

# Beltline Highway: Coburg Road to River Road Facility Plan Problem Statement

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## Overview

The facility plan will recommend improvements to the Beltline Highway from Coburg Road to River Road. This facility plan is for a four miles long section of Beltline Highway (OR 569) and includes full interchanges at Coburg Road, Delta Highway, and River Road. It also includes a  $\frac{3}{4}$  interchange at River Avenue/Division Avenue that provides a westbound off-ramp to Division Avenue, and an eastbound off-ramp and eastbound on-ramp at River Avenue. A map showing the interchange locations is included as figure 1. The Beltline Highway is designated as an urban expressway and a freight route and as a state highway on the National Highway System. From both community and technical perspectives, problems on the Beltline Highway relate to traffic volumes, congestion and safety.

The Beltline Highway provides the only crossing of the Willamette River between the I-105/Jefferson Street Bridge in Eugene and the Highway 99E Bridge in Harrisburg. Now over 40 years old, it was constructed by Lane County in the 1960s; ownership transferred to ODOT in 1978. When it was built, it was largely surrounded by rural land uses and very low density suburban land uses; its design reflected that kind of demand. As the community has grown around the Beltline Highway, the intensity of land uses has increased and traffic volumes have grown. Various safety problems have arisen associated with the interchange and inadequate ramp spacing given the more intense urban travel demands. The high traffic volumes and capacity problems on the Beltline Highway are further compounded by its design elements.

This Problem Statement describes the range of issues and concerns about the Beltline Highway that has been identified through technical analysis and conversations with community members. It is intended to include both objective statements (e.g. congestion levels) and subjective statements that reflect the experiences and perspectives of stakeholders. The problem statement will be refined as additional analysis is completed and more public input is received.



Figure 1. Study area interchanges

## Problems

### Beltline Highway

- The Beltline Highway has four through travel lanes carrying between 55,000 and 90,000 cars and trucks each day. The roadway was not designed to carry this volume of traffic, resulting in congestion, especially at peak periods. This congestion contributes to a higher rate of crashes than other similar facilities in the state. Congestion and safety issues are especially problematic between River Road and Delta Highway.
- The Delta Highway and River Avenue/Division Avenue interchanges, and the River Avenue/Division Avenue and River Road interchanges are closely spaced (0.3 and 0.6 miles apart respectively). This close spacing, the short ramp lengths, and inadequate weaving distances increase congestion and increase the risk of crashes.

### Coburg Road Interchange

- A project to improve the Coburg ramps and signals is slated for construction in 2009. This project is a short-term fix and will not address the long-term needs at this location. Some agency stakeholders fear that this will be perceived as a permanent solution.
- The close proximity of local streets and private driveways to ramp terminals contributes to backups for vehicles entering and exiting the facility and may contribute to the higher than average crash rate at this location.
- There is intense commercial development in the northeast and southeast quadrants of the interchange. This interchange was not constructed to accommodate current or future traffic volumes.
- Traffic from the ramps can backup onto Coburg Road.

### Delta Highway Interchange

- This interchange, a  $\frac{3}{4}$  clover leaf design, results in short distances between loop ramps causing increased congestion and potential for crashes.
- Both the Beltline Highway and Delta Highway are congested near this interchange. A high number of people need to change lanes in a short distance as they enter and exit the highways. There is a high incidence of crashes in this area – one of the highest rates of crashes of all ODOT facilities statewide.

- Development has occurred over the last 40 years in this area and will continue to occur resulting in increased traffic volumes at this interchange. This interchange was not constructed to accommodate current or future traffic volumes.
- Some stakeholders have observed frequent crashes on the northbound Delta Highway off-ramp to the eastbound Beltline Highway.

### River Avenue/Division Avenue Interchange

- There is congestion at this location with a rate of crashes that is higher than similar facilities in the state.
- This interchange provides access to a large mining business that is located immediately north of the highway. The business is concerned about loss of access. The proximity of to industrial land uses means that the interchange serves many trucks which need longer distances to accelerate to highway speeds and merge with through traffic.
- The design of the River Avenue/Division Avenue interchange creates limited sight-distance for drivers entering or exiting the Beltline Highway.
- A regional north-south bike path terminates just south of this interchange which means that cyclists with destinations north of the Beltline Highway travel through this congested area. This results in conflicts between auto and bike traffic in this area.
- Pedestrians cross under the Beltline Highway at this location.
- Some stakeholders observed that the close proximity of this interchange to the narrow bridge forces merging to occur in a short distance.

### River Road Interchange

- There is significant congestion for vehicles approaching the Beltline Highway at this location. The congestion is compounded by the proximity of signals, local accesses, and short ramp length.
- The interchange provides important access to businesses and residents in the Santa Clara and River Road neighborhoods. Some stakeholders expressed concern that access at this interchange might be eliminated or reduced through this facility plan process.
- Intense development in the northeast, southeast and southwest quadrants has occurred in the past and will continue to occur resulting in increased traffic volumes at this interchange. The interchange was not constructed to accommodate current or future traffic volumes.
- Regional north-south bike lanes pass through this interchange. The bike movements in this busy area create conflicts between auto and bike traffic.
- Many pedestrians cross River Road in this area which can create conflicts for cars turning onto the ramps.
- The bus slows traffic in the right lane of the northbound on-ramp to the Beltline Highway.

### Study Area

- Some stakeholders have noted that the Beltline Highway, a facility of statewide importance whose primary function is to carry longer distance regional and statewide trips, carries a great number of local trips between the Delta Highway and River Road or

Division Avenue because it is the only place to cross the Willamette River in North Eugene and for several miles north and south of the bridge. There are major natural and community constraints both north and south of the Beltline Highway that make identification of an alternative river crossing corridor difficult.

- Many stakeholders noted that, as a pinch-point on the system, this bridge creates considerable congestion up and downstream on the Beltline Highway. While some stakeholders believed that this situation requires major improvements directly to the Beltline Highway, many also believe that the local road system does not offer enough connectivity for more local east-west trips that may not otherwise need or want to be on a statewide facility like the Beltline Highway.
- The study area includes a range of land uses including single-family and multifamily housing, small-scale retail, large-scale retail and industrial activity. Most of the land on either side of the Beltline Highway is zoned for community commercial or low-density residential development. The area south of the highway between the Delta Highway and the Willamette River has higher intensity uses including housing and retail. The area north of the highway between the Delta Highway and Division Avenue is home to a large mining operation. There is some limited land zoned for agriculture and publicly-owned open space in the corridor. As currently planned, these land uses are capable of producing more traffic volume than can be accommodated by the existing roadway network.