

Meeting Minutes

Project: Outer Powell Transportation Safety Project (OPTSP)

Subject: Decision Committee Meeting #2

Date: Tuesday, March 31, 2015

Location: David Douglas School District Office - Board Room (1500 SE 130th Ave., Portland, OR, 97233)

Food was served at 5:00 p.m.; meeting started at 5:30 p.m.

1. Group Introduction and Welcome Back – Joan welcomed the group and led a round of introductions.

- Decision Committee Members:
 - Commissioner Steve Novick, City of Portland
 - Councilor Shirley Craddick, Metro Council
 - Rian Windsheimer, ODOT Region 1 Manager
 - Phil Ditzler, FHWA Division Administrator
 - Neil McFarlane, TriMet General Manager
 - Jennifer Beil, Pastor, St. Timothy Church and Community Advisory Group Co-Chair
 - Paul Grosjean, Pleasant Valley Neighborhood Association Vice-Chair and Community Advisory Group Co-Chair
- Project Team Members:
 - Mike Mason, ODOT Project Manager
 - Alan Snook, ODOT Major Projects Unit Manager
 - Andy Johnson, HDR Project Manager
 - Alex Cousins, HDR Public Involvement Manager
 - Cassie Davis, HDR Public Involvement Coordinator
 - Joan Brown-Kline, Committee Facilitator
- Public/Other:
 - April Bertelsen, PBOT and Agency Working Group member
 - Jeff Owen, TriMet and Agency Working Group member
 - Cammy Pierson, owner of Curtis Trailers and Community Advisory Group member
 - Andrea Valderrama, Office of Steve Novick, Outreach and Policy Advisor
 - Ana Valderrama, Oregon Legislative Aide for Representative Jessica Vega Pederson

2. Public Outreach – Alex walked through the recent public involvement activities.

- Seven corridor focus group meetings led by Joan Brown-Kline were held last fall. A total 218 participants from diverse faith communities, senior living community and social service organizations including: St. Timothy Church, Africa House (senior group and English as a second language group), Church of the Korean Martyrs, Powell Plaza, Assembly of God Worship Center, and Holgate Baptist Church.
- Two Open Houses drew a total of 58 attendees; held on December 9th, 2014 and March 9th, 2015.
- Project website has received 1000 visits to date, and 60 comments.



- Five Community Site Walks have been held with over 130 attendees. Four of the five walks were conducted in a foreign language to engage people that might not otherwise get involved (Chinese, Russian, Spanish and Vietnamese).
 - Members of the Decision Committee, ODOT Region 1 Manager Rian Windsheimer and City Commissioner Steve Novick, attended the February 7th, 2015 community walk where they were able to discuss project concerns with Community Advisory Group members, Kem Marks, Paul Grosjean, Cammy Pierson, Teresa Keishi Soto, Dan McCue and Joe Little along with members of the public at large.
- Business canvassing has begun. 15 businesses near and around SE 122nd Avenue have been informed of the project and encouraged to provide feedback. The rest of the corridor businesses will be canvassed soon. To date, businesses have been included on all mailings to advertise public events and meetings.
 - Most people were in support of the project as a whole and were happy to hear about sidewalks and increased safety. Top concerns were related to how their businesses may be affected in terms of access and parking.
 - Neil McFarlane expressed appreciation for the public outreach efforts and wanted to know if there seemed to be any built in conflicts among constituents.
 - Alex and Cassie responded that some business owners have expressed concern about customers accessing their business due to median barriers that were installed as part of the 2013 safety improvements. However, many people surveyed are equally concerned about public safety. People seemed just as concerned with getting the roadway improvements completed as they were about potential impacts.
- Two newsletter mailings have gone out to more than 15,500 homes along the study area.
- Project outreach has included 11 different languages to date including: Chinese, Russian, Romanian, Spanish, Vietnamese, Korean, Oromo, Amharic, Swahili, Somali, and English.
- Despite the spoken language, the feedback received has been consistent. Top concerns are related to sidewalks, crosswalks (with rapid flashing beacons), better lighting, turning lanes, bike lanes, trees (pro and con), and better transit stops with placement near crosswalks.
- April asked that the team to be more clear about the parking concerns – whether it is parking in the ROW or actually taking away from their parking area.
- Phil Ditzler asked to what extent people have been notified of project details included potential impacts.
 - Alex said the mailings that went out to all citizens along the corridor have provided background and safety information related to the project, priorities the community has shared and information about the Purpose and Need.
 - Rian Windsheimer noted that at the March 9th Open House people interacted first hand with the proposed project footprint.
- Rian asked the Community Advisory Group Co-Chairs what they have been hearing from fellow CAG and community members.
 - Jennifer said safety is a big concern, sidewalks and crosswalks are a top priority. Also, trees have more often been a concern for safety than preservation, a place for potential predators to hide and be unseen.

