

Meeting Minutes

Project: US 26: Outer Powell Transportation Safety Project (OPTSP)

Subject: Community Advisory Group Meeting #2

Date: Monday, January 26, 2015

Location: Human Solutions Community Room, 12350 SE Powell Blvd.

The meeting started at 6:00 p.m.

1. The meeting began with a warm welcome, and Community Advisory Group and Project Team introductions.

Community Advisory Group attendees:

Carol Fenstermacher
Cora Potter
Elizabeth Quiroz
Jean Ky
Joe Little
Kem Marks
Noel Mickelberry
Jennifer Beil
Paul Grosjean
Teresa Keishi Soto
Tom Barnes
Tom Lewis

Project Team attendees:

Mike Mason, ODOT
Susan Hanson, ODOT
Shelli Romero, ODOT
Alan Snook, ODOT
Andy Johnson, HDR
Alex Cousins, HDR
Cassie Davis, HDR
Joan Brown Kline, JBK & Co.

2. Andy reviewed an aerial video of the corridor and discussed some of the issues and existing conditions along Outer Powell.
 - Several clusters of large trees along the corridor make for illumination concerns.
 - A lot of residential areas in between business nodes reveal access needs throughout the corridor.
 - Design team will be trying to tie together a look and feel that accommodates both residential and business interests.
 - The intersection of SE 122nd has been identified as one of the biggest problem areas.
 - There are large patches of old trees in the 140's and 150's blocks.
 - SE 162nd is an important access point for north-south traffic to and from Powell Butte.
 - SE 174th and SE 176th are considered highly dangerous areas along the corridor.
 - **Action:** HDR to put the corridor video on the website.
 - Jean Ky and Teresa Keishi Soto noted that it was good to see the corridor from this perspective.
 - Paul Grosjean noted the potential challenges related to trees. He also noted the need for overlay around SE 140th to SE 150th.
 - Teresa noted how important the mature trees are to the aesthetic feel of the corridor.
 - Jean Ky noted that some trees should come out due to their age and the danger they pose.

- Andy Johnson noted the team will be looking into the tradeoffs amongst the conflicting factors.
- Portland's Urban Forestry department looks into the health and condition of the tree when they assess what trees could and/or should be removed.
- Cora Potter asked if team is looking at using long stretches of permeable asphalt rather than swales for the trees.
 - Andy Johnson stated this will be discussed later as part of the stormwater and stormwater treatment element of design.

3. Community Outreach Update.

- Joan Brown-Kline has conducted seven focus group meetings, including the following affiliations: Powell Plaza, St. Timothy Church, Africa House (2), Church of the Korean Martyrs, Church of God– Family Worship Center, and Holgate Baptist Church.
 - The focus group attendees were very interested in the project and provided a lot of comments and feedback. Some of the top concerns included lack of sidewalks, heavy traffic, poor lighting, crime activities, and not enough crosswalks. Prostitution and vandalism was also noted as a concern from some of the focus groups.
 - Tom Barnes noted that it would be good to have the police department and/or crime prevention program involved with the project.
 - April Bertelsen with PBOT stated she met with Sergeant Anderson to talk to him about the crime-related concerns involved with the Division project and the Powell project. April said he has been informed and that he and his fellow officers have expressed concern for the area.
 - Joan Brown-Kline was asked what types of corridor users were included in the focus groups. Joan stated that a wide range of users attended the focus groups including pedestrians, bus riders, crosswalk users and drivers.
- Alex Cousins talked about the Community Site Walks that have been conducted.
 - Chinese-speaking Community Site Walk held on November 8th, 2014 (21 attendees).
 - Russian-speaking Community Site Walk held on November 21st, 2014 (22 attendees). This site walk was held in the evening when it was dark outside and helped the team understand important elements of the corridor only seen at night.
 - Spanish-speaking Community Site Walk held on November 29th (21 attendees).
 - Vietnamese-speaking Community Site Walk held on December 13th (42 attendees).
 - Consistent and similar feedback from each group but heard in various different languages.
 - Some attendees spoke about how they avoid certain sections of Powell entirely because of the danger they feel.
 - It was often expressed that regardless of how people use the corridor they feel unsafe, i.e. pedestrians are wary of drivers and drivers wary of pedestrians – all modes of transportation voiced concerns about the others.
 - People noted how exposed they felt along the corridor and how trees have made them feel more unsafe due to added darkness and the potential for hidden dangers.
 - Lack of sidewalks seemed to be the number one concern.
 - People expressed a strong desire for turning lanes.

