

Beltline Facility Plan Stakeholder Advisory Committee Meeting #6 Summary

DATE: Monday, February 22, 2010, 5:30-7:30

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mary Archer, Lane Transit District
Charles Biggs, Friends of Eugene
Connie Bloom Williams, point2point
Chuck Gottfried, MWMC
Tom Mitchell, Cal Young Neighborhood Association
Ed Moore, DLCD
Eileen Nittler, River Road Community Association
Jody Ogle, Roads Advisory Committee
Ryan Pape, Eugene Chamber of Commerce
Shane Rhodes, Safe Routes to School
Paul Spain, River Avenue Business
George Staples, Delta Sand and Gravel
Sarah Strand, MPO CAC
Gary Wildish, Santa Clara Community Association

MEMBERS ABSENT: Barb Bellamy, Eugene School District
Michael Brewster, Emergency Services
Heather Hannah, Active Bethel Neighbors
Mike Hawley, Sherman Brothers Trucking

STAFF: Mark Bernard, 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
Julia Kuhn, Kittelson and Associates

PUBLIC: Garrett Dean

LOCATION: Bascom-Tykeson Rooms, Eugene Public Library
100 W 10th Avenue

The meeting started at 5:30 with 14 members in attendance, and one member of the public arrived about 45 minutes before the meeting adjourned. The meeting started with a welcome and introductions by those present.

Each SAC member present received a packet of relevant materials for the 3-ring binder.

The packet contains:

- Tonight's agenda

- PowerPoint Presentation
- Concepts Evaluation Process and Results Memo
- Open House #2 Plan

Kristin introduced the meeting agenda, and asked for comments on the SAC Meeting #5 summary. Paul commented that at the last meeting, he had noted that some of the concepts could potentially cut off river access near the Division Avenue/River Avenue Interchange, especially those that removed the connection underneath the Beltline Highway. He also noted that he was concerned for Lane County's River Rescue operations could be affected by the concepts. Those will be added to the SAC Meeting #5 summary.

Kristin also shared with the group that today's meeting is informational only; no recommendations or decisions were expected at this point. The next two meetings will focus on narrowing the concepts to carry forward in the next phase of the project.

Public Comment

None.

Review Range of Concepts (Shaun Quayle, Kittelson and Associates)

Shaun reviewed each of the concepts for the committee, running through the three low-build concepts, the two medium build, and the four system wide improvements.

Charles asked about the TDM/TSM (transportation demand management and transportation system management) measures. Kristin responded that we are waiting on analysis information to be completed and that it will be added to the evaluation before the public open house on April 16th.

Low-build concepts 1-3 – Shaun ran through all three low-build concepts together

- Gary mentioned that the low build concepts, especially at the Delta Highway and Beltline Highway interchange were more focused on improving safety instead of capacity. Shaun agreed, and added that the low build concepts really address the current friction between the River/Division interchange and the Delta Highway interchange. .
- Paul asked for clarification on how the left turn from eastbound Beltline Highway to Northbound Delta Highway would affect traffic patterns. There is still concern among the committee about how the signal would work. Some members think that it would back traffic up onto Beltline Highway because of the large number of vehicles currently making that movement.
- Charles asked if a visibility barrier between the eastbound and westbound Beltline Highway lanes could improve operations by cutting down on rubbernecking – Shaun and Julia agreed that it would have little if any improvement, and could be something considered during a design phase.
- Sarah clarified that the Low Build 3 would increase capacity on the Beltline Highway across the Willamette River

- Paul asked what the useful life of the low build concepts would be. Specifically, if the committee chose a low build concept as the preferred concept, would that then preclude any future improvements for a long time period? Kristin answered that if the committee's recommendation ended up being a low build option, then it could mean that future higher build concepts would be delayed or not considered until the next round of planning on the facility. She said that this is part of what this committee's role is, to weigh the tradeoffs between cost, construction impacts, and how much improvement is made to the Beltline Highway.

Local arterial – to keep local cross-river trips on an arterial

- Paul asked if the City had been a part of the conversation about this concept seeing as how Beaver Street would see much more traffic. Kristin noted that Beaver Street is actually owned by Lane County, and both the County and the City had been involved in this entire process as part of the PMT and attending the SAC meetings. Both jurisdictions are aware of potential needed upgrades, and there are suggested upgrades that already exist in local transportation plans.

Improved Existing – bring to contemporary form and function

- Chuck asked how the southbound Delta Highway to westbound Beltline movement would happen. Shaun answered that a controlled intersection would be added to the ramp at the north end of the interchange, and traffic would turn left and loop around to go westbound on Beltline Highway.
- Ryan asked how many business impacts would be associated with this concept. Kristin answered that at this level, we are looking at design exceptions to keep the alignment narrow to try and fit it into the existing right of way. The evaluation process looked at general business impacts, but didn't quantify the number because at this level of design, it is impossible to tell exact impacts.
- Charles asked if this concept would shift the centerline of the highway. Kristin answered that is not assumed.
- George noted that it would be difficult to get trucks from Beltline Highway to Delta Sand and Gravel, as this concept routes trucks to local streets that could be negatively impacted.
- Ed asked how the traffic model differentiated between private vehicles and trucks. Julia answered that at this high level of analysis, the model simply accounts for demand, not the types of vehicles. Further analysis could use a truck adjustment factor, and based on the increased size of trucks compared to passenger vehicles.

Split Diamond Concept – construct split diamond interchange between River Road and River/Division interchange

- Charles asked about if the cul-de-sacs shown off Lone Oak would be allowed under city code. Julia explained that other local circulation improvements could be made, if needed, to meet city code.

