

Highway 62 Corridor Project

Citizens Advisory Committee
and
Project Development Team
Handbook



December 2009

About this Handbook

The Highway 62 Corridor Solutions Project Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) and Project Development Team (PDT) first met in the fall of 2004. Between August 2004 and May 2007, the two groups met nearly every month to provide input and guide the project development.

Between May 2007 and August 2009, the PDT and CAC took a break from meeting while project staff conducted technical analyses and proceeded with agency coordination, design refinements, and other work.

When the PDT and CAC reconvened for a joint meeting on August 2009, it became evident that a project summary would be useful. The intent of this handbook is to provide a very brief overview of the project development for use as a quick reference or refresher guide. More detailed information about any of the topics covered in this handbook can be found in the PDT/CAC meeting materials and minutes or on the project's web site: http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/REGION3/hwy62_index.shtml.



A CAC meeting

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Project Vicinity

Figure 1-1
June 2009



Map Features

-  Highway 62
-  City Limits

RTP Project Timing

-  long
-  medium
-  short

Source: Jackson County GIS, RVMPO 2009 RTP



0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles



Project Background

- Mid-1990s** DOT Technical Team evaluated the practicality of increasing capacity in the OR 62 Corridor.
- 1997** The Highway 62 Corridor Solutions Project began.
- 1997-2000** The Solution Team identified and evaluated a variety of alternatives for OR 62.
- 2000** In response to funding constraints, recent case law and changes in Federal Highway Administration Policy (FHWA), the Solutions Team divided the corridor into two study areas: Unit 1 (the North Medford Interchange) and Unit 2 (OR 62 from the interchange north through White City).
- 2001** A Draft Environmental Assessment and a Revised Environmental Assessment were published for Unit 1. In October, the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) was issued.
- 2003** Construction of the North Medford Interchange began.
- 2004** ODOT began the environmental process for Unit 2. Although the 1997-2000 study had included some full-corridor studies, ODOT decided to conduct a new alternatives analysis process for this phase.
- 2004-2007** The project team identified and evaluated a variety of alternatives for OR 62. Four alternatives were scrutinized closely, but the two alternatives that called for improving the existing highway were eventually dismissed due to the number of business displacements (see p. 28 of this book for details). The wide range of alternatives was eventually narrowed to two: a bypass with a split diamond interchange and a bypass with a directional interchange.
- 2007-2009** Technical evaluations and further coordination with various agencies revealed the need to study additional design options that would reduce impacts to biological resources north of Vilas Road and to sensitive populations at the VA SORCC.
- 2009** The Oregon Legislature the Oregon Jobs and Transportation Act (HB 2001) that provided \$100 million in funding for the Highway 62 Corridor Solutions Project. The spirit of the legislation calls for construction to be underway by 2013. What would normally be a consecutive process of selecting a preferred alternative then developing a phasing plan for designing and building the alternative in segments became a concurrent process of completing the Environmental Impact Statement process for the corridor and at the same time refining the design for the primary corridor segment that would be built with State funding.

The NEPA Process:

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

NEPA is the regulatory framework that requires in-depth technical analysis of the full range of potential impacts of each of the alternatives.

Every project that receives federal funds is required to follow this process to make sure that all reasonable and feasible alternatives are thoroughly evaluated. This is documented in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

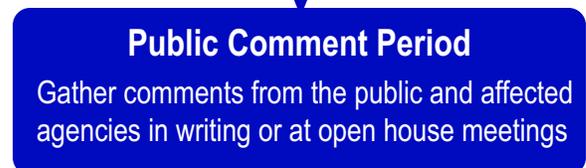
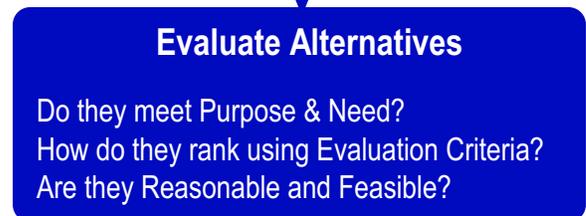
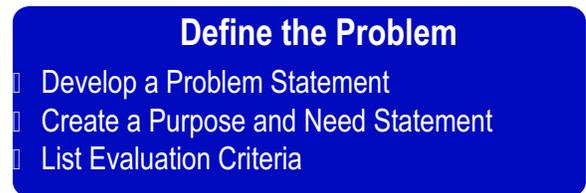
During the EIS process, alternatives are narrowed based on evaluation criteria and public input. Those alternatives that have too great an impact on the natural, social, or cultural environment are dismissed.