- Crosswalks were also an important consideration, and location of them with logical proximity to bus stops and destination areas.
- Some individuals complained that bus drivers are not pulling over to get out of the flow of traffic when they stop, causing safety concerns for both pedestrians getting on and off bus, and added traffic delay to vehicles stalled behind the bus.
 - Tom Barnes agreed, and said the bus pull-outs do not provide enough space for the buses to pull off and out of traffic to pick up and drop off passengers.
 - Alex Cousins stated that TriMet has active members on the Agency Working Group and Decision Committee and will be consulted on the matter.
 - Teresa Keishi Soto said she would like to see TriMet at these Community Advisory Group meetings because they need to hear the concerns of the community.
 - Mike Mason said they are working with TriMet and will encourage them to come to this meeting and speak to the group.
- Attendees expressed desire for better illumination.
- Potholes, puddles, and uneven surfaces were a concern.
- SE 122nd to 148th was frequently mentioned as an area of high concern.
- People noted that drivers tend to go either really slow or really fast and use shoulders to go around slow or turning vehicles, posing danger to pedestrians, bikers and other drivers.
- Tom Barnes asked whether people complaining about trees were asked if it was related to poor lighting or otherwise.
 - Alex Cousins responded that people offered concerns with the trees both related to lighting and a feeling that people could be hiding behind the trees.
- Paul Grosjean said he understands Safety is the focus for this project but not to forget transportation flow is important. Also, buses and bus driver behavior affect the traffic flow.
- An Open House was held on December 9th at Centennial High School in the cafeteria. There were 31 attendees. The open house consisted of a continuous rolling loop of the corridor video, interactive area maps where attendees were encouraged to write comments directly on the maps, an interactive online comment map accessible via on iPad, and a videographer on site where attendees could voice their concerns on camera.
 - Andy Johnson noted that cyclists made a point to indicate turn lanes as being a priority in order to reduce the number of drivers that use the shoulder to go around left turning vehicles.
 - Tom Barnes said he thought the Open House was very good despite the relatively low turnout.
 - Cora Potter noted that even in large intersections there can be an inclination for vehicles to veer into bike lanes, it might be good to put a raised rumble strip along the shoulders to deter cars from veering into bike lanes.
 - Alan Snook and Alex Cousins encouraged the Community Advisory Group to use the online comment map to submit additional comments.
- Upcoming Community Site Walk

- There will be another Community Site Walk on Saturday, February 7th from 10:00 a.m. to noon. Community Advisory Group members are strongly encouraged to attend and invite friends, family and fellow community members.
- Elizabeth Quiroz suggested doing a bike ride tour in addition to the walking tours. Tom Barnes encouraged teaming up with the EPAP bike group for such an occasion.

4. Draft Project Purpose and Need.

- The Purpose and Need statement is essential in establishing a basis for evaluating the design. All design alternatives will be evaluated with respect to the Purpose and Need. This document is required by the Federal Highway Administration and will be used in their evaluation of the project design during the Environmental Assessment process. FHWA will approve or not approve a document according to whether they think the design meets the Project Purpose and Need statement.
- Andy Johnson read the Draft Purpose Statement to the Community Advisory Group and opened the room for further discussion. He encouraged them to read the full document, with the Needs as well.
 - “Reduce severity of collisions” translates to improved safety. This includes eliminating conflicts, and reducing the frequency and severity of collisions for all modes of transportation.
 - It is important to the project to eliminate conflicts for *all* modes of transportation.
 - **Action:** Project Team to send the Draft Project Purpose and Need document to the Community Advisory Group for their review and input before the next meeting.
 - The *Need* section of this document is focused on bike safety, pedestrian safety, and driver safety.
- Andy asked if the group agreed with the draft Project Purpose or had any further questions.
 - Noel Mickelberry noted that the term “Safety” was not stated in the Purpose other than in the title. She emphasized that a general feeling of safety should be accomplished with this project and not just safety in terms of eliminating vehicle and pedestrian collisions, but also bringing a feeling of overall safety.
 - Tom Lewis stated that a few years ago his neighborhood visioning group found that the US26/Powell corridor should be viewed as a Coast-to-eastern Oregon highway route, and understand how it is in direct conflict with the fact that Powell is still a business and residentially heavy area. He also noted that Powell Blvd. serves not just one but many purposes.
 - Teresa would like to make sure when the Purpose and Need states *collisions*, that pedestrians are also accounted for.
 - Andy Johnson clarified that collisions do in fact include pedestrians but welcomed the potential need for clarification.
 - Cora Potter noted potholes and additional conflicts with the space not just things that directly conflict with the modes of transportation.
 - Tom Barnes pointed out how residents along Powell Blvd. view Powell as a neighborhood road, although it is clearly a highway and transit heavy corridor. It will be important to address the traffic and safety concerns for the neighborhood.

