to the degree possible, site interchanges wholly within Medford's UGB or the White City UCB, or
 - The inclusion of an exception alignment is necessary to document its merits while acknowledging that an exception may not be justified.

Gary defined Statewide Land Use Goal Exception: A decision by a local government (in the form of Comprehensive Land Use Plan amendment and supported by substantial evidence) demonstrating that reasons justify why the state policy embodied within the applicable goal(s) should not apply. He further explained the standards for an exception and problems with the Bypass Highway Alignment.

Problems

1. Portions of the interchange ramps at Vilas lie outside the Medford UGB.
2. The Bypass would cut through land designated EFU.
3. The Bypass would cut through land designated Open Space.

Two land use avoidance alternatives were developed to address these issues.

Land Use Avoidance Alternative 1

- Impacts 54 buildings, primarily commercial structures along Hwy 62 corridor
- Bypass in same area, impacts 32 buildings
- Would require 2 directional interchanges outside UGB and UCB (Bypass needs one)

Questions/Comments:

Mike Quilty: What are the soil classifications in this area? Gary replied there is not much irrigation so consequently there is not a lot of farming activity occurring on these lands. Mike added that RPS, the area at Vilas is inside of what Medford is proposing so it will be a mute issue before we build this. The RPS process says we will need other pieces of transportation infrastructure that will serve urban needs but will lay outside of our UGB's and eventual city limits. We are looking at ways to designate them with no population count and no development rights so that the exceptions are written into the RPS process. Mike feels that it would be helpful if this group makes a presentation to the RPS body that says in order to do this in such a way we are asking that you consider including this to help us to get to that point. We are going to need it for local roads and for the highway. This would nudge those communities into putting those things in our stakeholder agreement which will be signed off by ODOT and the LCDC by the time it is completed.

Gary said that would be helpful but the timing will be off. He went on to say that because the alignment of the directional interchange and being in a rural are, it would require an exception.

Land Use Avoidance Alternative 2

- Would require 3-level interchange to accommodate movements
- Would require long stretches of elevated ramps
- Significant impacts to buildings (greater than Alternative 1)

Gary said the project staff recommends dismissing the two land use avoidance alternatives for the following reasons:

- Operational issues
- Access issues
- Significantly (and unreasonably) higher number of commercial impacts than with non-avoidance alternative
- Significantly (and unreasonably) higher costs associated with Avoidance Alternative 2 than with non-avoidance alternative

Gary said the project staff and the CAC is recommending that the PDT reject the two land use avoidance alternatives.

Questions/Comments

David Elliott: He is concerned on how we got from Agate on. He thinks there is still some flexibility that we are talking about regarding access alignment that is compatible. He asked if there is any perception that a manipulation would cause a new land use avoidance that we would have to look at. Gary said we do have an issue with an exception for the north directional interchange. We are approaching that differently than we did with the other land

use exception issues. In this case we have asked Mike to look at why this is essential that this interchange be located at that location. It is a design and connectivity issue. Gary said that at the November meeting we will have a better understanding on these issues.

Jerry Marmon: Jerry said that if we have a land use issue when moving that alignment around a bit, we balance those issues out.

Dan Moore: He asked if Gary was confident that the options being presented are the only feasible ones that will be looked at. Gary replied that the standards for the consideration of alignments includes that the alignment has to be developed by an engineer. Simply having an idea isn't adequate for consideration in the exceptions process. That is not to say that a citizen cannot advance a concept that the county commissioners independently undertake a design level review and conclude that there is alternative that has no impact on EFU lands and is reasonable.

Mike Quilty: Are we not looking at the area where it goes up Agate Road and comes around the north of the DOM. Gary said that the issue north of the DOM, like the interchange at Vilas, is a part of the November meeting where we will try to refine them by design. A detailed analysis is needed to conclude that the impacts are unreasonable.

Mike Quilty made a motion to accept the Staff and CAC recommendation to drop to the land use avoidance alternatives that have been presented. David Elliott seconded the motion. The PDT voted unanimously to accept the motion to drop the land use avoidance alternatives numbers 1 and 2.

For the record Terry said that members who could not attend the meeting were asked to email in their comments on how they might look at the alternatives. Nick Fortey emailed his comments. Terry said it is important to note that Skip Knight, who is not here today and did not email his comments, has made it known that he is a proponent of the Texas Turnaround.

6.0 Public Comment

Terry Kearns, URS

Jim Coombes: Jim is with Fred Meyers stores. We continue to support the Bypass with the split diamond. He thinks he can speak for other businesses in the south terminus because it has the least negative impact on the local businesses and provides the greatest capacity and flexibility for the future.

7.0 PDT Comfort Check

Terry Kearns, URS

Dan Moore: Good. I like where we are in the process. We have reached an important milestone.

Suzanne Myers: I'm fine.

Dale Lininger: Satisfied.

Mark Gibson: Real good.

Brian Dunn: Glad we are here. It has been a long time.

Jerry Marmon: I'm happy where we are. We made a lot of progress today.

David Elliott: I'm fine. Please extend my thanks to the CAC for being patient with us.

Donna Beck: I'm fine. I am glad got to this point.

Mike Quilty: I would like to let the CAC know that we really appreciate all of the work they have done. It was important that they got that stuff to us. I am very glad that we have gotten to the point where we have made the decisions we have made today and that we are moving forward.

8.0 Next Steps

Terry Kearns, URS

Terry said we will have one more meeting on November 15th. We will probably reconvene in late spring.

9.0 Adjournment