Alternatives that meet the purpose and need, that rank highly based on the evaluation criteria, and that appear to be reasonable and feasible are advanced for further study.

Technical specialists analyze those alternatives' impacts and recommend ways to minimize impacts or, if the impacts are unavoidable, mitigate for those impacts.

The DEIS is compiled based on the detailed technical analyses. After ODOT and FHWA reviews, the DEIS is published for public and agency review.

During the public comment period, comments are gathered from the general public, local governments, affected agencies, and other sources. Those comments are collected and compiled, and become part of the project documentation.



An Overview



The preferred alternative is selected based on the results of the technical analysis and the comments received.

Mitigation measures that were identified in the technical studies are developed and included as part of the preferred alternative's design. Mitigation measures are often a necessary part of the process of acquiring permits and obtaining agency clearances.

If the project is so large that it must be built in stages, a phasing plan is developed. Each phase must be shown to have "independent utility," meaning that it can function as a stand-alone improvement, and "logical termini," or beginning and end points that make sense. Because projects typically have a 25-year planning horizon, some parts of a preferred alternative may not be needed (or built) for decades.

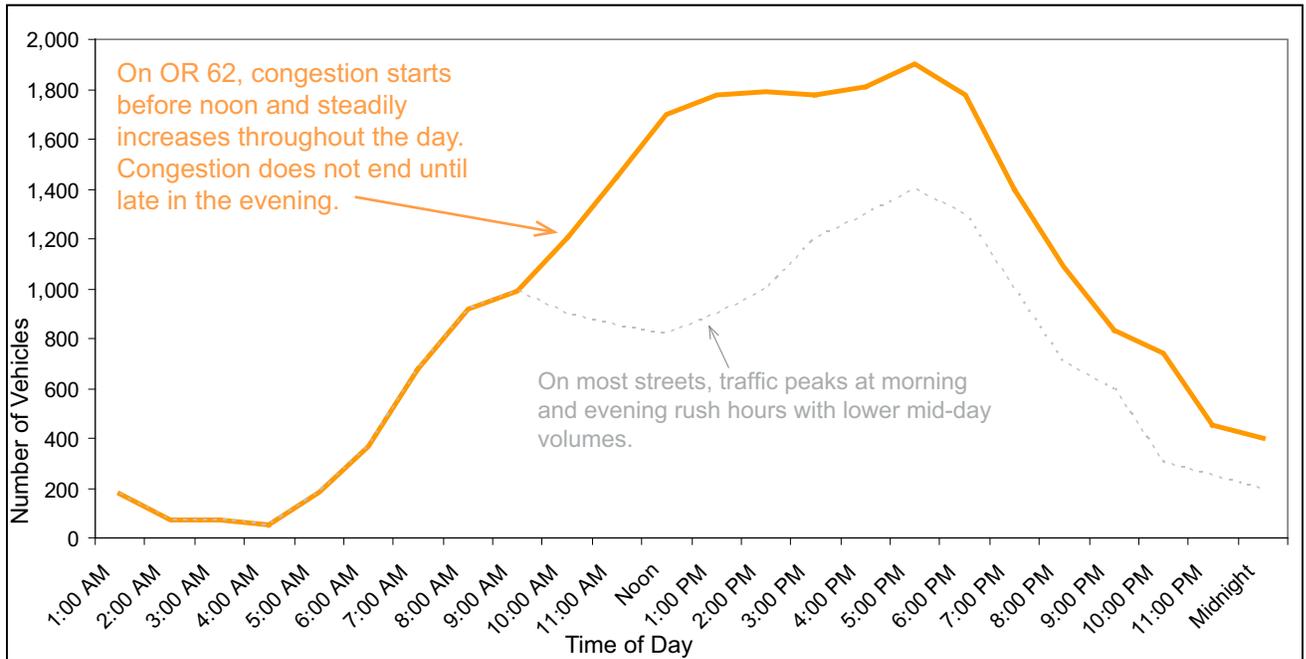
Any changes in the preferred alternative's design that were made as a result of design refinements, mitigation strategies, or the phasing plan are evaluated and compiled into a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS).

