



Highway 62 Corridor Project

Date: September 2009

From: Sue Casavan, RVCOG

Re: **PROJECT DEVELOPMENT TEAM (PDT) / CITIZEN
ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAC) JOINT MEETING
MINUTES for September 9, 2009**

CAC Members in Attendance: Mike Malepsy, Paige Townsend, Becky Brooks, Bill Blair, Curt Burrill, Richard Moorman

CAC Members Absent: Susan Rachor, Wade Six, David Christian, Bob Plankenhorn, Mike Montero, Don Riegger, Nanci Watkins, Mike Gardiner

PDT Members in Attendance: Mark Gibson, Brian Dunn, Suzanne Myers, Vicki Guarino, Al Densmore, Anna Henson, Chris Zelmer, Mike Quilty

PDT Members Absent: David Elliott, Nick Fortey, Dale Lininger, Kelly Madding

Location: Rogue Community College, Table Rock Campus

Guests: 24 members of the public

Staff Present: Tim Fletcher, Art Anderson, Dick Leever and Gary Leaming of ODOT; Terry Kearns of URS; Pat Foley and Sue Casavan of RVCOG

1.0 Review Agenda and Approval of Minutes

Terry Kearns, URS

Terry K. convened the meeting of the Highway 62 Corridor Project at 6:10 p.m. He asked committee members if they were any additions or corrections to the May 23, 2007 and August 26, 2009 meeting minutes.

On a motion by Mike Q. and seconded by Mark G. the committee unanimously approved the May 23, 2007 and August 26, 2009 minutes as presented.

2.0 Welcome and Object of Tonight's Meeting

Terry Kearns, URS

Terry K. discussed the objectives of the meeting: discussion on the South Terminus options, members will break into small groups to look at maps and ask questions, come back with questions for staff and public comment after committee discussion.

He noted that at the last meeting there was discussion about a strong desire from ODOT to make this a multi-modal project and members had previously looked at bike/ped issues but did not look at transit. He informed members that staff would like to propose forming a subcommittee on transit to develop transit options for the corridor. He added that ODOT and RVTD needed to work through some issues prior the meetings and that would probably take a couple weeks. He asked for volunteers for the subcommittee: Paige Townsend, Becky Brooks, Al Densmore, Suzanne Myers, Anna Henson, and Mike Quilty volunteered. The subcommittee will develop some transit options and report back to the committee with recommendations.

He asked members if there were any questions about the interim solution as a whole the way it was presented last time. Al D. asked if the committee had the ability to recommend adjustments and Terry K. said that it was encouraged.

Terry K. emphasized the fact that if the alignment goes beyond Vilas Road it is outside the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) of Medford and would require a goal exception. He added that a goal exception was a very lengthy process and it was required by state law to have the land use permit in hand by the time construction begins but staff thought there would be a sufficient amount of time for the process.

Curt B. asked if there were improvements that would have to be done at Vilas Road and Hwy 62 to accommodate the first phase and Terry K. responded that the bypass would go over the top of Vilas Road and two ramps would come down to Vilas Road. He thought there would be a need for improvements and the possibility will need to be planned for.

Al D. asked if there was a technical advisory committee to consult with and Terry K. said that consultation was generally the role of the project staff.

Man from audience asked if there was an option for a no-build and Terry K. said there was always an option for a no-build.

Mike Q. noted that through the Regional Problem Solving (RPS) process the county will be starting a comprehensive plan amendment process which will take about 12-18 months and a goal exception might not be needed if the timing coincides because it will be inside the urban reserve area.

3.0 South Terminus Option Discussion

Tim Fletcher, ODOT

Tim F. said staff had tried to improve upon the graphics from the last meeting and there were copies on the walls for later discussion. He showed a map of the proposed Phase II design and discussed cost of the project with different options.

Tim F. presented a map of the South Terminus Options and showed traffic movements and differences between the Cut & Cover and the At Grade intersection with signal structures. He discussed access issues and improvements that would be needed.

He showed a Synchro presentation which modeled how traffic would flow through the two South Terminus Options with actual projected traffic volumes.

Man from audience commented that it would not get rid of the Poplar problem and Tim F. responded that an additional southbound lane would be added through the intersection for a total of three through lanes.

