Frequently Asked Questions

U.S. 30: (10th St) / Hughes-Cedar St upgrades (Baker City)

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Why are we constructing this project?

Over the years, we've received requests from residents to improve this intersection. Based on traffic investigations, we determined that the frequency and severity of crashes were within safety thresholds and did not meet guidelines warranting a traffic signal. However, we ran several scenarios to identify ways to increase the intersection safety. Results showed that safety improvements could not be made without large modifications to the intersection.

We considered several options, including a roundabout. While it would address the safety concerns, it would create a large impact to the adjacent landowners. We determined a roundabout was not feasible.

We've decided that aligning the cross streets of Hughes & Pocahontas, along with improving turning angles, is the most economic and equitable solution.

Why are we not installing a traffic signal at the intersection?

ODOT must follow state (Oregon Revised Statutes - ORS), (Oregon Administrative Rules - OARs) and federal transportation regulations. For traffic signals specifically, we follow the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). This defines the minimum conditions under which installing traffic control signals *might* by justified.

Traffic control signals are sometimes installed without following MUTCD guidance, and that can reduce the safety of an intersection for all modes of traffic. Using the MUTCD to review traffic studies and crash history at this intersection, we found it does not meet these minimum conditions. Installing a signal here may lead to:

- Significant increases in the frequency of collisions, especially rear-end collisions.
- Excessive delays.
- A higher number of motorists ignoring traffic signals.
- Increased use of side roads as drivers attempt to avoid the traffic control signals.

Based on this information, ODOT will not install a signal here. However, we determined that we could do a layout on the ground for a future signal if conditions change.

How many crashes have occurred within the last 10 years at the intersection of U.S. 30 (10th Street) and Hughes/Pocahontas?

In the past ten years, we have seen 19 reported crashes for this location, resulting in:

- Ten moderate injury crashes.
- Two minor injuries.
- Seven property damage crashes.
- One crash involving a bicyclist.

ODOT asked for an independent Safety Analytics Study, which was conducted in June 2022. The study identified 88 near-miss crashes in a 24-hour period. The study suggested solutions including a roundabout, traffic signals (when MUTCD signal warrants are met), a reconfigured intersection and/or improvements to sight distance. This project will reconfigure and improve sight distance for the intersection.

What is the history of this project?

Where did this project originate?

Several years prior to 2017, Baker City lobbied ODOT for improvements at Hughes/Pocahontas. The local community considered this intersection to be dangerous.

The project did not get funded at that time. However, there was a new opportunity when it was brought up for inclusion in House Bill 2017. Passed by the 2017 legislature, this transportation funding program created new revenue sources for transportation and identified a number of dedicated projects, including State Highway 30 and Hughes Lane intersection in Baker County.

Who requested this project for HB 2017?

Before HB 2017 was passed, various supporters of the bill, including the Joint Committee on Transportation, reached out to cities and counties to ask about transportation funding needs.
In 2016, when making the case for HB 2017, Representative Bentz reached out to Baker City, and the city again brought forth the intersection project. Representative Bentz worked with the city to provide funding that was named in HB 2017. The project received $5.8 million.

After HB 2017 was passed and ODOT knew how much money was allocated for this intersection, we ran estimates based on construction costs at that time and determined we could flatten the northwest and southeast corners of the intersection, construct sidewalks on both sides of U.S. 30/10th Street and pave U.S. 30/10th Street. However, we've had to reduce the project scope based on current inflation rates.

What were the requirements of HB 2017 for this project?

The bill allocated $5.8 million for transportation improvements in Baker City and the project was required to meet trust fund eligibility. That means the funds could be used for a traffic signing project, sidewalks, paving, durable striping, or whatever the city wanted. ODOT added $1.7 million for active transportation, which is for bicycle and pedestrian improvements. ODOT and Baker City agreed on a target of starting the project by 2024.

How did we involve the community in project planning?

Project Team and Partner Meetings

The Northern Baker Transportation Plan (NBTIP) team worked with the project management team and partners to regularly review progress and discuss the outcomes of team and public meetings. The NBTIP is a planning effort that looks ahead 20-40 years. It includes street design standards and enables coordinated design and planning in support of the improvements funded by HB 2017.

Community Events and Outreach

We offered several opportunities to learn about and comment on the project. These events included a virtual public meeting in winter 2022; two virtual community workshops in spring and fall of 2021; an online open house on the city's website in winter 2021; a youth workshop held fall 2021; and an outreach event along Leo Adler Memorial Parkway in summer 2021.

In February 2023, we held an in-person open house in Baker City to share information on project design.

These events were advertised via print and radio, the city's project webpage, fliers posted in prominent locations in the city, mailers to residents in the vicinity of the project area and social media posts.

In addition, city and ODOT staff conducted targeted outreach with businesses and residents on 10th Street. ODOT staff held a work session in 2021 with City Council.

What is happening on Cedar Street?

Baker City will be leading the Cedar Street and Hughes Lane enhancements in Baker County and will begin construction in 2024. They will use project funds to boost other improvements along Cedar Street. Work includes widening the street and shoulder and creating a multi-use path on the west side. Specific locations are to be determined.

Will ODOT reduce lanes on 10th Street as part of this project?

No, we will not be reducing the number of lanes on 10th St.

What will happen to the tree on the southeast corner of U.S. 30 (10th Street) and Hughes Lane that obstructs view?

