



# OR 126: Veneta to Eugene NEPA Study

Open House #2 | April 26 – May 9, 2021

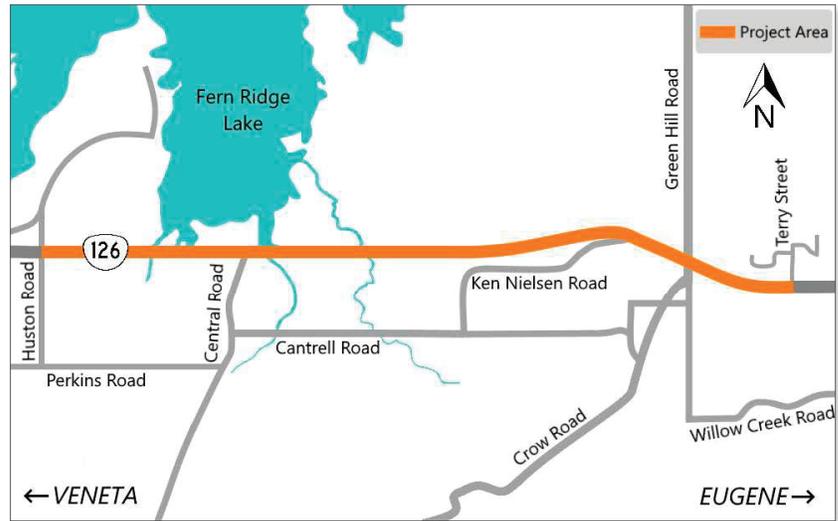
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# PROJECT STUDY AREA

OR 126 between Willamette Valley and the Oregon Coast is an important connector for daily commuters, emergency services and freight delivering goods and services. This area is also a local resource for outdoor recreation and environmental education.



The seven-mile section between Houston Road in Veneta and Terry Street in Eugene that we are studying is currently a two-lane road with narrow shoulders and no bicycle lanes or sidewalks for pedestrians. Some solutions have been recommended to improve the safety and mobility of the highway for everyone.

Several people suggested that the project limits should extend further west on OR 126 to Territorial Highway. We do not currently have funding to complete a study within the Veneta city limits, but this has been identified in the city's Transportation System Plan. When funding is available, we will ensure that all recommendations work together to develop a safer road.

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*"I'm really excited about this. I've traveled this road five days a week for the past 20 years because of my job. I've always been concerned about safety driving on it and I've also been disappointed that I haven't been able to bike or walk on it. This will solve at least the portion of the roadway between Eugene and Veneta."*

*- Cary, Eugene*

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# PROJECT BACKGROUND

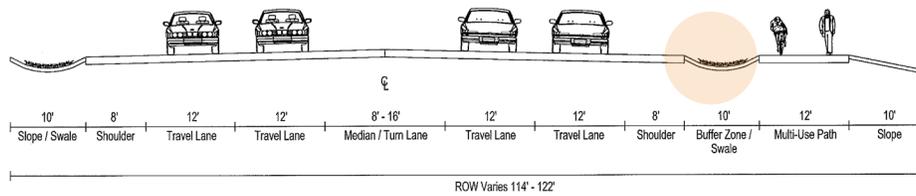
In 2011 and 2012, we worked with engineers, environmental scientists, area residents and businesses to help us to identify and prioritize needed improvements to the highway. The resulting Fern Ridge Corridor Plan was adopted by the Oregon Transportation Commission in April 2013.

Since 2013, we have made some improvements in the area, including:

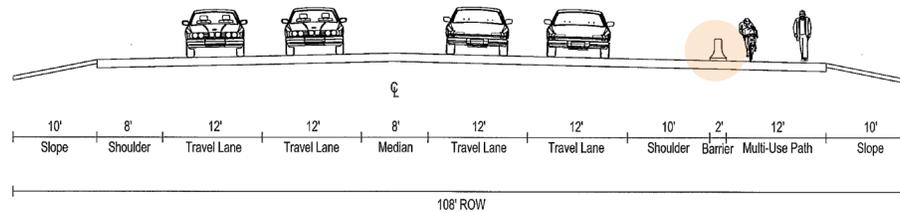
- Repaving and striping.
- Providing bus turn outs.
- Building a turn lane at Ellmaker Road.

We elected to evaluate the multi-use path along OR 126 with a buffer between the roadway and the path. Lane County will consider a southern route as part of their bicycle master plan.

