

Beltline Facility Plan Stakeholder Advisory Committee

Meeting #3 Summary

DATE: Tuesday, July 14, 2009, 5:30-7:30

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mary Archer, Lane Transit District
Barb Bellamy, Eugene School District
Charles Biggs, Friends of Eugene
Connie Bloom Williams, Commuter Solutions/ point2point
Michael Brewster, Emergency Services
Heather Hannah, Active Bethel Neighbors
Mike Hawley, Sherman Brothers Trucking
Tom Mitchel, Cal Young Neighborhood Association
Eileen Nittler, River Road Community Association
Shane Rhodes, Safe Routes to School
George Staples, Delta Sand and Gravel
Gary Wildish, Santa Clara Community Association

MEMBERS ABSENT: Chuck Gottfried, MWMC
Ed Moore, DLCD
Ryan Pape, Eugene Chamber of Commerce
Paul Spain, River Avenue Business
Sarah Strand, MPO CAC

STAFF: Celia Barry, Lane County
Savannah Crawford, ODOT
Chris Henry, City of Eugene Public Works
Kristin Hull, CH2M HILL
Terra Lingley, CH2M HILL
Shaun Quayle, Kittelson and Associates
Brian Ray, Kittelson and Associates

PUBLIC: Mark Rabinowitz, Road - Scholar
Jess Burns, KLCC
Nancy Nathanson, State Representative
Jared Mason-Gere, Eugene Chamber of Commerce
Phil Farrington, MPO CAC

LOCATION: Eugene Library, 100 West 10th Ave.

The meeting started at 5:30, with 12 members in attendance, and 5 members of the public observing. The meeting started with a welcome and introductions by those present.

Each SAC member present received a packet of relevant materials for their 3-ring binder. Those absent at the first meeting received a binder with the appropriate materials.

The packet contains:

- Tonight's agenda
- SAC Meeting #2 summary
- The updated alternative evaluation framework
- A printout of the improvement concepts presentation
- Open house plan

Kristin introduced the agenda for the meeting and went through the SAC Meeting #2 summary and asked for feedback and if all members thought that the summary was accurate.

Charles asked about Chris Henry's response to his question about measuring the carbon footprint and greenhouse gases that was not captured in the summary. Chris explained what his response to Charles was at the last meeting, and it will be added to the Final Summary for Meeting #2.

Public Comment

Mark Rabinowitz handed out a one page information sheet to those present about peak oil. He said that Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) had peaked in Oregon and nationally, and transportation projects are required to look 20 years into the future. He feels that since we are on the downslope of peak energy, the project needs to factor in energy availability and pricing. He does not believe that electric cars will replace vehicles, and that planning projects such as these need to factor in oil availability and economic downturn.

He said that the projection to widen Beltline would cost somewhere around \$.25 billion, and asked where that money will come from. Peak Oil and melting ice caps need to be addressed in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Minerals will be gone. We are "gambling" with our resources, there is no fiscal or economic reality to support this project. He would like to see the energy and financial assumptions presented at the open house at the end of July.

Comments on Updated Evaluation Framework

The updated evaluation framework was then presented, and Kristin went over what was changed as a result of the conversation at the last meeting, namely objectives to enhance the trail and bicycle/pedestrian system, the ability to "raise the bar" and create an aesthetically pleasing facility, and considerations of greenhouse gases via the proxy of system delay and the change in Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT).

Mary Archer from Lane Transit District (LTD) then introduced herself to the group and apologized for not attending the previous meetings. She had some comments on the evaluation framework that she shared with the group:

- LTD has in the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) candidate corridors for High Capacity Transit (HCT) which may be Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), or another mode. Beltline is one of the candidate corridors, and she suggested an objective under the Mobility criteria that addressed this issue. The text suggested was, “Alternative does not preclude dedicated lanes for HCT”.
- She asked if it was appropriate for park and rides to be added to the evaluation objectives or measures. Kristin responded that it would be a means to address the capacity issues – that it was more of a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategy than a criterion.

Connie pointed out that we talk about volume and capacity quite a bit, and we focus on vehicles, not the capacity of the system to move people. More people can fit into the existing vehicles today, and you would move more people overall, and there is more flexibility, especially with transit.

George wanted to know about the City of Eugene’s project to bring a bike path on River Avenue underneath Beltline. As is, there is concern with bike and truck conflicts. Shane noted that the bicycle and pedestrian committee is aware of this. Chris also noted that the City is coordinating with ODOT about the bike path project.

