

**I-5 to 99W Connector Project SWG #8
6-8 p.m. Thursday, June 1, 2006
Meeting Summary**



Attendance:

Bill Shake (Friends of the Refuge)
Mike Feves (Far West Association of Neighborhoods)
Dave Volz (Tualatin CCI)
Elliot Eki (AAA Oregon)
Jon Reimann (Westside Economic Alliance)
Loretta Pickerell (1000 Friends of Oregon)
Bob Adams (Tualatin Chamber of Commerce)
Ray Phelps (Wilsonville Chamber of Commerce)
Jerry Renfro (Tualatin Valley Fire and Rescue)
Ron Johnson (Washington County Farm Bureau)
Tom Aufenthie (CPO 5)
Jack Laverty (Oregon Trucking Association)

Members absent:

Nick Storie (Metro CCI)
Susan Rychlick (Sherwood Chamber of Commerce)
Adrian Emery (Sherwood CCI)
Tom Sullivan (Wilsonville CCI)

Staff:

Scott Richman (DEA)
Jeanne Lawson, Kalin Schmoldt (JLA)
Michael Ray (ODOT)
Barry Hennelly (Washington County)
Mark Turpel (Metro)

Meeting purpose

- Discuss draft screening criteria and criteria measurement.
- Review alternatives development and evaluation process schedule.

1. Welcome, meeting purpose and agenda

Jeanne began the meeting with eight members present with permission of the group. Jeanne noted that she was filling in for Vaughn for this meeting only. She introduced herself and described her history working with similar projects.

Jeanne described the purposes of tonight's meeting: to refine the draft screening criteria and to discuss the alternatives development and evaluation process. Jeanne polled the audience for anyone who had not yet attended a SWG meeting, directed newcomers to the comment forms by the door, and informed the public about the public comment period at the end of the meeting.

Meeting #7 summary was adopted as written.

Jeanne announced the Tualatin Wildlife Refuge Grand Opening. Bill Shake described the opening and noted that Sherwood is being considered as an “All American City” partly because of the presence of the Tualatin Wildlife Refuge.

2. Project update

Scott Richman introduced himself to the group. He noted that he had last addressed the group in early April and the report he had reviewed was now available on the project web site.

Scott reviewed a summary of community input received since the open houses held in November. It summarizes the current themes and input received from phone calls, letters, emails and community group briefings.

Scott noted that there had been media coverage of ODOT’s Oregon Innovative Partnerships Program (OIPP) study of possible toll corridors in the region. The Oregon Transportation Improvement Group, a consortium of consultants, has produced a summary tolling feasibility study. Scott directed the group www.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/OIPP for more information.

Scott also noted that it has been erroneously reported that DEA is currently preparing an EIS, which is not true. He noted that OIPP is currently completing planning and study that could lead to an EIS for a proposed corridor.

A SWG member asked which corridor OTIG was recommending. Scott responded that they had found the Newberg-Dundee corridor to be feasible. Barry noted that there was a potential I-5 to 99W connector related to the Newberg-Dundee Bypass which they studied, but added that OIPP did not use our project’s criteria. He noted that they wanted the least expensive facility to generate the most revenue, and used as their basis what was already published. Jeanne reminded the SWG that this process which will determine a corridor for the I-5 to 99W connector.

A member noted that there seems to be an increasing appetite for new revenue sources. Barry noted that tolls are one way of funding projects.

A SWG member asked whether private companies building toll roads were required to adhere to the same process and constraints as public projects. Michael and Barry responded that the same environmental studies were necessary.

Scott Richman reminded the SWG about the March 13 Project Steering Committee (PSC) where the PSC made real-time edits to the project purpose and need statement. He said that the Executive Management Team (EMT) recognized that the purpose statement, as altered by the PSC, had strayed from the intent as specified in the RTP. The EMT has proposed returning to the original statement by removing the reference to “local” travel

access, and changing the reference to the “transportation system” to a more overt reference to I-5 and 99W.

Scott noted that the original statement better reflected the regional nature of this project. He also noted that it was important to make explicit reference to I-5 and 99W in the body of the purpose and need, as only referring to them in the title was inadequate. Jef emphasized the importance of the purpose and need statement and described it as a parameter that will guide the project all the way into the design phase. He added that a well-crafted purpose statement allows for efficient management of the NEPA process.