All necessary permits, agency coordination, and regulatory requirements must be taken care of before a Record of Decision can be issued. However, some permits cannot be acquired until construction plans exist. Those last few permits are acquired prior to construction.



Traffic Problem Statement

Because of high traffic volumes, 6 out of 20 intersections on OR 62 fail to meet mobility standards. If traffic volumes continue to increase as they have in the past, more intersections will fail in the future.



Crash rates on OR 62 are higher than statewide averages in a number of areas

Crash Rates on OR 62 for Years 2002-2006 (per million vehicle miles traveled)

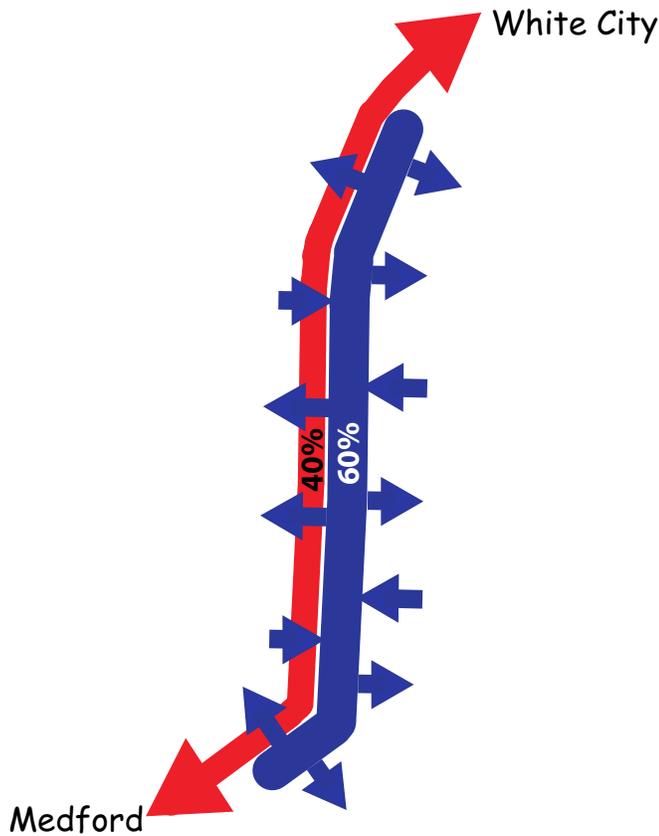
Year		Statewide Crash Rate	I-5 to Coker Butte Road	Coker Butte Road to Justice Road	Justice Road to OR 140	OR 140 to Dutton Road
2006	Urban City	2.24	2.09	1.49	--	--
	Suburban	1.45	--	--	0.76	2.77
2005	Urban City	2.26	2.17	1.72	--	--
	Suburban	1.39	--	--	0.94	1.86
2004	Urban City	2.05	2.24	2.89	--	--
	Suburban	1.17	--	--	0.67	1.89
2003	Urban City	3.14	2.89	0.92	--	--
	Suburban	1.29	--	--	0.65	2.95
2002	Urban City	2.71	1.3	1.3	--	--
	Suburban	2.12	--	--	0.8	1.38

Cells in black are for rates that exceed statewide averages

Source: ODOT

Origins and Destinations

OR 62 serves a variety of needs: commuters use it to travel between Medford and communities to the north (White City and Eagle Point); tourists use it to get to Crater Lake and other scenic destinations; freight uses it for moving goods; and consumers use it on their way to and from the many businesses along OR 62 itself.



Traffic studies show that people making local trips on OR 62 -- trips that either begin or end at some point in the OR 62 corridor -- comprise about 60% of the traffic on OR 62. This means that over half of the vehicles on OR 62 are there because they are heading to or coming from a business on OR 62. Even if a parallel route were provided, these vehicles would still use OR 62 to get to or from their business.

The other 40% of the vehicles on OR 62 are simply passing through on their way somewhere else. They are on OR 62 because it provides the best connection for their trip. If a parallel route existed, they may well take the alternate route if it were faster or less congested.