- Paul said the CAG is a diverse group and many live along Powell Blvd. and have not crossed the street due to expressed safety concerns. The lack of sidewalks has been a consistent issue. A CAG member and business owner across the street from Ed Benedict Park has expressed grave concern with losing her property. This project is going to benefit so many people and at the same time it is going to hurt some people; project needs to continue to move forward with this understanding.
 - Jennifer suggested that while it might be nice to have a five lane roadway as a driver, there are inherent issues with this as well. She wouldn't want to lose her property along with the many other people that live and work along the corridor.
 - Rian commended the CAG on having the open conversation about the needs of the corridor.
 - Councilor Craddick asked if the mailer distribution goes to multi-unit housing and if so whether all individual units receive the mailer or one to each complex?
 - Project Team responded that each individual unit receives the mailer.
 - Upcoming Outreach
 - Team is planning to host a biking tour as the weather gets better. More business canvassing is being planned between now and June. Bus canvassing is also being discussed.
3. Project Purpose and Need – Andy walked through the draft Purpose and Need statement.
- The Project Team has been working with FHWA for the last several months to draft a Project Purpose and Need that is in alignment with project objectives. This document will be the guiding principal for how this project will move forward.
 - This document is owned by FHWA with ODOT's support.
 - Phil clarified that although this document may technically be owned by FHWA, the way that ODOT manages their projects welcomes outside input to the Purpose and Need and is truly owned by its many contributors (agency, community and public).
 - The Team did not receive a lot of feedback from the Open House on the Draft Purpose and Need. However the AWG and CAG have both made good contributions.
 - Andy read the Purpose statement to the group and the committee reviewed and discussed.
 - The focus of the statement is on safety. General highlights of the Purpose are to reduce collisions, provide a through facility, safe travel, and for all modes of transportation. The Need elaborates on *increasing corridor safety, reducing modal conflicts, reducing turning movement crashes, increasing pedestrian safety, and increasing bike safety.*
 - The use of the term "comfort" as in making the corridor experience "comfortable" has been noted in previous conversations. The way the team chose to address use of this term was to add the term "potential" before "conflicts" in the Purpose statement.
 - CAG member Cora Potter had previously suggested at a CAG meeting to add the term "through" to help communicate the intent to maintain safety efforts for the entirety of a travelers experience through the corridor.
 - CAG members have requested clarity on where project limits lie. Since the city limits are relatively vague, the team expanded verbiage of the Purpose to say, "between approximately SE 99th Avenue to Portland City Limits at SE 176th Avenue".

