

# South Corvallis OR 99W Facility Plan

## Stakeholder Interviews

### Highlights Rev. 1/29/21

#### **OR 99W Facility Plan**

Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) has begun work to develop a Facility Plan for the Oregon Highway 99W corridor in South Corvallis. The project area extends from SW Western Boulevard south to the City's urban growth boundary. The plan will focus on potential improvements to OR 99W within the context of the South Corvallis Area Plan (underway) and the newly adopted South Corvallis Urban Renewal District Plan.

The Facility Plan is being developed by a multi-disciplinary consultant team led by Kittelson & Associates, Inc. The primary purpose is to make the OR 99W corridor a safer, more comfortable and attractive place to walk and bike while also addressing traffic operations, mobility and access.

Proactive public information and involvement is being conducted to support facility planning for the OR 99W corridor. Getting local area stakeholders and other highway users engaged will contribute meaningfully to project success. The overarching goal is to develop a plan that is fully informed with the unique and invaluable insights of stakeholders and the public.

#### **Stakeholder Interviews**

As an early step in public outreach, ODOT's outreach consultant – Barney & Worth, Inc. – interviewed a cross-section of 14 interested stakeholders: current and former South Corvallis residents, business operators, bicycle and pedestrian advocates, environmental and climate leaders, former City elected officials and commission members, and others who are familiar with the project area. Several participants say they travel solely on foot or by bicycle. Interviews were conducted by telephone with persons who are involved or have an interest in decisions surrounding the OR 99W Facility Plan.

Participants were asked to assess the current status of the highway corridor, identify issues, concerns and opportunities, and share their vision for the future. The range of travel modes discussed included automobiles, bicycles, pedestrians, transit, and freight. Interviewees who volunteered to continue their involvement in the Facility Plan were invited to suggest how they would like to participate.

This report reflects the advice, feelings and attitudes of the individuals interviewed. It is not intended to provide a statistically valid profile of community opinion as a whole.

## Highlights

The following highlights summarize the leading points offered by stakeholders who were interviewed for the South Corvallis OR 99W Facility Plan.

1. **South Corvallis – or “Southtown” – is on the verge of being transformed.** OR 99W is an essential spine that can facilitate or impede the neighborhood’s growth and redevelopment. Today, the highway is perceived as a barrier that divides the neighborhood in half. Improvements to the highway are being counted on to fulfill the vision of the “complete neighborhood” that is being planned for the transformation of South Corvallis, a bustling urban place in the future where there will be even more biking and walking.

*“The highway is a divider – a moat separating the two halves of South Corvallis.”*

*“The highway cuts the neighborhood in half.”*

*“South Corvallis is becoming a business magnet.”*

*“Anticipate community growth.”*

*“It’s a neighborhood, so this plan should be neighborhood-centric.”*

2. **The competing and often conflicting uses for OR 99W make safety hazards unavoidable.** The state highway serves as the main route for through traffic going to/from the south. At the same time OR 99W is also the “Main Street” for Southtown residents, and their only connection to the downtown, OSU campus and other destinations to the north. The word most commonly used to describe the corridor are “unsafe” and “dangerous”. Participants say the most dangerous spot is the “blind corner” at the north end of the corridor, where the highways converge.

*“An uncomfortable in-between place – not really a highway, but not a downtown either. Schizophrenic.”*

*“Quite unsafe.”*

*“Too many people have died – but there are no solutions yet.”*

3. **One key to creating a safer, more inviting corridor is slowing down traffic.** The underlying safety problem is speed. Participants suggest traffic calming strategies: such as placing OR 99W on a “road diet” (following the Circle Blvd. model) by changing lane configurations, reducing and enforcing speed limits, prioritizing bicycle and pedestrian travel/safety and enhancing aesthetics. Highway 20 in downtown Sisters, Oregon and Circle Blvd. in Corvallis are suggested as appealing comparisons.

*“We need something to combat constant speeding.”*

*“Slow way down!”*

*“This is like a drag strip.”*

4. **To ensure safety, it may be necessary to separate bicycles and pedestrians from the highway by building parallel paths.** Given the traffic volume and speeds, buffered lanes in the roadway aren’t sufficiently protective. Stakeholders say only separate paths can truly assure safety.

