

Minutes

Travel Lane Widths Work Group Session (SMPAC)

Meeting Date & Time: Monday, April 3, 2023
8:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.

Attendees:

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| <p>Stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Steve Bates ✓ Walt Gamble ✓ Mark Gibson ✓ Jana Jarvis ✓ Erik Zander | <p>ODOT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Rich Crossler-Laird ✓ Bill Gross ✓ Erik Havig | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Jessica Horning ✓ Christy Jordan ✓ Mike Kimlinger |
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Topic	Discussion Summary
<p>Related statutes; buffer definition</p>	<p>Mike Kimlinger opened the meeting and began by going over some of the statutes in Chapter 811 that touch on travel lanes. Mike had noted the following statutes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ORS 811.050: Failure to yield to rider on bicycle lane • ORS 811.440: When motor vehicles may operate on bicycle lane <p>Mark Gibson had noted the following statutes in the OTA Problem Statement document:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ORS 811.370: Failure to drive within lane; exception; penalty • ORS 811.430: Driving on highway divider; exceptions; penalty <p>Mike suggested that if the group identifies something specific for potential changes, he'll ask DOJ to weigh in.</p> <p>Walt Gamble referred to the last bullet in the OTA Problem Statement, and asked if it made sense to come up with a basic definition for the term "buffer." Mike said that is probably a good idea, and he wasn't sure if it's defined anywhere outside of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). Mark Gibson said he looked but couldn't find anything, but said that ODOT's Traffic Line Manual has a section on bicycle buffers.</p>

Topic	Discussion Summary
	<p>Using the bicycle buffer lane definition, Mike suggested the group come up with a more generic definition as a method of providing separation between different modes of travel. Mike pointed out that the line manual provides several different ways of doing buffers.</p> <p>Erik Zander suggested that once the group comes up with a suitable definition, they should also recommend public outreach to the general public.</p> <p>Walt Gamble suggested that in places where a 12-foot through lane cannot be accommodated, then perhaps a special marking (such as a cross-hatched design) could be used to designate a buffer space.</p> <p>The group discussed different potential buffer designs (including line shapes, solid versus dashed lines, and line colors), and potential pros and cons for each. Erik Zander suggested that Mike Kimlinger’s team is better suited for coming up with potential solutions offline. He suggested the group come up with some suggested outcomes that they could use in developing a solution. Some ideas suggested include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easily understood for drivers and the public • Consistent design • Simplicity • Ease of educating the general public <p>Mike Kimlinger said we probably need some input from law enforcement about what factors they would consider. He suggested we ask Captain Cord Wood with Oregon State Police to participate on the work group. The other work group members agreed.</p> <p>Jessica Horning cautioned the group about changes to ORS 811.440 (When motor vehicles may operate on bicycle lane). She said bicycle advocates are working to make that statute even more restrictive due to issues with bike lanes being used for parking, loading zones and Uber pickups.</p> <p>Mike Kimlinger said he will ask some of his staff to see what might be options for buffer markings that wouldn’t conflict with other uses.</p>
<p>Suggestions to forward to transportation planning efforts</p>	<p>Mike Kimlinger opened the discussion, asking the group to consider recommendations for the Oregon Highway Plan and Oregon Transportation Plan; which in turn influences how ODOT implements its design guidance. Regarding ODOT’s Highway Design Manual, Mike said ODOT is working to ensure it does a better job of ensuring that all factors are considered ahead of time, before reaching a conclusion on a design.</p>