Brian D. noted that entire corridor project deals with Poplar but in this phase it will not be fixed and will have problems with either option at the south end.

Vicki G. asked if the depictions in the Synchro presentation were 2034 conditions and Tim F. responded yes.

Mike Malepsy asked how much more expensive the Cut & Cover was and Tim F. said roughly \$8-10 million more.

Tim F. presented a matrix to summarize the issues between the Cut & Cover and traffic signal options.

Vicki G. asked how much was throw away and how big of a section in terms of area on the map. Tim F. said a traffic signal was not ultimately part of the configuration and that would all be throw away, probably the majority of the asphalt and the earthwork. He said it was difficult to determine without looking at both of the ultimate configurations.

Curt B. commented that with air and noise on the Cut & Cover the matrix said there was an improvement in impacts and with the At Grade a potential increase and he asked if that was based on a no-build scenario. Tim F. said this was a comparison of the two against each other, vehicles stopping versus not.

Mike Q. asked if air quality conformity for the region was looked at for the options and Terry K. noted that neither option shows an adverse air quality impact.

Al D. commented that the interim phase will be two lanes and when full build out comes around the City of Medford will take jurisdiction over Hwy 62 which is a larger facility than the bypass. Art A. said that the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) was very clear that with any bypass there would have to be a jurisdictional exchange because the state could not keep both of them. He explained that the exchange issue will be discussed with the City of Medford. Al D. asked if any alternatives had been looked at that could

increase circulation on the city side of existing Hwy 62 that might take trips off of Hwy 62. Terry K. said the bypass will ultimately take off about 40% and transit would be the alternative to look at. Suzanne M. added that the question would be if the committee could continue to look at that as part of the solution and Terry K. responded yes.

Al D. asked how much of a contingency was built into the construction estimates and Tim F. said that was where the range came into place, the 30-40%.

Paige T. felt it would be difficult to advocate for anyone to use a bicycle in this corridor especially with the free flow and fast traffic. Bikes would need to cross lanes, and she thought even with the signalized intersection it still looked difficult. She commented that pedestrians can use the southbound sidewalk legally but a cyclist cannot use the southbound bike lane legally. She would like to hear about how staff was looking at bicycle transportation in this area. Chris Z. said there would be an 8-10 foot shoulder but this concern has not been addressed at this level of design.

Mike Malepsy said members had discussed about using Springbrook all the way through as being a real possibility.

Tim F. reported that with a no-build travel time between the southern and northern limits would be 14.4 minutes, with the bypass constructed and At Grade intersection 5:40, and Cut & Cover 4:30.

He said if the decision is made to select the Cut & Cover at the southern terminus there will be constraints for selection at the northern terminus.

Committee took a break to look at wall maps and ask questions of staff.

4.0 CAC / PDT Q & A Session

Terry Kearns, URS

Terry K. asked each member for questions or concerns.

Al D. said he was not comfortable and felt the process was accelerated and there were key questions that council and staff would have to wrestle with before they could come to a position. He was concerned with maintenance of the facility and access issues for businesses on the city side of Hwy 62. He wanted to see some kind of access circulation plan to exist behind the businesses.

Suzanne M. asked if it took a couple weeks for a recommendation if it would interrupt the schedule. Terry K. said there are impending deadlines, but committee members need to be comfortable and Tim F. added that staff would have like to receive a recommendation tonight, go into more detailed design by November and have the project available by June of 2012 but emphasized that members needed to be comfortable with the decisions being made.

Anna H. passed.

Mike Malepsy said he liked the way the options were presented and felt a little uncomfortable moving north of Vilas Road but that would be a later conversation and he would feel comfortable making a decision tonight.

Mark G. said he was originally comfortable until he overheard comments and concerns primarily about access issues which he felt were not being answered at this point and that concerned him. He wanted more definitive answers concerning access issues.

Becky B. had no questions.

Curt B. asked if the committee went with options to keep the price on the low side of the estimates what would be the overall benefits of creating two lanes in each direction. Chris Z. said it would probably cost about \$8-10 million for four lanes and Terry K. added that the greatest benefit is more of a function of the farther north the option is extended and not the added lanes.

Brian D. had no questions.