A SWG member asked how the PSC-adopted wording weakens the purpose statement. Jef explained changes were made in order to refocus the statement onto regional and interstate travel. The intent of the RTP is to develop effective regional and intrastate access to planned and existing development. Having “local” in the purpose statement could be interpreted as a call to solve local problems in addition to state problems. He also noted that the use of “transportation system” is too vague.

A SWG member asked whether it would be possible to amend the RTP to exclude the toll-road reference and what would happen if the PSC does not adopt the recommended changes. Jef responded that, if the PSC does not reaffirm the intent of the RTP, the scope and direction of the study will be reevaluated.

A SWG member noted that the group had spent a lot of time developing the purpose and need statement and that the EMT had a chance to review it. He then asked why the EMT meetings are not open to the public. Barry noted that according to public meeting law, only meetings with *appointed* members (such as members of the SWG as appointed by the PSC) are required to be open to the public. Meetings for *assigned* members (representatives of the organizations comprising the PSC assigned to the EMT,) may remain closed. Jeanne described in further detail that the process calls for two types of meetings: one for staff and one for stakeholder representatives. (*Note: this position was revisited after the SWG meeting and EMT meetings are now open to the public*)

Barry offered agreed to post the EMT meeting summaries on the project web site.

A SWG member objected to having the SWG “ambushed” by the new purpose and need statement. He said it was inappropriate to try to sneak it in as part of the project update. Jef assured the group that this revision would go back to the PSC for approval.

A SWG member noted that, because much of the traffic is local, “local” should be incorporated into the purpose statement.

A SWG member described the process as being driven backwards from the goal of building a connector without collecting traffic data to establish the need and indicated that proceeding without traffic data was a waste of time.

A SWG member asked whether using “local” precludes consideration for federal funding. Michael responded that the two are not related. Jef noted that FHWA does not participate in land use master planning but does implement the outcomes. He noted that this project will still solve many local problems despite being focused on state and regional transportation problems. He noted that including “local” dramatically increases the scope of the project.

A SWG member noted that it does not seem like this change will affect the narrowing of alternatives.

A SWG member suggested that the group take a vote to support or oppose revisions to the PSC-approved statement. Jeanne surveyed the group.

- Jerry Renfro commented that the project should not move forward using language that will lead to confusion about the project’s purpose
- Bob Adams said he was undecided and need assurance that the local issues would be addressed.
- Loretta Pickerell said she still did not understand how the rewording narrows options or and how this project could proceed without directly addressing local needs.
- Elliot Eki, Dave Volz, and Jon Reimann agreed to the rewording. Jon expressed a desire to move on.
- Mike Feves reiterated his objection to the suggested rewording and said that it wastes the last several months of work. He also stated that he felt there was inadequate data to support the revised statement.
- Bill Shake reminded the group that the SWG had originally passed on four Purpose and Need statements to the PSC because they were unable to reach consensus. He agreed with the suggested reworded.
- Tom Aufenthie noted that the use of “transportation system” is important because it broadens the project scope.

Jeanne replied that the concerns will be noted and passed on to the PSC. Scott Richman briefly covered the process flow chart and noted the upcoming meeting on June 12.

3. Alternatives development and evaluation & Draft screening criteria input

Jeanne outlined the purpose of establishing the screening criteria, emphasizing that they should be pass/fail oriented. Jef noted that the next milestone will be to develop the range of alternatives. He explained that the SWG has three guiding tools for that purpose:

- project purpose and need statement which is the cornerstone of project development
- goals and objectives which will present throughout the project
- screening criteria used to complete a rough filtering of alternatives

Jef noted that there will be lots of ideas and that the group will need tools to indicate whether each idea generally meets the project’s purpose. Once the alternatives have been narrowed, a new set of set of evaluation criteria will be developed.

Jef noted that there are no federal guidelines for screening criteria. He directed reviewed the screening criteria handout and emphasized that the criteria must be easily recognizable as easily pass/fail. He added that alternatives should pass every screening criterion.

Jef emphasized that 1.1 does not preclude the use of existing roads. 1.2 is intended to relieve congestion and preserve the viability of town centers. 1.3 focuses on the concern that a new facility will exacerbate problems elsewhere in the system. Jef described the screening criteria for Goal 2 as a catch-all to make sure that alternatives support the state, regional, and local land use plans.

