



Meeting Date: August 7, 2008

Purpose: IAMP - Fern Valley Interchange Project
Project Development Team Meeting

Distribution: IAMP Project Development Team, Public

From: Kate Lyman, URS

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Attendees: Stan Bartell, Phoenix
Bob Lewis, Phoenix
Tom Giordano, Phoenix
Mike Kuntz, Jackson County
Peter Schuytema, ODOT
Mike Baker, ODOT
John McDonald, ODOT
John Raasch, ODOT
Christina Fera-Thomas, ODOT
Brian Sheadel, ODOT
Pat Foley, RVCOG
Nancy Reynolds, URS
John Kelly, URS
Kate Lyman, URS

Introduction

John McDonald stated that there was a meeting last night to discuss Interchange Area Management Plan (IAMP) management measures, and that there was good feedback from the community. Given the funding situation, ODOT had determined that it was time to complete the Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) discussions on the IAMP and to start working with the City Planning Commission and City Council. The intent of the CAC meeting was to get feedback on how the CAC members feel about the measures currently being proposed.

John then stated that public comment on the IAMP will now go through the City rather than the CAC, but that the committee members can now contact their elected and

appointed representatives directly. The reason for this is that the project is under a severe time crunch. The Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) won't release funding for this project without an adopted IAMP. If ODOT can reach an agreement with the city on IAMP management measures, there will be several months of work before the IAMP can be sent to the OTC. John stated that he is sympathetic to the position the City is in given the need for system development charge funds.

Tom Giordano stated that the public hearing will be in mid-September along with the Planning Commission meeting. He asked when the City Council meeting would be in September due to Labor Day. Bob Lewis answered that it would be the second week, and that the Planning Commission meeting is the following week. Nancy Reynolds responded that the public hearing is actually going to be in October at the earliest and will be held within the 30-day comment period following publication of the Environmental Assessment (EA). It is a special meeting and probably won't be held in conjunction with a regularly scheduled Planning Commission meeting. She noted that this is the absolute best case schedule for the EA (not the IAMP) hearing.

Bob Lewis stated that the City is looking at holding a joint workshop with the Planning Commission, City Council, and hopefully an ODOT representative to bring the Commission up to speed.

Pat Foley stated that she was confused as to whether they were talking about the IAMP or the EA. Bob Lewis said that they were talking about the IAMP. He said, because of the land use actions in the IAMP, they needed to bring the measures to the Planning Commission as soon as possible and to work with the City Council.

Tom Giordano mentioned that Dave Lewin had brought up the question as to whether or not there was any conflict of interest for him being on the CAC and the Planning Commission. Mike Baker said no, that it is pretty common. He suggested that when it comes to a public hearing, Dave should state that he participated in the process and then whether he feels that he is biased or not. Bob Lewis said that because this is a legislative action, bias is less of an issue and that other Planning Commission members will be able to ask him questions. He suggested coordinating with the Rogue Valley Council of Governments, getting public notice out, and notifying the CAC members of City meetings. Stan Bartell noted that the City Council should be brought up to speed before or during the workshop. Bob Lewis said there should be a public comment period at the end of the workshop.

Tom said that some workshops don't allow the public at all, but instead they have another meeting where the public is allowed to speak. Bob stated that Lenny Neimark and Tani Wouters will want their voices heard, since the IAMP is not yet completed. Stan reminded everyone that it is important for the city to bring in all of the stakeholders. There are still many questions about access management. Information needs to be shared with them, and all the property owners involved need to be notified. Pat said she would share the interested parties list with Stan.

Discussion of IAMP Measures

John McDonald stated that City Council and the Planning Commission should get together and think about what interchange area management tools they support. There is a lot of information at their disposal, and it can be overwhelming. He said that he had brought up the walkable community transition overlay zone—and it was largely rejected, but he went over some of the individual details regarding this tool and some of these details were well-received. John said that ODOT will develop a list of tools and present them like a menu to the City to consider. He said that ODOT wants to protect the interchange, but if there is any way that the IAMP could help support the city's interests—as well as ODOT's state interests—ODOT would support that.

Tom said he was very supportive of the walkable community zone, and that it could be tied to some of the other measures.

John stated that their idea is to have an overarching framework, whether it's a conditional use permit, a trip bank, or the blanket prohibition on uses (which didn't seem popular).