Purpose and Need



Project Purpose

The purpose of the proposed action is to address current and future highway capacity needs, improve intersection operations and to provide enhanced transportation safety and multimodal opportunities in the Highway 62 corridor from Poplar Drive (MP 0.89) , north to Avenue H (MP 7.36) White City.

Need

System Linkage

- OR 62 between I-5 and OR 140 is classified as part of the Statewide National Highway System.
- OR 62 north from Delta Waters Road is classified as an Expressway in recognition of the state, regional and local importance of this corridor and the vital role it plays in the economic well-being of the Rogue Valley and the State of Oregon.

Traffic Volumes

- Since 1990, population growth in both Jackson County and the City of Medford has exceeded the statewide average and this trend is expected to continue. Increased population leads to increased traffic volumes.
- Development in and around the OR 62 corridor has led to increased traffic volumes and congestion.
- Continued development has increased congestion and caused lengthy delays that are costly for both commerce and individuals.
- In 2004 over 46,000 vehicles used this portion of the OR 62 corridor daily (this is similar to the volumes on I-5 through Medford). Future planned growth will increase volumes to approximately 70,000 vehicles in the next twenty years.

Intersection Operations

- Key intersections are becoming highly congested: vehicles often must wait through multiple cycles before getting through an intersection.
- When the purpose and need statement was written, five of the eleven signalized intersections in the study area failed to meet mobility standards, as did several non-signalized intersections.
- These conditions have reduced the highway's ability to meet the demands of the Expressway classification.

Purpose and Need

Need (continued)

Safety

A long history of crash and congestion issues, in addition to the highway no longer meeting the prescribed mobility standards, led to the initial Highway 62 Corridor Solutions project in 1997. The need to evaluate the crash and congestion issues along the corridor and identify potential solutions was an original impetus for the project.

- There were 456 reported crashes on OR 62 between I-5 and White City in 2000-2003.
- Between 2000-2003, crash rates on OR 62 exceeded statewide rates for similar facilities between Poplar Drive and Delta Waters Road and Corey Road and Antelope Road. ODOT reduced speed limits and increased signage to improve safety, but between 2002-2006, crash rates on OR 62 were still higher than statewide average in a number of areas (see the table on page 6).

Multimodal Facilities

- Sidewalks are intermittent along OR 62, forcing pedestrians to walk on the shoulder in many areas.
- Signalized crossings are spaced far apart, thus increasing the temptation to dash across the highway at an unsignalized location.
- OR 62 is a very wide road, so walking across it even at a signalized intersection can be an intimidating experience.
- RVTD runs buses on OR 62, but inadequate pedestrian facilities provide a disincentive (or, in some cases, a barrier) to use transit.
- Although bicycle lanes exist along the southern portion of OR 62 and a wide shoulder exists along the rest of OR 62, the high speeds, high traffic volumes, and debris that is often present make OR 62 an unappealing and unsafe bicycle route.



Goals and Objectives



During the alternatives analysis phase of the project, the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) and Project Decision Team (PDT) composed a set of goals and objectives to facilitate the comparison of alternatives.

Goal 1 (Multi modal): Ensure solution provides for safe alternative modes of transportation

Objectives:

- Improve/increase bike and pedestrian facilities in the corridor
- Improve bike and pedestrian connectivity in the corridor
- Provide opportunities for increased transit usage
- Consider a separated multi-use path in corridor
- Provide safe bike and pedestrian facilities

Goal 2 (Environmental): Protect and enhance the natural environment

Objectives:

- Minimize air quality impacts
- Protect and enhance native fish and wildlife habitat
- Avoid or minimize impacts to ESA listed species and their habitats
- Avoid or minimize impacts to wetlands/vernal pools
- Avoid or minimize impacts to aquatic resources
- Minimize impacts to water quality
- Minimize noise impacts
- Enhance the visual/aesthetic landscape
- Avoid or minimize impacts to cultural resources

Goal 3 (Economic): Maintain economic vitality in the corridor

Objectives:

- Provide for safe and efficient movement of freight
- Minimize impacts to businesses and residents
- Provide accessibility for businesses
- Encourage opportunities for economic development
- Develop solutions that allow construction phasing relative to funding

Goals and Objectives

Goal 4 (Safety): Ensure the solution is safe for all modes of transportation

Objectives:

- Follow applicable design standards
- Reduce the number and severity of crashes and conflict points
- Apply access management standards within the corridor
- Accommodate emergency vehicles