Topic	Discussion Summary
	<p>Mike asked Erik Havig if he had any suggestions as to the best way of bringing recommendations forward into the planning efforts taking place. Erik said the Oregon Highway Plan is probably the best place for those conversations, as the plan is intended to define the purpose and functions of different routes in the state; what the state is trying to achieve with them; and how ODOT will use its policies to inform design and operational decisions. He said a particular challenge will be in urban areas that have trucks, autos, bikes, pedestrians and transit vehicles – and deciding how to balance tradeoffs and choices to make the system work for all those users. Erik said a steering committee made up of different stakeholder groups will help guide the efforts to update Oregon Highway Plan. He said he also expects some focus groups will get involved in some of the more difficult issues, to try and get consensus on policy outcomes and decisions.</p> <p>Erik Zander said the guidance in the Highway Design Manual (which now incorporates the Blueprint for Urban Design guidance) should emphasize to first consider 12-foot lanes versus 11-foot lanes, instead of the other way around. He said the guidance should include some of the example cross-sections provided in the OTA Problem Statement as standard to aim for. He said the main purpose for the travel lane work group is to improve safety in these urban areas and to speed up the discussions in the monthly Mobility Advisory Committee meetings.</p> <p>Mike Kimlinger mentioned the Research Summary document that was shared with the work group members. He said it is a compilation of travel lane widths research over the last forty years. He said nationally, there appears to be very little difference, safety-wise, between 11-foot and 12-foot travel lanes. He said there is a lot of discussion in terms of national standards in urbanized areas; “creating caution” for drivers by reducing lane width to 11 feet.</p> <p>Walt Gamble asked how we can pivot to the AASHTO provision that when there is more than 10% truck traffic in certain areas that we can avoid using 11-foot travel lanes. He also asked what could be done through the ODOT Chief Engineer’s office that would make an immediate difference in terms of training and guidance to reflect that 10% threshold. Jana Jarvis added that it is industry’s contention that trucks are almost 11 feet wide and that it is difficult to drive one on an 11-foot travel lane. She suggested that the guidance start with 12 feet; and where there’s a need for an 11-foot lane, then ODOT and stakeholders should have a discussion.</p> <p>Mike Kimlinger said what we’re seeing in the evolution of urban design is the need to slow people down and to create a different environment. He said that’s the need from the perspective of designers who are looking at how to rebalance the urban cross-section to create a safer place for bikes and peds. Mike said he also understands the needs of large trucks to be able to safely operate in those spaces as well. Mike said the outcome they’re looking for in those urban environments is consistent slower traffic; and that speed limits don’t always slow vehicles down.</p>

Topic	Discussion Summary
	<p>Jana commented that the trucking industry is a big customer of ODOT and a major user of the system. She said we need roads that are functioning for the needs of freight and that you cannot thread a 10 ½-foot vehicle through an 11-foot lane.</p> <p>Regarding the Oregon Highway Plan and Transportation Plan, Mike Kimlinger said that there are discussions around having the right set of designations for all of our routes. Jana added that there needs to be some recognition of freight routes, and that you can't just change where the port is located and how freight gets product in and out of a city. She said everyone wants their freight but doesn't want any freight routes.</p> <p>Mike Kimlinger asked if a buffer that's usable for freight is paired with a narrower lane to slow vehicles down, does that provide the accommodation needed to get all vehicles through. Jana said that may be a good alternative, but not the best alternative in all circumstances due to the potential confusion to drivers. She said it goes back to their original contention that the design should start with 12-foot lanes, and only go to 11-foot lanes in cases where it is a necessity.</p> <p>Mark Gibson commented that on designated freight routes that have 10% or more truck traffic, the conversations should start with 12-foot lanes. Jessica Horning said she believes ODOT designers really do want 12-foot lanes in places with high freight volumes, but in some locations it can be challenging to balance the needs of all users. She pointed out that AASHTO also has guidelines for bicycle facilities and places like Lincoln City have a nationally designated bike route. She suggested that the Design Concurrence Narrative that is used on projects may be useful to the Mobility Advisory Committee members to see the context behind design decisions. Mark said he appreciates that suggestion, but he said sometimes it seems like not much consideration or justification for one decision over another.</p>
Next steps	<p>Mike Kimlinger said he will have his staff look into what a safety buffer description should look like, while cross-referencing AASHTO and other design guidance documents. Mike then asked the group if there were any suggestions about statutory changes to allow trucks to use a safety buffer. The group decided a buffer description should be developed first, and then law enforcement should have the opportunity to comment on potential statutory changes (Walt suggested adding some language to ORS 811.370).</p> <p>Mike suggested having the work group meet again near the end of the month. The group also decided to report out to the full SMPAC, scheduled to meet on April 26th. The group also agreed that Jessica Horning should be invited to the next SMPAC meeting as well (Bill Gross will forward her the meeting invitation).</p>