*“This is the most dangerous part of Corvallis for bicycles and pedestrians.”*

*“We need alternate, enjoyable routes for bicycles and pedestrians.”*

*“A buffer is needed between the highway and bicycles/pedestrians.”*

5. **ODOT is advised to use OR 99W improvements to leverage Southtown’s transformation under the City’s South Corvallis and urban renewal plans.** Participants applaud the attention being paid to the “long overlooked” South Corvallis neighborhood, and see a great potential for synergy with a Highway 99W makeover. Urban design is an essential opportunity to make this highway corridor work.

*“Highway 99W needs a comprehensive solution – not a band-aid. The current system isn’t working. There are lots of accidents. It needs to be redesigned.”*

*“There’s great potential with the new urban renewal district.”*

*“Prime potential for affordable housing.”*

*“Plan for an increase in area population, residential development and travel.”*

*“The area is developing fast.”*

*“The City no longer enforces traffic laws, so design is crucial.”*

*“Cost isn’t a barrier with urban design – you can use ‘tactical urbanism’ as a substitute for capital investments.”*

6. **The OR 99W Facility Plan presents an opportunity for “out-of-the-box” ideas.** Pointing to plentiful opportunities and challenges, participants suggest ODOT and the City of Corvallis should consider options that go beyond standard highway planning (see examples listed below).

**OR 99W Facility Plan  
“Out-of-the-Box” Ideas**

Restore the historic Mary’s River Bridge, including the original lighting fixtures.

Move/replace the Mary’s River and Mill Race bridges to avoid flood impacts.

Retrofit Mary’s River and Mill Race bridges to be seismically sound.

Develop the rail corridor ROW as an alternate travel route connecting Southtown to the rest of Corvallis.

Build an OR 99W bypass, converting the current highway into a neighborhood street that serves primarily local traffic.

Construct pedestrian overcrossings at the most dangerous intersections.

Create an eye-catching, enticing gateway for Corvallis at the south end of this corridor.

Restore natural wetlands in the low lying areas, respecting the original terrain; focus the corridor plan on the water features.

Involve the indigenous Kalapuya Tribe (Grande Ronde Confederation) in corridor planning. Acknowledge and honor tribal history.

Use this project to help combat climate change.

Transfer highway ownership to the City of Corvallis.

Extend the project area further south.

7. **Details – details.** The group’s collective advice on some corridor design details:

*Traffic speed:* slower!

*Public transit:* good now – could be better

*Bicycles:* safer travel for growing bicycle traffic; separated from autos and pedestrians

*Plantings:* more (6); same (2); fewer (2)

*Buildings:* closer (5) or further (3) from the street

*Sidewalks:* okay now, or wider with improvements near bus stops

*On-street parking:* no (6); selective locations only (2); yes (2)

*Traffic controls:* many suggestions; no consensus on what and where

8. **Minority Report.** A couple participants think the OR99 segment in South Corvallis is working well and doesn’t warrant significant change. These observers explain their view that state highways should prioritize traffic flow. They note the corridor is seldom congested, and traffic generally moves freely.

*“Traffic volumes are growing in the area as development increases. But other highways in the area are much worse.”*

*“ODOT should widen the highway further to the south to free up traffic flow.”*

*“A 20 mph speed limit on a state highway is ridiculous.”*

*“No more green plantings – they hamper visibility.”*

9. **Final Advice.** When asked to provide their “single most important piece of advice” for corridor improvements, participants repeat themes from their earlier responses:

- Safety – particularly school safety – should be the top priority for the Facility Plan.
- Highway 99W/3<sup>rd</sup> Street is Southtown’s “Main Street”. It needs to function as a neighborhood street – ODOT’s plan should make the South Corvallis neighborhood the centerpiece of its future vision for this state highway segment, helping to reinforce the neighborhood’s identity and sense of place.
- This project area presents a special opportunity to create an important gateway to Corvallis from the south.

10. **“Please keep in touch”.** All but one participant want to stay involved in the Facility Plan for Highway 99W. Most ask to be kept informed and updated via email.

A list of the persons interviewed and discussion questions are attached.