Mike Q. liked the Cut & Cover option as it moves traffic better and cuts down idling time which improves air quality in the area. He had real concerns with the accesses for businesses after three years of figuring how businesses could keep their access along existing Hwy 62. He liked the idea of expanding transit but felt it would be more beneficial to reinstate past routes that were discontinued before adding a new transit line. He said he needed to know if there was funding to provide access for the businesses.

Paige T. said it was her understanding that there would have to be reasonable bicycle accommodations either adjacent to or in the corridor and she would like to take it to the Medford Bike/Ped Committee to see what they would recommend. She said in response to the transit component, ODOT approached RVTD to provide some type of transit solution for this project and as a system-wide transit agency Route 4 is still a priority of RVTD. She added that this project is basically a purchased service from RVTD and would be at no cost to taxpayers that contribute to the RVTD tax system. She noted that Route 4 in East Medford is their first priority when funds become available. She was aware that it is a contentious issue, perhaps confusing to the public of where the money is coming from, and the fact that RVTD cannot provide other services that might be more important. Mike Q. added that not having it be a long term funded service makes it difficult. Art A. agreed it was a challenge but thought opportunities needed to be explored wherever they arise, and if it becomes not sustainable and least an effort was made. He felt strongly about the need for transit due to the fact that the corridor will be only partially built.

Vicki G. asked for clarification that business accesses would only be lost on the Cut & Cover option and Terry K. responded yes, access is preserved with the At Grade signal.

Richard M. said he was a little uncomfortable for the accelerated process that appeared to exist. He added that the CAC submitted a couple alternatives two years ago and from

those alternatives there should be other studies completed and returned to members with information. Terry K. assured him that those studies will be out soon. Richard M. was concerned about the problems on Poplar being addressed and if they will be addressed successfully. There are businesses that will be affected and that needs to be addressed. He added that the Cut & Cover looked good for moving traffic but wondered why there would be temporary termination of the project putting traffic out to Hwy 62.

Bill B. was also concerned about the North Terminus, building a temporary road that is less than a half mile to Agate and traffic will be backed up at Vilas. He noted that business access was a great concern for him also.

Tim F. explained for clarification that as far as at the northern terminus if a traffic signal were installed at that location, northbound Hwy 62 traffic would not pass through the signal they would continue on to the north, traffic heading south on Hwy 62 would make a left at the signal.

5.0 Public Comment

Terry Kearns, URS

Jim Coombs, Fred Meyer Stores: He felt that the value of the commercial center at the south terminus should be considered and while listening to the ODOT presentation describing costs about one option versus the other it seemed like they were not really telling the true cost to the community, only land and construction. He did not want the businesses to be forgotten and said the Cut & Cover would be devastating to the value of those businesses. He felt jobs and thriving businesses would be vital to Medford, not saving one minute of travel time. He emphasized that he had big concerns about businesses losing clear and direct access and if so, those businesses will not come back. He felt with the At Grade option there was great visibility and the property will have great potential for jobs and help the community. He noted preserving the potential for businesses at the south will help the community.

John Archer: He said he has gone to meetings for three years and part of his problem was he thought this whole thing was settled and it was changing with the \$120 million. He informed members that he was in the corridor where access will be taken away. Terry K. explained that the previous work was still going on and moving forward with the draft document in review. John A. asked how the changes can be explained. He felt it was a complete change of the process and circumstances should not change with the \$120 million for the process. He commented that two meetings should not equal three years.

Ron Bryan: He said there are so many things open here without the right answers, no transit or bicycle plans. He had concern with the numbers and noted that at the last meeting 48,000 cars per day in those two intersections was used and according to information he got from ODOT it was only 44,200, off by 10%. He commented that currently water cannot get through the area in Section 2, area north of Vilas Road. He does not think the need was there to justify it all the way from White City. Terry K. said the concern about the water flow is disclosed in the environmental document and design

has to do everything they can to fix that problem. Ron B. felt there were ways around that when government really wanted something done and commented that people and businesses will be flooded out. He said water runs over Table Rock Road now and sometimes water cannot pass through and placing 34 more acres of road on top of it he doesn't see how it could work. Brian D. explained that the numbers Ron B. was getting were from the traffic volume tables and the way they get those numbers is to put tubes out on the road once every three years. Brian D. noted that ODOT has several counts that were recently taken at Poplar and Delta Waters that are more accurate than the tables. Ron B. asked if those numbers were available for the public and Brian D. responded yes, contact Gary Leaming and he will get them to you.