Goal 5 (Transportation): Provide a solution that addresses capacity and connectivity needs

Objectives:

- Meet design year capacity needs (v/c, LOS)
- Provide facilities that meet user expectations (signage, visibility, etc)
- Provide efficient connectivity within the corridor
- Find a balance between different users (through vs. local) needs
- Design a facility that meets or approaches applicable design standards

Goal 6 (Planning): Ensure the solution is compatible with existing land use and transportation plans

Objectives:

- Comply with Medford's land use and transportation plans
- Comply with county land use and transportation plans
- Comply with White City's land use and transportation plans
- Comply with Regional transportation planning goals
- Comply with State land use and transportation planning goals
- Minimize impacts to farmland (EFU) and forestland

Goal 7 (Social): Enhance community livability and quality of life

Objectives:

- Design transportation facilities that are visually pleasing
- Address all user groups
- Minimize impacts to neighborhoods within and adjacent to the project area



Design Constraints



There are some design constraints in the OR 62 project area: the Medford International Airport's runway protection zones; numerous vernal pool complexes; and the Ken Denman Wildlife Area. Impacts to these areas are regulated through federal and state laws.

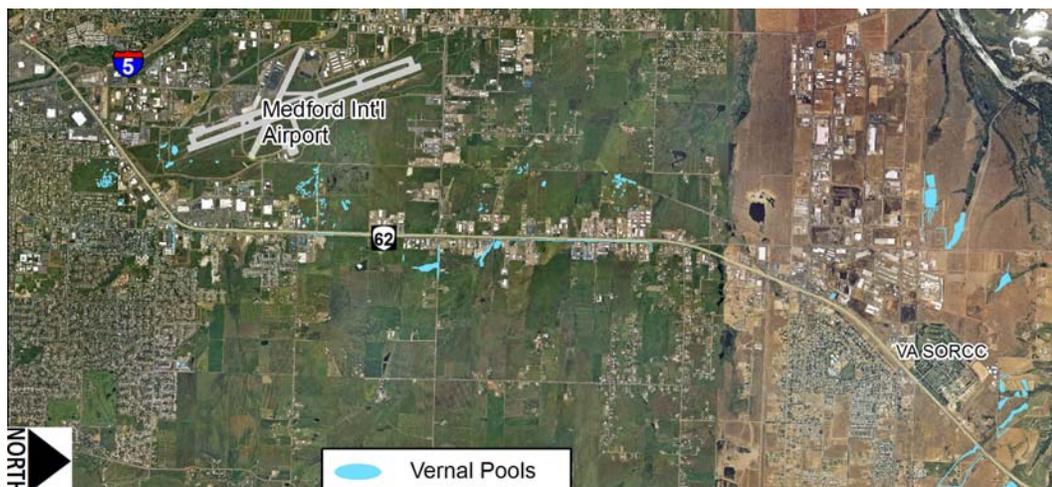
Runway Protection Zones

The Federal Aviation Administration has designated runway protection zones (RPZ) at the ends of the Medford International Airport's runways. Those trapezoidal zones, shown in green on the map at right, limit the allowable height and type of development. No construction is allowed in the inner RPZ trapezoid (the area with green hatch marks). Roads and buildings are allowed in the outer RPZ trapezoid, but everything within that RPZ -- signs, light posts, even vehicles using the roads -- must comply with specific height limitations.



Vernal Pools

Vernal pools are located throughout the project vicinity. Vernal pools provide important habitat to some threatened or endangered plants and animals. Multiple Federal and State agencies regulate vernal pools. If the project impacts any vernal pools, mitigation will be required. Any impacts to the pools, along with proposed mitigation strategies, must be approved by these agencies.