Charles asked about flexibility for changing vehicles, peak and non-peak times. He emphasized the need for an adaptable roadway that could accommodate overhead rail, and expand and contract based on demand. Brian clarified that a “zipper barrier” could be used to move medians to provide more lanes in the peak direction, and Charles added that signs above the lanes could provide similar information to allow cars to travel in the peak direction more freely.

Mary added that there is new technology for transit vehicles, called the “Bus Lane Intermittent Priority” (BLIP) that allows a regular lane to change into a bus priority lane when there is a vehicle approaching. There are lights in the roadway that indicate when a transit vehicle is approaching and that regular vehicles need to clear the lane.

Improvement Concepts (Brian Ray, Kittelson and Associates)

Kristin started this section by clarifying that this project is NOT a bridge study, we are looking at improvements to Beltline throughout the study area, not only adding a bridge. There was some discussion at the last Steering Committee meeting, and she wanted to ensure that everyone was clear about our purpose.

Brian then talked through the presentation that was provided in the handouts for this meeting (See presentation materials on the website). He walked through:

- Area opportunities and constraints
- Corridor-specific operational and physical considerations
- Families of Concepts and next steps.

Area Opportunities and constraints

Brian walked through the physical and environmental issues in the area.

Charles asked a clarifying question about what was addressed in the constraints, and whether it was just geometrics. Brian said yes, geometrics were only addressed.

Corridor-Specific operational and physical considerations

Brian described why Beltline has operational issues from a traffic engineering standpoint, which include close interchanges and merging/diverging areas too close together. There are options to address the issues including: adding lanes, adding auxiliary lanes, removing on or off ramps, separating conflicts (braiding), and a collector distributor lane that would be next to the highway, but pull the exiting and entering conflicts away from the mainline and move them to a separate road adjacent to the highway. Brian showed examples of the options to improve the issues seen on Beltline.

Brian then went on to call out the operational, influence areas, and capacity areas along the study area, and it is a complex issue.

Charles asked if Brian considered the grade constraints and topography of the roadbed. Brian said that both the horizontal and vertical aspects were taken into account. Charles also asked if solutions that separate grades such as elevated roadways or ramp braids would be considered. Brian explained that ramp braids could improve the short merge/weave distances on the highway.

Family of Concepts

There are three types of concepts that could address the issues mentioned on Beltline:

1. System considerations
2. Beltline Highway Capacity
3. Interchange Capacity

Starting with **system considerations**, Brian pointed out that there is more traffic traveling on Beltline than was originally planned for. There are a variety of things that could be done to address the issue including:

- Transportation System and Demand Management (TSM and TDM)
 - ITS treatments (e.g. ramp meters, variable message signs) Addresses traffic time and flow
 - Bus rapid transit/carpool program/HOV - Carry more people in vehicle units
 - Charles suggested adding an "other" here, to not limit the things we can suggest
- Network Improvements
 - Beaver Street Extension
 - NW Expressway upgrades
 - Charles suggested adding an "other" here, to not limit the things we can suggest
- River Crossings
 - North of Beltline
 - South of Beltline
 - North and south of Beltline
 - Other? Charles suggested double-decking the roadway
- Others

Connie would like to see policy or direction that would determine impact on local streets, so we don't adversely affect local streets to fix the issues on Beltline.

Shane asked if we should consider a way to reduce the amount of people using the system overall, namely by providing other improvements (bicycle and pedestrian), etc.

Heather mentioned there was some opposition from Steering Committee members to adding a bridge. She was wondering if the SAC could recommend a new bridge if the political will didn't support it. Celia pointed out that the reason we have two different committees, the Steering Committee and the SAC for this very reason, to provide a variety of viewpoints. The SAC should consider alternatives that they think address the goals and objectives of the project, and the process can be different than the Steering Committee's.

Beltline Highway Capacity has a couple of options: 2 lanes in each direction, 3 lanes in each direction, apply auxiliary lanes, and consider Collector-Distributor (C-D) Roads. This is a more complex issue than just adding capacity, due to the tight, built-up area. There are some options to add auxiliary lanes between interchanges, and Brian showed possible lanes between River Road to River/Division Ave, and on Northbound Delta Highway between Goodpasture Island Road interchange and Beltline.