Bob asked if ODOT were keeping the cross-adoption measure—whether or not ODOT was going to require cross-adoption. John stated that they are not looking at cross-adoption with the city of Phoenix – only with Jackson County. ODOT is looking to expand the management area to include PH-5, MD-5 and PH-3, and adopt Jackson County's ordinance to control development there unless the impact on the Fern Valley Interchange is specifically addressed. In this way, ODOT would be acting on behalf of Phoenix.

Stan shared his thoughts that Phoenix doesn't want the perception out there that they are being bullied. He felt everyone supports the walkable community zone, but they support what their planner is looking at—e.g., at Northgate where developers and property owners are working together to help figure out a vision for that area. He said that it is difficult to try and bring in the right mix of stores. Across the valley, they can see vacancy after vacancy, but the question is whether Phoenix can attract a magnet store, such as Trader Joes. A magnet store would really help to pull businesses into the area—and it will take a large residential area to support the businesses and really have a viable community. Walkability on the west side is not ideal because they have to walk across the freeway to the east side businesses. Phoenix has to come up with the walkable community and must work with the developers. Stan was not sure what business mix is coming in, but he said it has to be the right mix to make it all work.

John McDonald said that the city's transportation system plan (TSP) has identified bike and pedestrian corridors. He said there are policies they can work with the city on to further those interests. Also, there are grants available to help develop plans for communities. Grant money is available to help cities craft these policies and realize these visions. Tom reflected that the key problem in Phoenix is the lack of funds. He said that they are going to need a lot of financial support for the upcoming planning. John McDonald stated that Rogue Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization is poised to help

out with the TSP update and ODOT will be able to work with Bob and Tom in discussing some of those funding options. As far as the IAMP, John thought it would be a bit more broad brush, and not specifically discuss bike and pedestrian corridors.

Bob said that at the first Planning Commission workshop they need to just sit down without ODOT's involvement. John McDonald thought also that they could schedule a weekend workshop. If they spend some time on it, and they're very focused on what they're trying to accomplish, that could be a great benefit.

Stan said that he and Tom were working on something of that nature at the present. Tom added that, especially after last night's CAC meeting, there is going to be more work to be done. He said he was going to try and look at some of the good things from the measures and then present a menu of the measures the city would like to see incorporated into the IAMP. Then they could show it to the City Council and Planning Commission and see if they could secure some funding to develop the measures for incorporation into their plan.

In regards to the trip bank, Stan wondered if the traffic that comes from the east side and then gets on the freeway and the traffic coming off of the freeway that is heading north were considered in the traffic count for crossing the freeway—because those cars don't go across the bridge. John McDonald responded by saying that if someone was to put a McDonalds on the east side, one would expect that some people would cross the freeway from the west side to go to that McDonalds. He said the assumption is that people within Phoenix would want to cross the bridge to use a grocery store, a hair salon, a nursing home, etc., as well. So, therefore, the impact won't just be east of the I-5 interchange, but there also will be some sort of impact throughout the area. This is one of the reasons that, prior to development, they request a traffic impact analysis so that the developer can work with ODOT and with the City to try and figure out what that impact might be.

Stan said the management measures give Phoenix leverage with developers, but the final approval rests with Phoenix. However, he was confused in that ODOT then has to also sign off on the projects later. John McDonald explained that was correct, and he said to imagine a timeline, where they start with property that is barren. Then, for example, there is a request to put a Trader Joe's on that property. ODOT would first review the traffic impact study¹ to determine its accuracy; basically, ODOT has the responsibility to determine the accuracy of the traffic impact study. Once the traffic study is done and the anticipated traffic impact of a development is known, it must be determined how the developer is going to solve whatever traffic problems would be caused by the development. ODOT must approve the methods used to solve these traffic problems. The city would talk with the developer about items such as landscaping or setbacks. Ultimately, the decision about whether the developer can develop a property rests with the City. ODOT only focuses on the traffic impact study and whether the methods used to solve the traffic problems are acceptable (i.e., what the developer is proposing to add to the road network). John said that ODOT has a large number of professional engineers that the City doesn't have, and so ODOT is best informed to help make those traffic-

¹ This is also referred to as a traffic impact analysis.

related decisions. The City would then be aware of the problem that would be caused by a specific development.