- Jennifer Beil pointed out the significant number of near-miss accidents that occur along the corridor and those should be accounted for as well.
 - Kem Marks stated his concern with posted speed limits rising.
 - Andy Johnson asked the Community Advisory Group members if they would be willing to share their anecdotes and concerns in written form with the Project Team.
 - Tom Barnes asked how soon the Project Purpose and Need will need to be finalized.
 - Andy Johnson said the Project Team will be reviewing and refining the Draft Project Purpose and Need until the next Decision Committee meeting (approximately 6-weeks from now), where it will then need to be approved by the Decision Committee. Community Advisory Group members and Agency Working Group members will be able to provide comments before the document is presented to the Decision Committee.
 - **Action:** Project Team to forward Draft Purpose and Need statement to Community Advisory Group members. Community Advisory Group is encouraged to provide any additional comments to the project team for consideration.
5. Voting for the Community Advisory Group representative that will serve as Chair and be represented on the Decision Committee.
- Paul Grosjean and Jennifer Beil have both volunteered to serve as the Community Advisory Group Chair. They were both asked to stand up and state why they think they would be good candidates for the position.
 - Jennifer Beil – Pastor at St. Timothy Church at 145th and Powell. She speaks on behalf of her congregation, a multi-language faith-based community. She has been working with and leading community groups since she was a teenager. Has been at St. Timothy Church for three years. Very concerned with the livelihood of the Powell community. Has not worked with government groups in the past.
 - Tom Barnes asked Jennifer whether she thought her relative inexperience working with formal committees on a government project would be a handicap.
 - Jennifer responded that she provides a fresh perspective and is ready to learn.
 - Paul Grosjean – Has spent 15 years in leadership positions and steering committees including the Pleasant Valley Neighborhood Association. Was part of a project that did a complete rebuild of 162nd and Foster, and similar rebuilds at various other intersections in the area. He has worked with many local and state agencies and on various multijurisdictional issues. He also stated that his kids and grandkids have given him a multigenerational awareness.
 - Kem Marks asked Paul if increased capacity for vehicles on Outer Powell was still something he felt was a priority since he has mentioned this issue.
 - Paul responded that he understands that this is a safety project and that he accepts the current 3-lane concept design.
 - Tom Barnes addressed the entire group and suggested that instead of having one single person represent the Community Advisory Group as their Chair and representative on the Decision Committee, another option would be to have co-chairs since they have two very viable candidates.

- Joan asked both Paul and Jennifer whether they thought being co-chairs of the committee was workable for them. Both agreed.
 - The group voted by a raise of hands and by a consensus vote everyone decided there would be two co-chairs – Jennifer Beil and Paul Grosjean. Both will represent the views of the Community Advisory Group and collaborate to provide a single vote on the Decision Committee.
6. Transportation Safety Concerns – Andy Johnson discussed some of the known safety issues along the corridor.
- Over 1,000 collisions between 2009 and 2013.
 - 26 pedestrian-involved collisions between 113th and 136th.
 - The Safety Priority Index System (SPIS) used by ODOT to identify locations that have high and severe crash levels, found that the project corridor had eight sites within the top 10% SPIS ranking in 2012.
 - Intersection at SE 122nd and Powell had the highest number and severity of crashes on a state highway in 2012.
 - Project Team will be updating a full report that includes the safety elements as well as correlating the collisions to specific design features such as signaled intersections, crosswalks, street lights, etc., (for example, if a collision occurred at or near a specific feature). This report will help identify specific components to help drive the design.
 - Project Team has met with Portland Parks and Recreation and Urban Forestry to discuss streetscape treatments and trees along the corridor. They have been very helpful and may be willing to provide funding for certain aspects of the Project.
 - ODOT has been working with Portland Bureau of Environmental Services (BES) about what to do about stormwater treatment and green streets.
 - Andy Johnson talked about the potential use of Underground Injection Control (UIC) tanks for stormwater treatment. They are underground tanks used to take in water runoff. They also treat the water before it goes into the ground. However, due to size and location of the tanks, use of UICs would also determine the type of tree that could be installed near or around it.
 - There are a lot of instances of ponding water during rainy conditions that can cause safety issues for people along the corridor. Project Team is working with BES to address these concerns in the design.
 - The current project concept plan shows buffers for bike lanes, raised bike lanes, or larger separations between vehicle lanes and bike lanes. At this point the Project Team is reviewing the different options.
 - Kem Marks wants to make sure light poles and other utilities do not conflict with the mobility of bikes and wheelchairs.
 - Elizabeth Quiroz asked about the length of the bike modifications.
 - Andy Johnson stated there would be bike lanes for the entire length of the corridor but that the design treatment may vary depending on location.
 - A workshop with TriMet was held to coordinate project objectives. Some of the discussion included options that would consolidate bus stops and provide pedestrian improvements near



the stop locations. Team is working to align goals and encourage flexibility in order to arrive at modifications that are conducive for everyone.

- The Team is still working to hone in on a cost estimate. By the next meeting Project Team anticipates having a fairly comprehensive cost estimate for the project. As of now the preliminary cost is approximately \$90 million (this figure will be refined).
- Kem Marks pointed out the importance of ADA compliance with the design.
- Cora Potter mentioned a light colored, permeable asphalt that was used to repave the frontage at SE 84th and Holgate; this has been good for bikers and walkers for visibility. It also has good permeability for water treatment.

7. Schedule – Mike

- Next open house will be sometime in March.
- Next Community Advisory Group meeting and Agency Working Group meeting will be sometime in March. The next Decision Committee meeting will be in early April.
- At this time the goal is to have the draft design options pulled together and to begin assessing the environmental elements by the next meeting.
- There will be a design workshop coming up sometime in March. The public will be engaged to discuss the feel of the corridor and provide feedback to the team about aspects of the design.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.