Michael Sullivan: He said he owned the property where Abby's is next to the veterinarian. He would place a million plus value on that property if ODOT does what is drawn on the map because he would not be able to sell the property. He thought right in, right out would probably be okay. He said the Cut & Cover will kill the property and the other will create a lot of traffic through his property. He did not like either option.

Terry K. asked members if he had understood and included all their concerns in the following:

- Access concerns, other ways to provide access, general feeling that at grade signal will maintain some access
- Concern about no bike/ped solutions
- Concern with north terminus
- Where does the corridor solution fit into this project, show the two build alternatives for the entire corridor and overlay the interim solution, be able to see what is common and what is not

Terry K. briefly reviewed the two build alternatives for the entire corridor. He said the interim solution is a common element to both build alternatives, works well and is useful with both alternatives.

Is the group comfortable with making a recommendation or do they want more information

Curt B.-graphic illustration overlay on the two alternatives will be key in making an important decision.

Richard M.-enough people uncomfortable need more information

6.0 CAC / PDT Recommendation

Terry Kearns, URS

Pat Foley noted that there was a broad spectrum for this particular project and asked that each member state what they specifically needed to be comfortable making a recommendation for the project.

Al D. felt uncomfortable committing one of the largest jurisdictions in the area to a point of view in regard to a project with no ability for bike/ped committee to comment, technical understanding, city staff consultation or a city council study session with ODOT resources available to answer these questions.

Suzanne M. said they needed more time to talk over with others.

Anna H. passed.

Mike Malepsy said he could decide.

Mark G. asked in talking about the south terminus, was the access depicted a done deal for the Cut & Cover and Terry K. responded yes it was standard access control. He said he could make decision but he questioned the fact that a lot of other members were absent.

Becky B. asked if there was not a time consideration for the funding would we still consider these two options as our best options. She said in order to make the best use of what is available from the state one of these will be chosen but we also know in the future at build out that all this will be torn out.

Curt B. said he felt as though he had enough information to make a decision. He felt the recommendation for the maps would help with concerns of this committee and the public. He said members needed to know what was a good investment for the state money and what portion will be throw away.

Brian D. explained that the throw away was just a little piece. He said he had enough information to make a decision. He added that traffic volumes can vary by 5-10% by just going out on a different day and the magnitude of the issue does not change that much.

Mike Q. said he did not expect to come up with a decision where we are spending \$100 million. He felt it has changed and would like to see maps with the complete projects plus the interim phase come together before they make a decision and to make the public feel more comfortable.

Paige T. would like to see maps showing what is salvageable and what would be throw away perhaps simply by coloring the areas different on the two options. Bike/ped alternate routes on existing facilities and improvements that might need to be made would be helpful. She noted that there was a Medford Bike/ped Committee meeting next week and she would like to review this with them.

Vicki G. said she would like better information of what the throwaway aspects are in terms of the features, location, and cost.

Richard M. needed to look at the south terminus some more.

Bill B. needs more time to make a decision.

John Archer commented that something needed to be put together that does not conflict with three years of the other meetings, something matches up with the two options.

Art A. summed up member's requests: access issues, bike/ped issue, throw away issue, questions about jurisdictional exchange. He explained that the corridor solution is still being done but staff has been told that the project needed to be under construction by 2013 with a functional phase one somewhere between the North Medford interchange and somewhere near Vilas Road. He noted that it was the state legislature telling them to build Phase I. He said it seemed rapid because it was rapid, 2013 is not that far off and staff should be in early design right now. He acknowledged that ODOT does not have all the answers and asked the committee for their help. He noted that it was more difficult to build a phase of a big project and said the committees raised a lot of good questions and there are issues that need more discussion.

Ron Bryant said he appreciated all the comments but he felt main thing was that the most expensive mistake you can make is the one you rush into when you don't have all the answers. He feels right now there are not nearly enough answers.

Terry K. said staff will come back in two weeks with the information requested.

7.0 Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 p.m.