Tom asked if ODOT could provide a list of questions or a list of things they want to see the applicant produce. Mike Baker stated that ODOT helps to scope any traffic studies. John McDonald stated that ODOT would have final approval responsibility on the scope of work of these traffic studies. Once the traffic impact has been identified and the potential solutions are proposed and evaluated, ODOT would have to approve the solutions (mitigation measures) for the development. But John noted that whether a business is ultimately allowed to develop would still be within the City's authority.

Peter Schuytema noted that it is more about acceptability. Through the traffic impact analysis (TIA) process, they come up with requirements that don't conflict. The consultant will submit their study in pieces so ODOT can approve it as it is being developed. Therefore, when ODOT gets the final numbers at the end of the study, they can basically just check off the entire study if ODOT considers the TIA acceptable. If ODOT deems the study unacceptable, it will be sent back to the consultant and the consultant will have to correct it until ODOT deems it acceptable.

Mike clarified that this methodology (that would be in the IAMP) is like it is today, but they are just going to codify it. Bob Lewis stated that ODOT isn't really going to veto developments; ODOT is just going to require mitigation. John McDonald said that they were already doing that with the Knollcrest property. He said they are going over the scope of work and approving the methodology, and will be relying on the TPR. In this case (the IAMP), they would have measures that would have wider application.

Stan stated that the end result in twenty years is that Phoenix would not look like it does now. John McDonald agreed and added that (with the project in place) there won't be the heavy traffic congestion, but they also want to preserve the capacity of the interchange—and the measures are meant to help do this. John stated that when he talked to former Mayor Bayer and former Planning Director Janelle Wintergreen, there were a lot of ideas for development that would bring living wage jobs to the community. He said they need to preserve capacity at that interchange, so when they get to the point of bringing in more development, the City will have the infrastructure set up so that they can support that development.

Stan suggested that this potential development is so far off that by the time it occurs, the interchange would have reached capacity. He wondered if people building at the Centennial Golf Course will have finished before the interchange is completed. He suggested that a lot of development northeast of the interchange will occur quickly in Medford. John McDonald responded that ODOT is going to work on making sure that Medford and other cities also work to help solve some of the transportation impacts that they cause through development approvals. Also, it will be important to work on making sure that other jurisdictions take some responsibility for the impacts they cause to Interchange 24. John indicated that when he speaks of living wage jobs, he agrees that commercial growth can be good, but usually a number of businesses don't pay really well

(compared to heating/air conditioning, software development, plumbing, etc., which are solid family-wage jobs). The intent is to have the industrial zone in PH-5 generate those kinds of living-wage jobs. If Phoenix is in an economic position to have those jobs located in the area, they will need to have some capacity available.

John Raasch stated that is one of the key examples as to why ODOT wants to have approval of the traffic methodology. He said that the conclusions in the traffic impact study will determine whether or not mitigation is required and what mitigation measures would help to keep capacity available and ensure future growth and development. This way, they can ensure that developers are helping to provide for additional capacity so that the City can keep developing in the future.

Mike Baker said they are planning on a twenty-year horizon, but that doesn't mean that ODOT will rebuild the interchange again in twenty years if it can no longer handle the traffic. Bob stated that their regional transportation plan is trying to address that issue as well. He said Medford is actually pushing for a South Stage overcrossing, which would alleviate problems at Exit 24, and Medford is starting to move forward on plans for that overcrossing. Stan objected, saying the South Stage overpass would only help with about 10% of the traffic, if that. Peter responded that it would depend. If the overpass is considered given the current development patterns, it would be about 10%. But he said that once the area between Medford and Phoenix starts to develop, the overcrossing would have more impact in helping to handle traffic volumes. He added that the effect of the South Stage overcrossing is dependent on the time that this area develops. Once development occurs in this area (e.g., with the Medford Southeast Plan or development in northeast Phoenix), the overcrossing becomes a necessity.