**Fig. A: Multiuse Section with Swale Separation**



**Fig. B: Multiuse Section with Barrier Separation**

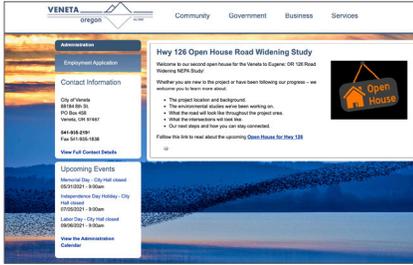


# WHERE WE ARE NOW

There are four key phases.

<b>Phase 1 Completed</b> <b>2011-2013</b>	<b>Phase 2 Underway</b> <b>2020 - 2022</b>	<b>Phase 3</b> <b>Future*</b>	<b>Phase 4</b> <b>Future*</b>
<p>The Fern Ridge Corridor Plan, adopted by the Oregon Transportation Commission, identified needs, showed a range of alternatives, and selected a preferred alternative.</p>	<p>Refine Conceptual Design and complete comprehensive environmental studies of the preferred alternative to meet National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements.</p>	<p>Preliminary and final design, and preparation of construction plans.</p>	<p>Construct preferred alternative.</p>
<p>Phase 2 establishes the project footprint and studies the project's impacts on the environment. The project's goals include balanced attainment of the widest range of benefits for the population and environmental resources. The study will also produce a cost estimate and a strategy for implementation, as funding becomes available.</p>		<p><i>*Future phases depend on securing additional funding.</i></p>	

# OUTREACH DURING A PANDEMIC



Veneta website connected residents with information and opportunity to participate in the Open House



Promotional material provided to local agencies and organizations for social media and newsletters



QR code for quick link to Open House

- **Website** with live link to Open House.
- **Email** with link sent to 1,700 Interested Parties.
- **Postcard** mailed to 4,828 households.
- **Postcard placed** on store counters, in food pantry and Meals on Wheels boxes.
- **Facebook/Newsletters** Open House promo used by ten agencies and organizations.
- **A-Frames** placed at key intersections.
- **A-Frames with QR** code placed at local store entrances.
- **Phone calls** to 25 adjacent businesses.
- **Phone announcement** via Fern Ridge School District to 1,500 households in Veneta, Elmira, Walton and Noti reaching 3,000–5,000 people.
- **Reader Boards** with Open House information at two prominent locations.



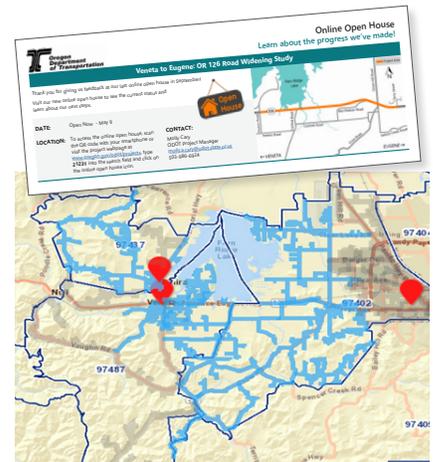
Postcards added to Meals on Wheels boxes



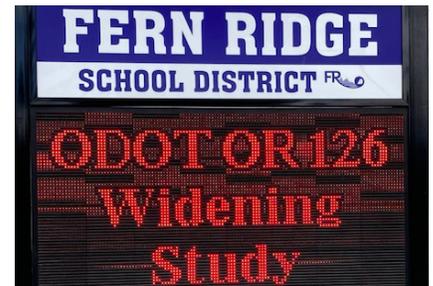
Signs at busy intersections



Postcards on counters of local businesses



Postcards delivered along seven postal routes to 4,828 houses



Fern Ridge School District reader board

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# ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

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## WETLANDS

We are designing to minimize impacts to the wetlands that are on both sides of the highway. Before construction we will get all required permits and plan for mitigation.

## ENDANGERED SPECIES

There are three endangered plants here: the Willamette Daisy, Kincaid's Lupine and Bradshaw's Lomatium. Plants also provide habitat for the endangered Fender's Blue Butterfly.



## CULTURAL RESOURCES

There are archaeological and historic resources on this corridor. Five properties will be evaluated for eligibility for historic designation.

## AIR QUALITY

Evaluation found no action or mitigation to be required by Federal Highway Administration standards.