- Paul stated that the CAG feels comfortable with the Purpose and Need.
- Commissioner Novick stated that the City of Portland would like to see verbiage added to the Purpose that supports the Portland Plan for healthy and complete neighborhoods. He suggested adding after “bicycle modes”, “...and supporting the creation of healthy and connected complete neighborhoods...” He said it is important to not only refer to Outer Powell as a place for people “not to die,” but also be a place that offers complete neighborhoods and a good quality of life.
- Phil stated that the intent with the Purpose was to avoid being vague, but is certainly open to suggestions.
- Andy said some content may better be addressed in the Need than the Purpose.
- Councilor Craddick asked if there has been any discussion about jurisdictional transfer from ODOT to the City after construction is complete.
 - Commissioner Novick said he was not aware of taking over the project after completion.
 - Rian stated the intent of this project is not to transfer something after it is complete, but to accomplish something that needs to get done.
- Rian said the approach to the Purpose and Need is to focus on what the project is trying to achieve (i.e. Safety) in order to be clear about the objectives. If we try to fix everything it becomes unmanageable.
- Andy asked the group if there are any comments about modifying the Purpose to include Commissioner Novick’s statement or other suggestions.
- Neil said the Need does not really address how the project is going to make things better for transit riders. He likes that the focus is on safety; however with the idea of comfort being discussed transit riders may need more shelter or comfort when it comes to things like stepping out of the rain. In general the Need is light on the specifics related to transit. He suggested possibly adding to the section “Reducing Modal Conflicts” something related to comfort and/or safety for transit riders.
 - Councilor Craddick agreed with Neil, and said there should be special attention given to transit and make sure it is a focus moving forward.
 - **Action:** Mike Mason noted that the team will add a bullet to the Need addressing transit concerns.
- Andy asked the group how they would like to proceed with the given comments and suggestions.
 - Neil suggested conditional approval of the suggestions received and to leave it to project staff to further integrate the Decision Committee comments into the Purpose and Need. Action to conditionally move ahead with this motion.
 - Phil agreed with the notion to conceptually approve suggestions received.
 - **Action/Decision** to conceptually move ahead in support of the Project Purpose and Need with Commissioner Novick’s suggested modification to the Purpose and further addressing transit concerns in the Need.
 - a. **Motion:** Moved by Commissioner Novick, seconded by Councilor Craddick, and by a raise of hands the remainder of the committee carried the motion.

4. Project Footprint Review and Discussion – Andy and Alex scrolled through an aerial map of the project footprint for the entire corridor, including an overlay of the Area of Potential Impact (API).
 - The magenta line in the corridor maps is the edge of current project design and potential future right of way, and is what is being proposed today. The blue line depicts the outer line of the API, also called the project footprint, this line accounts for any potential impacts that may be incurred as a result of the project. The yellow line is the current right of way.
 - The intent is to capture a broad enough area that accounts for any resources that could potentially be impacted by the project within the API.
 - Councilor Craddick asked what kinds of resources this accounts for.
 - Andy said things such as parks, noise, land use, biology, historic or cultural resources, socioeconomic resources, and environmental are the kinds of things the team will be evaluating for potential impacts.
 - Area between Ed Benedict Park and Curtis Trailers:
 - The API has been bumped out on both sides of the road to account for potential impacts at either Ed Benedict Park and/or Curtis Trailers. It is not certain at this point where the impacts may occur but the API has been broadened to account for potential impacts to either side in the evaluation.
 - A crosswalk may be added at SE 102nd Avenue.
 - There is an 8-foot buffer on both sides of the corridor included in the API to account for potential construction staging areas and temporary impacts.
 - There is a grove of fir trees just east of SE 104th Avenue that are considered Park assets. The API has been bumped out along the north side of the road across from these trees to avoid potential impacts.
 - The API is extended down SE 108th Avenue to the south to account for potentially adding sidewalk down a portion of the street.
 - Between SE 108th Avenue and SE 111th Avenue there are a lot of open frontages that will need to be assessed moving forward with design. The API has been extended at these locations to account for potential impacts.
 - SE 112th Avenue is one of the major signalized intersections along the corridor. Safety data shows that approximately 80-85% of collisions occurred at a signalized intersection.
 - Team has extended left turn lanes at signalized intersections as much as possible.
 - Rian pointed out that while the bus stops shown on the maps reflect where bus stops exist today and/or may potentially be placed, the API has been expanded to include possible relocation or changes to existing stops.
 - Andy confirmed Rian's statement and said there are ongoing discussions about placement and design of future bus stops along the corridor.
 - Continuous left turns have been used in many locations to allow for turning movements in both directions.
 - Two different kinds of crosswalks are used along the corridor – standard crosswalks and crosswalks with rectangular rapid flashing beacons (RRFB).
 - April noted that in some areas the yellow line showing existing ROW is right along the magenta line showing potential future right of way.