Stan stated that the area in southwest Medford is open for development, and when that is developed, it will load the Fern Valley Interchange much more. He wondered if ODOT knows that the interchange is going to reach capacity, then why not put an interchange in at South Valley. In PDT meeting #7, the project team stated that, "Once the capacity was reached for Fern Valley Interchange, that would give them the authority to exceed the space and exception rule that they have now to put in an interchange." He asked why they shouldn't address that now. They are going to spend a lot of money putting in an overpass. Stan and his wife, Carol, are currently writing a letter to ODOT. Since Stan is a pilot, he has flown over the valley during peak hours, and he can see where the traffic is congested. He asked why I-5 is not being widened to accommodate increasing numbers of commuters between Medford and Ashland.

Peter commented that a study for widening I-5 is currently underway and the goals are to meet the standards for I-5. He said that it is possible that when they build the interchange, they may have to widen I-5 or OR 99. He thought that OR 99 needed some changes because it is getting too busy. He also suggested widening N. Phoenix Road to create additional capacity north to south. An increase of connectivity would be needed before ODOT puts in another interchange. He said that when it's not feasible to widen OR 99 or I-5 anymore, then ODOT will look at South Stage. If the South Stage overcrossing does go in, it can be designed so that is inexpensive to add ramps at a later time. Therefore, it

would be possible to get the benefit of the overcrossing at a time when it would be hard to justify an interchange.

Tom asked about the possibility of a development fund. He stated that development in Medford will supply some sort of a fund for future development of the South Stage interchange. John McDonald agreed that it would be possible to arrange some kind of IGA between the jurisdictions and ODOT to have funds set aside. Tom added that he knew there would be some residential development occurring in that area, so maybe it would be possible to get some of that money to go to the overcrossing.

John McDonald stated that a lot of people are looking at these issues, and it is necessary to take small steps. ODOT could not look at an interchange (it would not meet standards) at South Stage, but they could look at an overcrossing. Medford has submitted a request for an earmark. It would be possible to design the overcrossing so that if the need arises, ramps could be added. The South Medford interchange, South Stage overcrossing and Fern Valley interchange are so geographically close, that it could potentially create a dangerous traffic situation.

Traffic

Stan stated that if queuing reached north from OR 99 about 3,300 feet, it would put the queue past the Harley Davidson shop and almost to Glenwood. He was worried that if that was the case, there was going to be some difficulty crossing OR 99 in either direction. John McDonald pointed out that that queue is only during commute times—and that weekends and weekdays outside of the peak hours would be better.

Stan joked that there wouldn't be a problem with Phoenix putting in a superstore if they had business hours from 7 PM to 6 AM. He said that for people traveling from Rose Street onto OR 99, it will be really difficult to move around, so it would be helpful having a stoplight. But, at this time, Coleman Creek Estates is on Rombach's property. He has watched traffic at OR 99 and has seen as many as 33 cars back up, so he thought that as it gets worse, it will be more difficult for people from Coleman Creek Estates to exit their neighborhood.

John McDonald stated that, as a part of this project, the traffic signal locations have already been decided. He added that the Coleman Creek Estates access is so close to the Fern Valley Road, that it would take a lot to synchronize the signals to work together.

Christina Fera-Thomas said that there would be a longer queue on OR 99 if they put a signal in at Rose Street; Peter agreed. Bob added that access would be tougher for mobile home parks in the area. Brian Sheadel said that one of the considerations between Cheryl and Coleman Creek was, if they signalized at Cheryl, they would have to rebuild the bridge (due to the angle of connection) – which would be another 5 to 7 million dollars.

Peter said he and others have looked at signals at the other streets, but there was not enough traffic volume. He said that there was potential to move the signal to Cheryl in

the future, because there is a definite need to enhance pedestrian crossings since the highway goes straight through town. Stan said he would like to put a frontage road in to mitigate all the traffic in one spot. John McDonald suggested that they bring that suggestion up during their TSP update because that is a better time to look at those issues.

Stan said that when the City Council meets, they will have fewer personal interests dictating what needs to occur than there is on the CAC. He said that if the IAMP were to happen again, he's not sure if the CAC should be set up in the same way. John McDonald said that it wasn't originally set up that way and there were a lot of compromises along the way. He added that when it comes to property owners and developers in the short term, their interests and the city's interests are close, but in the long term the city's interest and ODOT's interests are really close.

Mike said they would try to refine the measures to incorporate comments on them before the City Council meeting so that they could have a more firm idea of some of the thoughts of the CAC. Pat asked Bob if he would be attending the meetings, given the historical perspective that he had. Bob stated that he would attend.