Interchange Capacity- there are a few options to increase interchange capacity:

- Upgrade all existing locations
- Remove Select interchanges or ramps
- Add a partial interchange

Brian suggested what could be done to **upgrade existing locations**:

- River Road
 - Diamond Forms
- River/Division Avenues
 - "Diamond Forms" (may need ramp braids or CD roads)
- Delta Highway
 - System forms (highway to highway) with service connections (highway to regular roadway, may need ramp braids or CD roads)
 - Consider Good Pasture Island Road

Another option is to **remove select interchanges or ramps**

River/Division Avenue has the least network connectivity of the interchanges in the study area. Shifting ramps at this point includes a grade change.

Gary suggested moving the ramps at River/Division would be good. The current configuration was difficult to maneuver, with vehicles going different speeds.

The final option is to **add a partial interchange**; however this is inconsistent with ODOT policy, and would have to have good justification for adding an interchange. Gilham Road has the most overall connectivity, but it does have a Middle School on it.

Charles asked if the grades and sight distance issues would be addressed, and Brian answered that any interchange upgrade would include considerations of vertical rises and sight distance.

Nancy Nathanson, the State Representative for this area noted that safety is her primary concern as Beltline is a high speed facility. For long term planning, how does the highway impact the local system, and how does the local system impact the highway? Lack of alternatives forces people onto the high speed highway.

Phil Farrington asked if a Single Point Urban Interchange (SPUI) would be considered on Beltline interchanges. Brian then explained that a SPUI has ramps on a diamond interchange intersect at one point that is signalized. It is an alternative to be considered when interchange form is looked at.

Gary noted that the congestion is not just on Beltline, it is also caused by the local roads that are near the interchanges like River Avenue and Division Avenue. Sometimes you have to wait 3-4 lights. This project should consider the local roads. ODOT facilities and local roads need to be considered together. Brian agreed, and the traffic information considers the entire system.

Charles reminded the group that we should think three-dimensionally to create interesting solutions.

Next Steps

Kristin then walked through the next steps, and showed how these families of concepts are going to be used:

Families will be reviewed at the Open House #1

Alternatives will go into screening to take out infeasible alternatives

Alternatives will be decided on, and brought to the public in Open House #2

Alternatives will be evaluated

Alternatives will be narrowed based on evaluation.

Celia asked if the outcome was going to be more general than one alternative recommendation. Kristin responded that it depends on the process forward what we end up with. Depending on the solutions we brainstorm, and how the evaluation process goes, we may end up with a few alternatives, or a very narrow alternative. It is hard to tell at this point.

Open House Plan

Terra then talked about the Open House. It is on Wednesday, July 29th from 4:30- 7:00 p.m. at the North Eugene High School. Barb clarified that the location is simply North Eugene High School, not Alternative High School as written on the Open House Plan and the postcards going out. Postcards will be mailed July 15th to about 1,500 households within 1/8 mile of Beltline.

Neighborhood notices have been sent to the representatives on the SAC. Charles asked that the Open House notice be mailed to all members for them to distribute to other mailing lists and groups, Terra said that would be possible.

The CAC MPO group is aware of the open house and information has been presented to that group.

The open house will share information on the project, the goals and objectives, and will gather input from the community on potential solutions.

The “Pulse of the community” will be gathered through an exercise where attendees indicate which evaluation criteria are important to them, so that this group has an idea of which criteria to keep in mind when coming up with alternatives.

Charles asked if there was a way to have a video of the drive along Beltline in both directions. Savannah said that ODOT has video of the roadway, and we would look into having that at the open house.

Other Items

Tom brought up a land use change proposed in the Cal Young neighborhood that could impact the work of the SAC on planning for the Beltline/Delta interchange. A RiverRidge Metro Plan Amendment is being considered jointly by the City of Eugene and Lane County to change 61 acres of the RiverRidge Golf Course from Parks and Open Space to Low Density Residential designation. City staff estimate in excess of 300 single-family homes could be allowed. The CYNA Executive Committee July 7 adopted a statement expressing “a major concern is increased traffic congestion on already overloaded Delta Highway and Beltline.” The statement urged that the state Transportation Planning Rule (TPR) analysis be made before action is taken on the Metro Plan amendment, rather than being postponed until the development application.

Kristin said that the one-page response from Cal Young would be emailed to SAC members but that this was only for their information and not part of our project process.

Next Meeting, Close and Next Steps

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 pm, and the next meeting will be held in August or September. Members will be notified of the meeting date as soon as possible.