A SWG member asked what would happen if this project were taken out of the RTP. Jef responded that there would no longer be a reason to undertake this process.

Jef noted that the important element of 3.1 is to avoid destroying the integrity or functional value of natural resources. He noted that 3.2 includes Native American historical and cultural resources.

Suggestions to screening criteria were suggested as follows:

1.1

- A member proposed changing “a defined state highway corridor” to “a solution”
- A member suggested incorporating the referenced sentence “does not preclude consideration of existing roadway facilities” into the body of the criteria

1.2

- A member expressed concern that the wording would automatically exclude alternatives which do not use Tualatin/Sherwood Road and 99W
- Jeanne suggested rewording the criteria so that it does not make some roads ineligible as options
- A member asked to see “local” incorporated into the criteria. He noted that there is data to show which traffic is local, regional, and statewide, and the majority seems local. He also indicated that he thought it was premature to act without traffic information.

1.3

- A member asked that the same criteria regarding mitigation apply to all areas on I-5 and 99W. Jef reminded the SWG that the project was not intended to address problems on I-5, and emphasized that while the system is going to become more and more congested, the intent is to mitigate the effects of this project and *not* background problems.
- A member asked for a definition of “mitigate.” Jeanne described mitigation as the process of addressing created problems and reducing their impact. A member pointed out that “reducing impact” and “having no impact” are different, and asked why the criteria do not say “will not adversely impact.” Jef responded that there is always

effect, either positive or negative, and mitigation implies an attempt to offset the impact. He also noted that the wording “will not adversely impact” would be too rigid and would eliminate most alternatives. Jeanne and Jef emphasized that “having no adverse impact” is a good goal to strive for, but is too restrictive as a criteria.

2.1

- A member said that he didn’t know what the “standards” referred to in the criteria actually were and asked what would happen if the RTP is updated. Mark Turpel responded that the RTP won’t be updated until 2008.

2.2

- A member recommended using the word “conform” instead of “addresses” in 2.1 and 2.2. Other members disagreed.

2.3

- A member suggested that a criteria related to community livability be added since it should carry the same importance as protecting natural resources.

3.1

- A member asked about which areas are considered “protected.” Jef answered that there are different levels of protection that apply for different areas. He noted that while the Tualatin Wildlife Refuge is on one end of the spectrum, the “Scablands” are on the other, with wetlands and other areas in between
- A member noted that he did not see any criteria that would eliminate alternatives because of engineering or seismic viability. Jef noted that seismically unstable soils can all be addressed with various engineering techniques.
- A member suggested that cost be considered as a Goal 4 screening criteria. Barry said that he appreciated the idea, but noted that it would be difficult to settle on reasonable cost objectives at this phase.

Jeanne summed up suggestions from the SWG, noting general consensus on the changes to 1.2, 1.3, and 2.2, while noting that the other suggestions will all be forwarded as individual comments. She added that a draft of the revised screening criteria will be sent out to the SWG before it goes to the steering committee. The SWG suggested that the team develop metrics for the screening criteria and noted that it was important to have measures.

4. Public comment

There were three public comments:

John Alto – Commented on the proceedings, saying it reminded him of steering the Exxon Valdez. He stated that the only people who can grab the wheel are the PSC. He

asked to keep the process public and noted that “if there’s a course change, the PSC can comment.”

Dan Ruediger – Mr. Ruediger made three points. 1. He requested that Washington County look up public meeting law which he says states that if recommendations are made in a meeting it is considered a quorum. 2. He expressed concern with the process and said that it seems that the EMT is pushing and biasing this process through. He suggested that Washington County redo its process flow chart to actually articulate the process as it stands. 3. He pointed out that the problem of local traffic has been articulated many times. He pointed out that Tualatin and Sherwood are congested but can’t get federal money if it doesn’t have a regional basis—but the problem is all local. He said that the solution is multiple solutions—not only a state highway. He added that for this committee to not look at the data makes it virtually useless.

(Did not state his name) – The member of the public stated that he had been to nine meetings over the past twelve years and said what he has seen appalls him. He advised saving \$100 million and simply widening Tualatin-Sherwood road.

5. Next steps and close

Jeanne polled the group to see who would be available on the 6th and noted that Kristin will get info out to the group confirming the date and location. Jeanne reiterated that all the information gathered here will be passed on to PSC, and announced that the next PSC meeting will be held on June 12.