Stan wondered what would happen if there was a developer looking to put in a major development, but the available trip bank wasn't enough to accommodate that development. He compared it to a development in Fresno that was losing tenants until the developers brought in Macy's. The development immediately filled up. He asked what Phoenix or ODOT would do if they wanted to secure the development but didn't have enough traffic capacity.

John McDonald said he hopes that the city would be prepared for that. But assuming the situation comes to pass, it could be similar to what happened with Home Depot, where they negotiated a combination of less square footage and more mitigation. They've already negotiated a lot of mitigation from Home Depot, so it could be some combination of less square footage and more mitigation. There are ways to develop site plans that can minimize the amount/kind of uses. Stan then wondered if it wouldn't be prudent for Phoenix to set aside some trip capacity for the future. Mike reminded him that is really what that bank is about, and in some cases it will reserve some trip capacity for uses that may exceed the allocation that was given to that property.

Stan stated that they have been realistic, but if everything has developed around them, he wondered if they would still be able to develop. Mike said that it may be simple market forces in play - when you don't have the capacity available, development may not want to come. Tom asked that if they were to play by the rules and have some trips in the bank, and then because of other development beyond their control the interchange is used up, would they still be allowed to develop. John McDonald said yes, they would. He then said that ODOT was also taking a risk. He added that maybe the City of Phoenix could think long-term and set aside some money to eventually widen OR 99.

Stan brought up the stoplight at OR 99 and wondered if having a stoplight at Fern Valley and again another 500 feet later would help traffic flow. He wondered if it would make

more sense to bring Fern Valley and Cheryl Lane together and have one stoplight. Christina and Peter said that that option was considered, but it wasn't popular. Stan responded that it was not all of the business community against it; it was some of businesses that ended up having their way.

John McDonald indicated that just because it has been dismissed from the EA doesn't mean that in the TSP update, it can't be revisited. John Raasch said that they weren't supposed to segment projects. He thought it was kind of fuzzy sometimes where termini are for projects. Peter added that unless someone reinvested in the Bear Creek Bridge, they should leave it where it was. A lot of alternatives hinged on different bridge crossings. John Raasch wondered if anything would stop Phoenix from widening OR 99 in the future. Brian stated that the two main problems with OR 99 that need to be fixed are the issue of queuing, and dealing with left turns off of OR 99 going towards the freeway. He also said the intersection at Bolz Road could accommodate long queuing distances.

Stan wondered what would happen to access at Cheryl Lane if there was an accident at Ray's that stopped traffic. He added that the City is not gaining anything for their infrastructure, and asked if there was anyway they could push to get something done at Cheryl because it would be cheaper to build it in now rather than down the road.

John Raasch said that ODOT plans to purchase the ROW now for the Fern Valley and OR 99 mitigation measure (adding turn lanes). However, it's so late in the process, that it's not possible to revisit moving the Bear Creek Bridge. Peter wondered if they could cut the corner off the Ray's parking lot and potentially displace Ray's. He noted that it could be looked at in the TSP. John Raasch stated that there was nothing in NEPA that would stop them from doing that, and he wondered if that was feasible from a design perspective. Brian confirmed it could be done.

Roundabout

Tom wondered if a roundabout had any potential. He stated that Christina looked at it and noted problems with access. But he wondered if there was any opportunity to bring it up again, with some more emphasis. Christina didn't know how much they had looked at the roundabout. Peter added that, from a geometry standpoint, it had difficulties. The idea was to preserve the property inside the triangle as functional. There are only 3 equal legs, which creates issues from an operational standpoint because roundabouts function better with 4 equal legs. Also, trying to make everyone's accesses work would be difficult. Peter said that a roundabout would basically involve tearing everything down around it, putting the roundabout in, and then rebuilding everything.

John McDonald suggested that when they update the TSP, they will have a chance to bring it up again. But he said that this (EA) process was too far along, and re-looking at that option would be costly. Tom suggested it might be worth the expense if it really solved the problems. Stan said it would take out a big tax base of Phoenix. Tom wondered if the triangle would be big enough. Brian stated that the triangle was big

enough, but access to each business would be difficult to engineer. Peter stated the issue was with the whole triangle; Christina added that it was hard to fit it in an existing plan.

