

Fern Valley Interchange: Considerations for Bike and Pedestrian Facilities

Many issues have been brought to light as the CAC and PDT work through appropriate solutions for the traffic issues at the Fern Valley Interchange. One of these issues is how to adequately address bicycle and pedestrians within the project area, particularly with respect to Highway 99 (OR 99). The project management team and stakeholder groups recognize this as an important consideration that must be addressed as alternative development moves forward. When retrofitting existing facilities in urban environments, providing bicycle and pedestrian facilities often means the acquisition of additional right of way. These impacts need to be addressed, and the pros and cons weighed, for each alternative as we move forward. Ultimately, the teams will need to find common ground on the appropriate balance of accommodating this important stakeholder group and the acquisition of additional right of way. This memo outlines some important policy issues related to this topic and provides insight into the various concepts currently being considered to address bike and pedestrian issues.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Policy

ODOT is required by law (ORS 366.514) to accommodate bikes and pedestrians when constructing new or retrofitting existing transportation facilities. To comply with this law ODOT has developed the Oregon Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/BIKEPED/docs/or_bicycle_ped_plan.pdf). This plan outlines implementation strategies and provides design detail on appropriate methods to accommodate bicycles and pedestrians during project development.

Understanding that each project presents unique opportunities and constraints, as well as different bicycle and pedestrian user types, the standards that apply vary depending on the particular project. Therefore, the standards are not “prescriptive”, but rather provide the design team with a toolbox of different ways to accommodate bicycles and pedestrians.

Highway 99

The majority of the discussion around this topic has been centered around the appropriate way to accommodate bicycles on Highway 99 (OR 99). It is assumed that any project improvements outside of the area of OR 99 will be built to the ODOT standard. The project teams, in trying to accommodate the concerns of the community, as well as biking enthusiasts, have come up with four different concepts to accommodate bikes along OR 99. These concepts are summarized below:

Concept 1: Full Bike and Pedestrian Facilities

This treatment would provide bicycle lanes and sidewalks in each direction. The bike lanes and sidewalks would be constructed to the full ODOT standard, which is 6-foot bike lanes and 6-foot sidewalks. While fully accommodating bikes and pedestrians, the resulting cross-section would require the acquisition of additional right of way along OR 99, and would likely impact some of the existing businesses. This concept could be applied to any of the alternatives currently under consideration.

Concept 2: Reduced Cross-Section

In an attempt to minimize impacts to existing businesses, the teams have developed a reduced cross-section on OR 99. This treatment would include a shared outside lane in both directions for vehicles and bicycles, which would be 14 feet in width (the standard travel lane is 12 feet). The cross section of the inside travel lanes were also reduced to 11 feet to minimize impacts. In general, sidewalks would remain at 6 feet where the width would not impact existing businesses. Where impacts would occur, sidewalk width may vary, but would not be reduced below the minimum standard of 5 feet. This concept could be applied to any of the alternatives currently under consideration.

Concept 3: Parallel Bike Route

This concept looks at creating a parallel bike route adjacent to OR 99, using the existing street network. While this concept could be applied to any of the alternatives under consideration, its impacts have not been fully evaluated. ODOT policy is that when a parallel route is established in lieu of accommodating bicycles on the mainline, the parallel route must be brought up to standard. This would entail constructing bike lanes on the parallel route and may require right of way acquisition. Reducing travel lane widths and restriping may also be an option for providing a parallel bike path that may reduce right of way impacts. While this is still an option, it is always better to accommodate bicycles on the mainline, as rerouting bicycle traffic to city streets can lead to safety concerns for bicyclists (see Page 54 in the Bicycle Plan for a more detailed discussion). This option can be further explored if the teams wish. (This concept could be combined with other bike/pedestrian options.)

Concept 4: Reducing Travel Lane Widths

In some projects it may be appropriate to reduce the width of the vehicle travel lane to provide for a bike lane (see Page 81 in the Bicycle Plan for a more detailed discussion). Given the expected volume that OR 99 is anticipated to carry, and the fact that some alternatives require acute turning movements (i.e., OR 99 and Bolz), reducing travel lanes may not be an appropriate design option for this section of highway. In addition, as mentioned in Concept 2 above, alternatives have been developed that reduced the travel lanes to 11 feet. Further reduction in travel lane widths would likely not be approved. However, this option can be further explored if the teams wish.

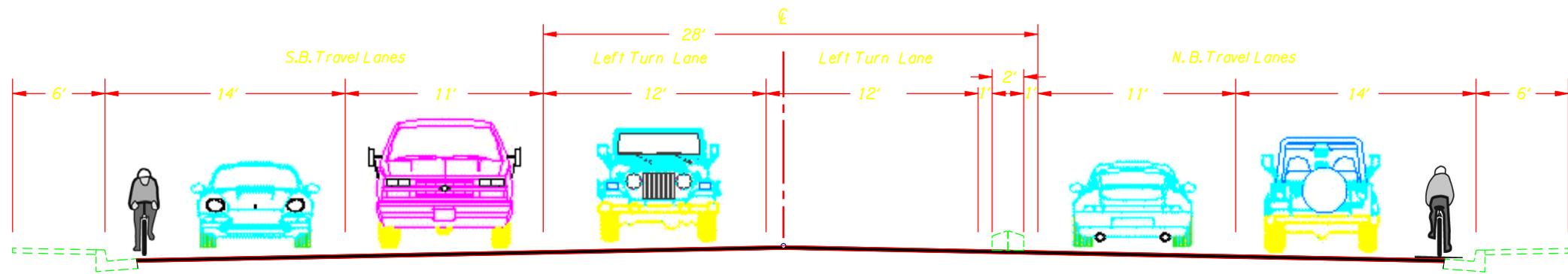
Other Issues

There has also been some discussion regarding the need to address the existing stormwater grates, as they are currently unsafe for bicyclists. This issue is addressed on Page 73 of the Bicycle Plan, and will be addressed during final design of the project.

Summary

As we continue to work through alternatives to solve the safety and congestion problems at the Fern Valley interchange, the teams will need to continue to discuss, evaluate, and come to agreement on the best way to accommodate bicycles and pedestrians for the project. This will no doubt necessitate some give and take from all involved. The two attached cross-sections show how Concept 1 and Concept 2 would look if implemented.

HIGHWAY 99
REDUCED IMPACT SECTION



HIGHWAY 99
STANDARD HIGHWAY SECTION