- Rian pointed out that the existing ROW has been used illegally for parking and garden boxes for many years and those individuals using the space illegally will be affected.
- SE 122nd Avenue intersection has had the highest number of collisions along the corridor. Two pedestrians were killed at this location, and it has high bus transit use. This area is going to be an important section for safety improvements due to the severity of safety concerns.
- Section between SE 122nd Avenue and SE 126th Avenue will have zoning and parking issues to be further addressed in design; the API has been bumped out to account for these impacts. Andy referred to this area as “ground zero” for potential impacts along the entire corridor.
 - April stated from a zoning perspective it would be good to look at separated sidewalks in this area to be conservative about impacts.
 - April stated that an AWG member pointed out possible parking lot treatment requirements that may need to be considered if any parking lots are proposed.
- Section from SE 129th Avenue to SE 134th Avenue is consistent with the standard 76-foot cross section.
 - Rian noted that the API takes into account a number of driveways in close proximity in several places, which makes for an oddly configured API delineation. He suggested making the API a straight line across at the outside boundaries, rather than notching it in and out around the driveways.
 - **Action:** Team to consolidate these kinds of areas to account for one bumped out section in the API as opposed to multiple small notches.
- A property owner who attended the last Open House expressed concern for potential impacts to his property in the southwest corner of 136th Avenue and Powell Blvd. The team extended the API to account for potential property impacts at this location.
- Intersection at SE 136th Avenue is one of the largest intersections along the entire study area.
- Segment two of the study area stretches from SE 119th Avenue to SE 136th and is considered the section with the highest number of collisions and severity of crashes, which makes it a high priority area for safety improvements.
- Traffic data from 2009-2013 revealed several collisions between SE 143rd Avenue and 144th Avenue because of a blind curve in the road. As a result, the team has modified the alignment to smooth out the curve in this area.
 - Jennifer noted that St. Timothy Church is located near this section and she has witnessed several near-miss collisions.
 - Jennifer also noted the bus stops and proposed cross walk east of SE 145th and said people will most likely not walk down to use the crosswalk if it is not located close to the bus stop. She suggested making all crosswalk and bus stop locations more convenient by co-locating for transit riders traveling in both directions.
 - Andy reiterated that bus stop locations are still being assessed for modifications and possible relocation.
- SE 148th Avenue to SE 162nd Avenue holds a fairly consistent cross section.
- SE 160th Avenue is another example of where the crosswalk and/or bus stops may be modified or relocated.