## NOISE

Evaluation found no noise mitigation is needed.

## CONCERNS

Four of 68 comments oppose road widening for environmental reasons.

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*Widening this highway will only induce demand and increase the amount of vehicle miles travelled, greenhouse gas emissions, and devastating environmental impact.*

*- Shane, Eugene*

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# INTERSECTIONS WITH OR 126

Stakeholder feedback continues to request Improving safety at intersections. We evaluated nine intersections for how they are working now and how they are forecast to work in 20 years. Five need modification to meet our goals. We have identified two potential solutions for each, which will be examined more closely in the future when funding is available.



- 1 **HUSTON ROAD:** Two lane roundabout or traffic signals.
- 2 **ELLMAKER ROAD:** Two lane roundabout or turn lane improvements.
- 3 **CENTRAL ROAD:** Two lane roundabout or traffic signals.
- 4 **FISHER ROAD:** Two lane roundabout or turn lane improvements.
- 5 **GREENHILL ROAD:** Two lane roundabout or traffic signals.



**ROUNDBABOUTS** provide excellent safety and improved air quality. They may cost more to construct and are less expensive to maintain.



**TRAFFIC SIGNALS** improve safety over stops signs but tend to result in increased rear-end crashes. They are usually less expensive to construct than roundabouts but have higher long-term maintenance costs.



**TURN LANE IMPROVEMENTS** may include adding turn lanes on the side roads and a lane at the median for vehicles turning left onto the highway to have time to accelerate and merge into the traffic flow. The additional lane in the median allows drivers to make the left-turn in two stages, with the need to look for a gap one direction at a time, resulting in improved safety and less congestion on side roads.

*"The intersection at Ellmaker Road needs more than just turn lane improvements. The recent updates to the turn lanes have helped those turning off of 126 onto Ellmaker but during all times of the day it is very difficult to find an opening in the traffic flow to safely enter 126 eastbound. Too often drivers stack up on Ellmaker waiting to go east and eventually they have to make a risky jump in front of 65 MPH traffic from the east, west or both."*

*- Herb, Veneta*

## ROUNDBABOUTS

Comments from the open house were skeptical of roundabouts with two-thirds preferring traffic signals.

### Representative Comments

**"I worry about the roundabouts.** Many drivers may not understand how a roundabout works. They may be tourists pulling a trailer or a motorhome pulling a car westbound into sunset blindness. I believe the roundabout is more of a danger than traffic lights."

*- Sandra, Jefferson*

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"I am favor of improving the five intersections named. As a 40-year veteran street paramedic I can usually identify dangerous intersections. All five of these scare me. **I like the idea of roundabouts or traffic lights** — but not improved turn lanes that don't help those turning left from the access road."

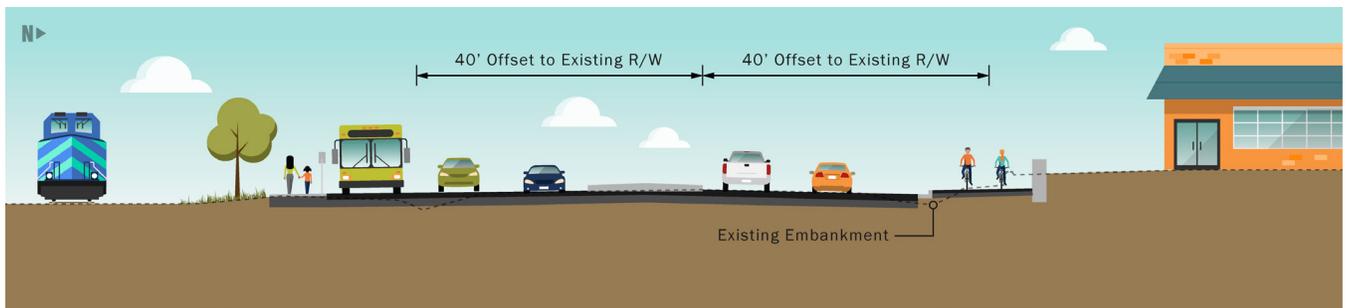
*- Gary, Eugene*

**"I prefer roundabouts.** The traffic flow is smoother, and it slows down the drivers who use the straight stretch as a speedway. I live off 126 and making a left turn is often difficult and stops all the cars behind. I am so pleased with the process you are using to identify what is needed to improve 126 by asking the people who use it most."