- Paul mentioned that this concept could remove access to the river and potentially interfere with Lane County Search and Rescue because of the eliminated Beltline Highway undercrossing. Kristin said that this concept doesn't preclude a future river access, and there could still be a local road connection to the river, but that would be determined when more design is done.
- Shane asked how this concept could affect the bike path being built this summer along the river. Kristin and Julia noted that this came up in the evaluation discussion, and that any bike and pedestrian path would be maintained, but possibly need to be rebuilt as a result of this project. Chris noted that as the Beltline Highway project is likely 10+ years out from being constructed, there would be 10 years of utility on the facility that is being built, and then it could be reconstructed. The connection would not be taken out as a result of the project.
- Tom noted that the connection to Lone Oak seems cost effective and potentially easier to accomplish
- Connie asked about the opportunities for fixed route transit. Kristin responded that the local arterial bridge would be a good connection for adding future transit service.
- Charles asked about moving the existing Park and Ride at River Road closer to future service on a new local arterial. Mary noted that there is a lot of detail that would need to be looked at from LTD service planners to determine feasibility.

Auxiliary Lane- Add a merge/diverge lane to the mainline Beltline

- This concept was inadvertently skipped, but was revisited during the evaluation conversation

Collector-Distributor (C-D) Roadway – separate roadway for merge/diverge movements

- Charles noted that the on and off loop ramps looked pretty tight and potentially not to standard. Kristin noted that it is a balance between limiting impacts on the adjacent residences and businesses, and that the Beltline Highway is a highly constrained environment.

Ramp Braid- physically separate the on- and off-ramps

- There was no discussion about the ramp braid concept

Alternative Evaluation Results

Kristin and Julia then walked through the high points of the evaluation based on the evaluation criteria developed at the beginning of this phase.

Mobility, Reliability, and Congestion

Julia walked the group through the evaluation. The project team looked at the mainline Beltline Highway and the local road operations at a very high level, as well as connectivity for all modes.

- There was a question about the assumptions used in the traffic model, and Julia responded that it is based on the current Comprehensive Plans for Eugene and Springfield, and the projected employment and population growth associated with the future land uses in the area. That information is then translated into the number of trips in the region. The model also assumes an increase in non-auto trip making, increasing the mode share of transit and non-automated modes higher than what it currently is.
- Sarah noted that some discussion about current Greenhouse Gas reduction goals suggest a dramatic decrease in VMT of gasoline-powered vehicles.
- There was a question about how each of the concepts was scored, if the scoring was based on the output from the model, or if professional judgments were used. Julia answered that for this measure, it was a combination of model outputs and professional judgment.
- Chuck noted that he was still not convinced that the queuing for northbound and southbound Delta Highway at the interchange from Beltline Highway would be able to accommodate all of the traffic currently using the on and off ramps for the Split Diamond, Local Arterial, C-D Road, Ramp Braid, Auxiliary Lane, and Improved existing concepts. Julia answered that there are signal timing methods and other tweaks that would be discussed during the design phase to make sure that the traffic was accommodated through that controlled intersection.
- Shane suggested that it is impossible to “build our way out of congestion”, and noted that no matter how big we build, as the capacity is there, people will use it, until the future Beltline Highway is congested again. Julia answered that the model assumes that people will change their driving habits and looks at trip diversion to the new facility.

Safety

Julia introduced this criterion, and said that the project team looked at the merging/diverging movements on the mainline, the engineering best practices, and the system redundancy of a new local bridge, or additional capacity across the Willamette River. She noted where the system concepts would add a local arterial bridge – the auxiliary lane and split diamond concepts.

Community livability and economic vitality

Kristin walked through this criterion, and noted that it was qualitative review, and specific business and residential impacts cannot be determined at this level of design. Access to interchange area businesses looked at how much ramp terminals were altered within the concept.

Environmental Impacts

Kristin noted that we were using VMT and vehicle delay as a proxy for greenhouse gas emissions, since the model and methodology are still being developed by ODOT. Julia and Shaun noted that the low build 1 and 2 concepts do not actually change VMT or delay, and should be gray circles as opposed to half circles, but all of the other concepts reduce VMT and vehicle delay, but do not make any major changes in the system-wide VMT and delay. Kristin then noted that Low build 1 and 2 are within the existing right of way, and therefore have no impacts to sensitive habitats, while all of the other larger build concepts would have impacts.

Cost Effectiveness

Julia then walked through the thinking on the “ability to be phased” criterion. The project team did not want to penalize the lower-build options that would not necessarily be phased because they were so small, and all the other higher-build options could be phased in a meaningful way, as money became available except for the ramp braid option, which would need to be built all at once.

Construction costs are very general; in this phase planning level cost estimates will not be prepared. Generally, the low cost concepts do not require a new bridge, medium cost requires a new bridge or additional bridge, and high cost requires significant restructuring of the interchanges and new a new bridge.

Public Comment

None.

Next Steps

Terra talked about the upcoming Open House on March 16th, and discussed the general format and purpose. Kristin reminded the group that the next Project Steering Committee meeting is next Monday, March 1. The next SAC meeting will be in April.

Kristin also asked for feedback on how to present this material to the public at the open house.

- Gary noted that the gray circles are confusing
- Another member mentioned that it would be helpful to have sideboards that show similar projects and costs to give a range of magnitude for the low, medium and high costs associated with the concepts.
- Clear maps are very important
- Paul suggested showing the tradeoffs in terms of time to construct and the benefit associated with the project.
- TDM/TSM measures will be finished and ready to share at the public open house.
- Charles mentioned that a videographer could capture discussion at the open house.

The meeting adjourned at 7:20 p.m.