- There is a fairly large skew on the west side of the SE 162nd Avenue intersection. The crossing may be shortened to avoid a historic building near this location.
- Cross section remains fairly consistent from SE 166th Avenue to SE 174th Avenue.
- Section from SE 170th Avenue to SE 174th Avenue has seen a spike in collisions.
- Team is working with City of Gresham to make sure the transition from the Portland City Limits to Gresham is smooth.
- Neil stated that there may be a potential need to shift the signalized intersection east of SE 99th Avenue to SE 99th Avenue in the future. He suggested expanding the API at SE 99th Avenue to account for this potential shift.
- Neil said he feels there may be a few too many bus stops throughout the corridor and thinks there is an opportunity to balance the number of stops and improve transit along the corridor.
- Neil mentioned considering a new bike lane configuration at some of the bus stop locations where bikes would be routed to the right around the bus stops to avoid potential bike-bus conflicts.
- Paul addressed the committee regarding some of his concerns with multi-modal conflicts with TriMet buses and bus stops along the corridor. He said he counted the number of stops and there are about 25 going each direction and that about 50% of them block the bike lane and about 20% block the auto lane, at least to the extent of vehicles having to go over a double yellow to go around the buses pulled over at bus stops. Paul noted that pedestrian conflicts will go away with the proposed improvements but the bike lanes will still have conflicts. He would like to see more attempts made to accommodate buses getting out of the bike lanes.
- Paul noted that east Portland and eastern Multnomah County are building extensively. Pleasant Valley alone is planning on building a significant number of homes in the next decade. One of the concerns of the Pleasant Valley Neighborhood Association is how all these people are going to be accommodated by transportation. He understands things are limited but wants to make the best use of the area.
- Councilor Craddick asked what the plans are for not only the trees that may come out as a result of the project but for trees that will need to be re-planted.
 - Andy said there is a tree ordinance with the City, and there would be required mitigation for the trees. There is potential for landscaped buffers but it still being assessed as part of the trade-offs.
- Councilor Craddick further asked about plans for green streets and stormwater.
 - Andy noted that Underground Injection Control (UIC) units are a likely option for stormwater. However, if UIC's are used they would be used in conjunction with a pre-treatment system. Other options are also being considered.
- Councilor Craddick pointed out increased traffic at SE 174th Avenue for drivers coming from the west going north onto SE 174th and traffic using SE 174th to transfer east onto Powell. She asked the team if it is possible to consider widening the section from SE 174th Avenue turning east onto Powell going to Gresham.
 - This would shift the API 12 feet to the south.
 - The committee was asked if everyone is on board with expanding the API to address this consideration.

- Mike pointed out that it may not fit in with the purpose when evaluating for design down the road.
 - **Action** to conceptually support the API with the following modifications:
 - Widen API at SE 99th Avenue for potentially moving signalized intersection.
 - Widen and consolidate driveway locations in close proximity.
 - Widen to account for potential expansion at SE 174th Avenue.
 - **Decision:** By a consensus agreement, the committee supported the API with the noted modifications.
5. Project Schedule – Andy reviewed and explained the Environmental Process Timeline.
- FHWA will begin the Environmental Class Confirmation process this summer (2015). This will determine whether an Environmental Assessment is necessary or whether a Categorical Exclusion (CatEx) will suffice. If it is identified after environmental reports are submitted and reviewed that no significant impacts exist, then the project would receive CatEx classification and could begin the design process once funding is secured. However if any potential significant impacts are identified then the project will advance into an Environmental Assessment prior to design; this process would continue through August 2016. The next time the committee meets the project will be close to this decision and will be able to determine how the schedule may change.
6. Public Comment
- Cammy Pierson, CAG member and owner of Curtis Trailers (between SE 99th Avenue and SE 104th Avenue) stated she has had this property in her family since 1948. Her comment is twofold: first she expressed concern for the safety of kids that use the skate park at Ed Benedict Park across the street from her business. She has witnessed many collisions and near-misses due to the visual distraction to drivers, kids and skateboards going into the street and the curve in the road. She feels the skate park is extremely unsafe for kids and something should be done to improve safety. She further stated she doesn't feel keeping the skate plaza in its current location is in alignment with the intent of this safety project. Cammy noted that she will take whatever means necessary including notifying the media to make her points clear. Secondly, she pointed out that she believes the skate park utilizes existing state-owned right of way and doesn't think it is fair that her property and business must be penalized for the City's use of the existing state right of way for the skate park. She further said she would look at legal recourse if ODOT right of way is not used for its intended purpose.
 - The Decision Committee members thanked Cammy for expressing her concerns and her participation on the CAG.

Meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.