*- Lynn, Veneta*

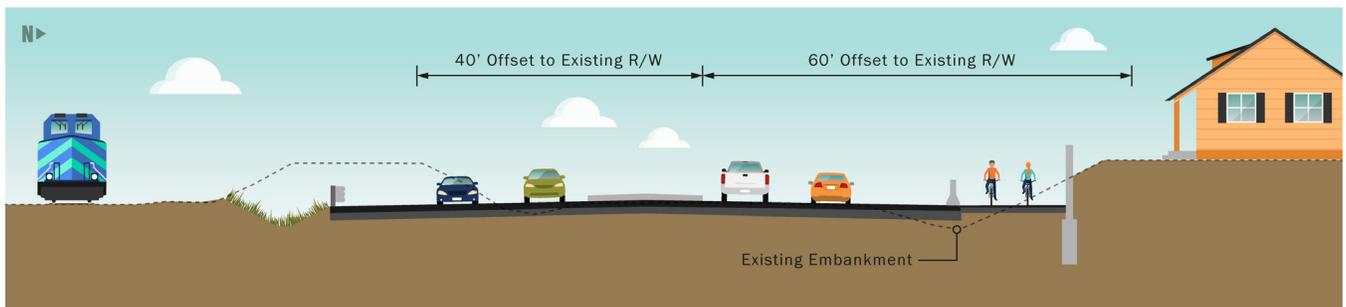
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# ROADWAY SECTIONS



## 1 HUSTON ROAD TO ELLMAKER ROAD

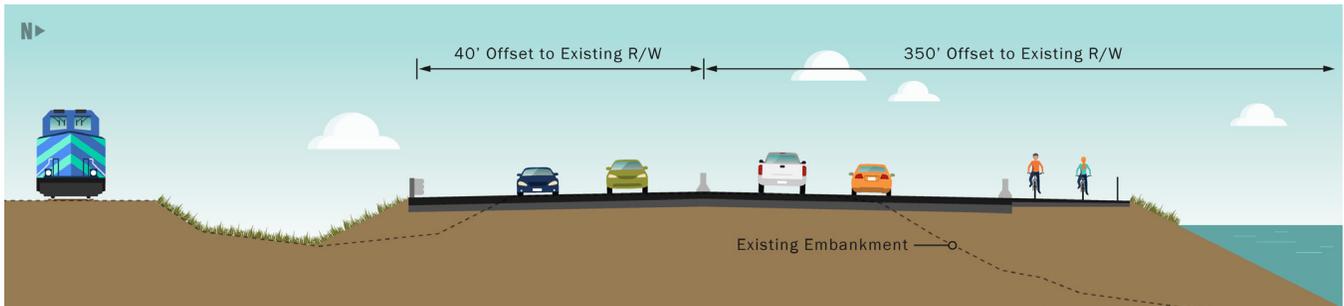
Most of the roadway widening shifts toward the railroad to reduce the impact to the properties on the north side. This includes a median separating opposing travel lanes, which may be raised or designed to accommodate a left-turn lane. There will be bus stops. Driveways and accesses will be designed when construction funding is secured.



## 2 SHADY REST DRIVE

Most of the roadway widening shifts toward the railroad to reduce the impact to the homes on the north side. The multi-use path shifts closer to the roadway and a retaining wall is added to further reduce impacts.

*Continues >>*



### 3 CROSSING FERN RIDGE RESERVOIR

To reduce impacts to the reservoir, the roadway and the multi-use path shift toward the railroad and use steeper slopes for the embankment.



### 4 GREEN HILL ROAD TO TERRY STREET

This is within Eugene’s city limits and includes curbs and landscaping. The multi-use path will be on the north side, while the south side will have a sidewalk. This section includes a median that separates opposing travel lanes, which may be raised or designed to accommodate a left-turn lane.

*Please make sure to include bike and pedestrian facilities that are separated and protected. This would encourage more biking/walking along this corridor and reduce the number of cars and therefore congestion and emissions in the corridor. Roundabouts are the safest intersections and are cheaper to maintain down the road.*

*– Josh, Eugene*

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## NEXT STEPS

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We will complete the conceptual design work this summer and anticipate completion of the environmental work in the next year. This summer, we will also begin work to secure funding for the design and construction of the project.

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*I think it is critical to begin now to lay groundwork for a substantial federal request for funding.*

*- Len, Elmira*

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