Peter said, in regards to the TSP process, that the City may have a lack of current vision of where it wants to go, but it would be possible to develop future plans using a visioning process. He suggested the possibility of Phoenix 2050, where the triangle is a big and radically different roundabout. In some of the more successful TSPs out there, the city has a vision of where it wants to go. He noted that Phoenix seems to have a conflict between wanting to be a walkable community with its own employment base versus being bedroom community for Medford.

Update on EA document

Nancy Reynolds stated that they wouldn't have specificity going into the EA document, in terms of IAMP measures. She said that right now the first draft of the EA is with ODOT, and it will go through a couple of different rounds of review. They still have more integration to do because the IAMP process has been parallel to the EA.

Conclusion

John McDonald asked if there was anything else anyone wanted to say. He asked if he could confirm that the major thing they had decided was that the Planning Commission and City Council will meet alone and then, at some point, they would bring in ODOT staff and John Kelly to discuss the measures with the City Council.

Tom said a joint meeting would probably be at the end of August, or the beginning of September. He said the Planning Commission was starting to get very busy, so they would have to have a special meeting.

John Raasch stated that the \$70 million dollars that have been programmed for this project could go away if the timeline is not met. Since the schedule is pretty optimistic, they were hoping that things go really quickly and smoothly. He said that if there was any way that the Planning Commission could have a special meeting, it would really help them. Tom suggested they have a meeting on Tuesday, August 19th. Bob agreed. Stan said he could take the lead on putting together questions from the Planning Commission and City Council. Bob emphasized that they need to bring the Planning Commission up to speed. Tom stated that ODOT should come back on the evening of September 9th and work with the City. Stan suggested they email questions to ODOT on how to address the measures to them ahead of time.

John McDonald thanked everyone for their hard work. He emphasized the importance of their assistance, and how they were changing the face of their town for the next 20 to 40 years. He noted that it is worth the effort, so they could adjust the trip bank as needed.

Stan asked if, once the trip bank was used up, they could reserve trip counts for south valley employment. John McDonald answered that whatever is in the bank is in the bank,

so they could say no when people ask for it. Stan stated that they want to build out to have a financial base, so they aren't at the mercy of one land developer. He said they needed residential development to support the local businesses.

John McDonald suggested they all could revisit some of the Regional Problem Solving assumptions. Phoenix is saving a lot of land for the high school, but he wondered if they really needed that. He suggested that maybe they are not as stretched for land as they think, and perhaps there are property owners willing to work with them. Stan said they are bound by what the LCDC says. Urban Reserve PH-2 went to the school district because they asked to have it. There are plans to have it on the east side in the MD-5 area, which is a really choice area. When Mayor Parducci was there, the Council was one vote short of voting to bring this area into the city's urban growth boundary.

Tom said that some of the land area has a lot of history. John McDonald stated that he couldn't speak specifically to what the land would support, knowing the traffic situation, but he said he knew that ODOT would be supportive of revisiting some assumptions that were made in the past. He suggested that perhaps some of those assumptions are ones that the City would consider looking at again.

John McDonald mentioned a comment from CAC member Lisa Sandrock, who asked why Phoenix doesn't become a solid, great bedroom community to Medford. Others want it to be an industrial center. John McDonald said that it's going to take a lot of political will to set a vision and stick to it. Tom said he liked the concept of having living wage jobs. The average income is very low in Phoenix, and the Rogue Valley average is below the state average. Therefore, living wage jobs are a must.

John McDonald agreed that they have some hard decisions ahead. He re-stated that ODOT's interest is in protecting the capacity of the interchange.

Bob asked when the PDT could meet again. Nancy suggested after the public hearing because they will want to see the comments on the EA all together. She said she would put together a document that includes all the comments. She emphasized that the decision on the alternatives needs to be made by the PDT with a CAC recommendation.

Stan asked if there was a limit to the number of questions they could send. Mike replied no, but jokingly stated that perhaps there would be a limit to the number of answers.

John McDonald stated that two to three months ago they had all these different ideas on how to manage the interchange. Then, last night they presented three simple, direct ideas. He suggested that they don't need to be simple with their questions, because they are trying to come up with something that works. Mike stated that they may even come up with something else during the process. John McDonald said that Jay Harland had a nice idea about different bank numbers for land use types, and that ODOT is happy to entertain new ideas.