We will work with the landowner to decide what to do about the tree.

Will ODOT construct sidewalks on the east side of 10th Street?

No. We do not have the funds in this project to construct sidewalks on the east side of 10th Street. We will have to consider constructing sidewalks during future projects when funding is available.

Why are we placing the bicycle lanes on Hughes and Pocahontas in between vehicle lanes?

Placing the bicycle lane in between vehicle lanes is a standard configuration for these types of intersections. Adding the bike lanes through the intersection is considered a safer option as it provides a designated space for bicyclists to stop and/or negotiate through the intersection. Without this bike lane, the bicyclist would be required to share the lane with the motorist. The dedicated bike lane also removes the bicyclist from the right turn lane and creates a safer situation for both users.

Are there plans to place a barrier in between vehicle and bike lanes?

There are no plans to place a barrier in between the vehicle and bicycle lanes. Installing barriers would create obstructions to large farm equipment and maintenance issues during winter plowing operations; it would also affect drainage by obstructing water flow.

Why are we constructing pedestrian islands in the U.S. 30 (10th Street) Hughes/Pocahontas intersection?

We are designing the intersection for the potential to install a traffic signal in the future. As mentioned above, the intersection does not meet criteria that would require the signal right now. If this changes, then the intersection will have the necessary foundations in place. One of these foundations is the addition of pedestrian islands.

What benefits do these islands provide?

U.S. 30/10th Street and Hughes/Pocahontas do not intersect at 90 degrees (see photo below). The northeast and southwest corners exceed 90 degrees, creating complications for motorists, pedestrians and bicyclists.

For pedestrians, the islands provide these benefits:

- Reduces the total crossing distance.
- Allows pedestrians to cross fewer lanes at a time.
- Provides a clear separation of highway users (motorists vs. pedestrians).

For motorists, adding the pedestrian islands will create right-turn channelization pockets that will allow larger vehicles to negotiate right turns while staying between curbs.

Frequently Asked Questions for ADA Curb Ramp Upgrades and Sidewalk Treatments

When ODOT upgrades an intersection on the state highway system, we also upgrade ADA curb ramps around the intersection. ODOT is actively improving access for all users of the transportation system and have numerous ADA specific projects going on or planned for all around the state. As part of these upgrades, we design them in a way to ensure the pedestrian way is useable by people with various abilities. In some cases, features on the sidewalks are included to help people with low vision or mobility issues. Some of these features may be new to your community and you may have questions as to why we included them as part of the curb ramp upgrades.

What purpose do the ADA features such as raised, stamped concrete serve?

The stamped concrete is a landscape feature used in buffer zones between the street and the sidewalk to alert people with mobility or vision impairments where the intended path of travel is to access a crosswalk. The stamped concrete area is not intended to be part of the pedestrian route, just as other landscape features like grass are not intended to be used as part of the pedestrian route.

Some landscape designs are not able to meet the ADA requirements for curb ramps without this technique. For example, many public agencies do not have the staff or resources to maintain landscaped areas, and this is a maintenance free option. These areas are buffer zones that separate pedestrian pathways from roads and driveways, and often include other things like utility poles and street signs.

Why not use plain concrete?

Plain concrete can be used under certain conditions, but not in buffer zones or planter strips. Walkways should not direct pedestrians over an unexpected vertical drop as a result of a curb along the walkway. Low vision users need contrasting and tactile elements to inform them about the walkway environment. It can be confusing if a person with low vision cannot distinguish between the pathway underfoot and the buffer zone that separates the path from the street.

Has ODOT tried using other types of treatments such as loose rock and stamped concrete in buffer zones?

Yes. We have used loose rock, but this treatment led to concerns about rock displacement in the roadway or the walkway. We revised designs to use more durable, longer-lasting products like stamped and colorized concrete. The tradeoff is that the stamped concrete is required to be detectable underfoot for the desired outcome. Detection might occur with a white cane, walking on the roughed surface, or with a service animal raising up a step

change. While no treatment is perfect for all users, we continue to work with each community to find an ADA compliant treatment that works for the broadest group of users.

Why not build or install planters in these areas?

While planters would be aesthetically pleasing buffers, they do require maintenance. More often than not, any treatment that requires continued maintenance is not an option. The ADA curb ramp projects are focused on the immediate need of upgrading the ramps and connecting them to existing sidewalks.

Why does ODOT put in curb ramp extensions at corners that bump out halfway out into the street?

Curb extensions, also known as "bulb-outs," are good tools to help reduce the pedestrian crossing distance and exposure in the street. They are often built in areas with on-street parking or wide shoulders. In cases like these, curb extensions increase pedestrian visibility, help control vehicular speeds, and give a "downtown look" to an urban area. They are designed to ensure vehicles can make the turning moves at intersections, see pedestrians, and allow bicycles to stay in the shoulder. In addition, they ensure parked cars don't block the curb ramp or obstruct the intersection as required by law. Curb extensions increase the area for pedestrian use and makes achieving the ADA slope requirements for curb ramps easier when the space is constrained by existing infrastructure.

Where can I find more information about ODOT's ADA program?

If you would like to learn more about accessibility efforts at ODOT, please visit https://www.oregon.gov/odot/ADA/Pages/Default.aspx.

For information regarding the AOCIL Settlement Agreement, visit https://www.oregon.gov/odot/About/Pages/ODOT-AOCIL-Settlement-Agreement.aspx.