## **South Corvallis OR 99W Facility Plan**

### **Stakeholder Interviews**

Natchee Barnd	South Corvallis resident and OSU Associate Professor, Ethnic Studies
B. A. Beierle	South Corvallis orchardist, PreservationWORKS
Greg Bennett	South Corvallis resident
Jonah Browning	The Arc of Benton County
Dave Eckert	Corvallis Sustainability Coalition, Water Action Team
Angel Harris	Former South Corvallis resident, NAACP, affordable housing advocate
Tony Howell	Former Planning Commissioner & City Councilor, South Corvallis resident
Linzy Lingo	Former South Corvallis resident
Araceli Mendez	Benton County Health Department school health navigator
Abby Metzger	South Corvallis resident
Jeremy Monroe	Freshwater Illustrated, South Corvallis resident
Paul Reinier	RB Materials
Marjorie Stevens	Climate Action Task Force
Jay Thatcher	League of American Bicyclists, South Corvallis resident

# Highway 99W South Corvallis Facility Plan

## Stakeholder Interviews

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### DISCUSSION GUIDE Rev. 11/3/20

#### Introduction

The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) is looking for ways to improve a segment of Highway 99W in South Corvallis. That facility planning process is just getting underway. Your advice and insights at this early stage will be invaluable.

1. How have you been involved with the Highway 99W corridor in South Corvallis? How do you use this facility for personal or business travel and how often? Have you participated in earlier discussions about possible improvements to this corridor?

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2. What phrases come to mind that best characterize for you the Highway 99W corridor in South Corvallis today?

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#### Vision

3. What's your long-range vision for the Highway 99W corridor? Are there phrases that best describe your 99W corridor of the future? What improvements would you like to see over the next 10-20 years? Can you think of another corridor that represents your vision for what Highway 99W could become?

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4. Let me ask a few specifics about your vision for the Highway 99 corridor of the future.

- Do cars/trucks go faster/slower? \_\_\_\_\_
- Does it have more or fewer lanes for cars/trucks? \_\_\_\_\_
- Is transit use more prevalent? \_\_\_\_\_
- Are bicyclists present? What do the bicycle facilities look like? \_\_\_\_\_
- Is there more or less greenery? \_\_\_\_\_
- Are buildings closer/further from the street? \_\_\_\_\_
- Are the sidewalks bigger/smaller, closer/further from the roadway? \_\_\_\_\_
- Is there on-street parking? \_\_\_\_\_
- Are there more/fewer driveways? \_\_\_\_\_
- What about traffic controls: traffic signals, protected pedestrian crossings, roundabouts, public street intersections? \_\_\_\_\_

5. How do you foresee use of the various travel modes changing in the future? Should some of these ways to travel have priority over others?

Motorists: \_\_\_\_\_

Bicycles: \_\_\_\_\_

Pedestrians: \_\_\_\_\_

Transit: \_\_\_\_\_

Freight: \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

6. How would you compare current conditions for the corridor with your vision? Are there any barriers to achieving that vision?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Issues and Opportunities

7. What specific issues or challenges do you foresee that need to be addressed in the Highway 99W corridor for the future? Which are the most serious challenges in your view?

\_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_

8. Safety concerns in the corridor have gained some public attention – for bicyclists, pedestrians and motorists. What’s your view on transportation safety here? Do you see any particular problem areas or solutions?

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9. What land uses would you like to see as part of future development of the South Corvallis area? \_\_\_\_\_

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How might changing land uses in this vicinity affect plans for the state highway? Do you think changes to the land uses will have a greater impact on the highway – or vice versa?

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10. Does your own business/organization have plans for the future that need to be accommodated by Highway 99W improvements?

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11. What are the very best opportunities for the future along this segment of Highway 99W?

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12. What things should ODOT consider in making decisions on the future design for Highway 99W? Are there any values or principles that should guide their decisions?

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## Stakeholder Engagement

13. Are there any other people or organizations you would recommend we contact at this early stage to get their views on the future design for Highway 99W corridor improvements in South Corvallis?

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14. What is the best way for you to stay informed about the project?

- Attend a virtual meeting
- Attend a face-to-face meeting
- Receive email updates
- Get information on the website
- Another way: \_\_\_\_\_
- Don't want to stay involved

## Wrap-up

15. Can you offer a single most important piece of advice for ODOT as it considers the design for the Highway 99W corridor in South Corvallis?

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16. Any further comments or suggestions?

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