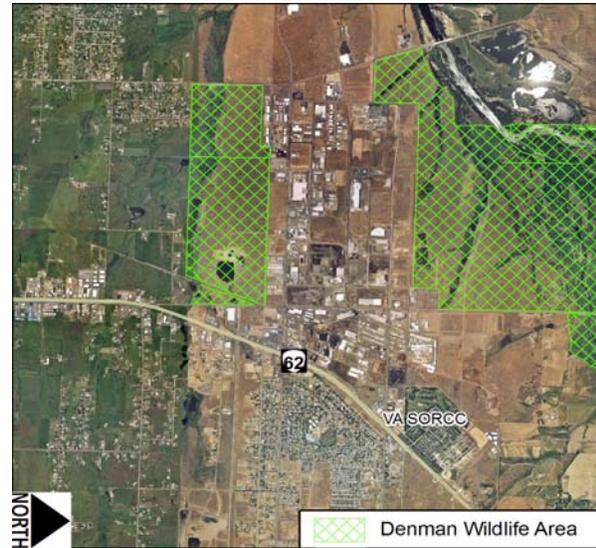


Design Constraints

Denman Wildlife Area

Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966 protects parks, recreational facilities, and wildlife refuges. Transportation projects may not impact these lands unless it can be proven that there is “no feasible and prudent alternative to the use of such land.”

So far, engineers have been able to successfully avoid impacting the Denman Wildlife Area, thus proving that there *are* “feasible and prudent” alternatives to impacting the resource.



Alternatives Considered

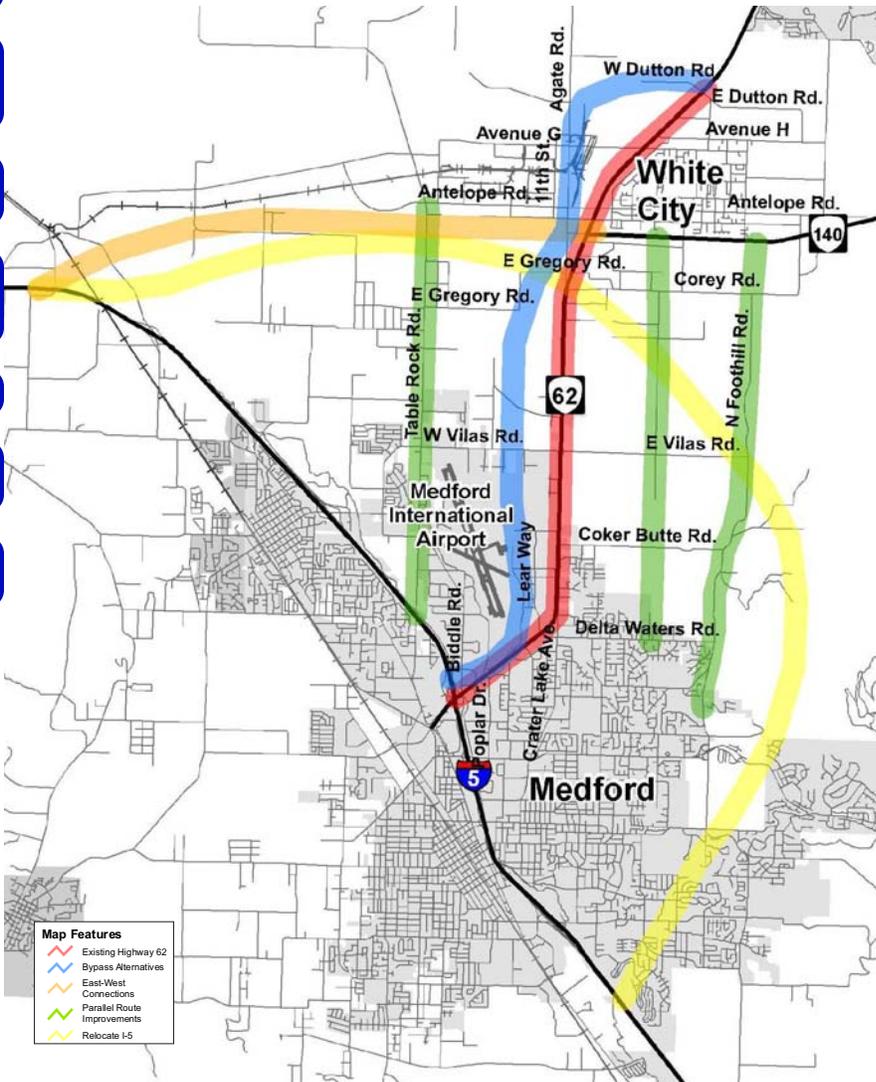


Alternatives considered for the project were gathered from CAC and PDT work sessions; the previous alternatives analysis process; ODOT engineers; the general public. More than 30 alternatives were submitted.

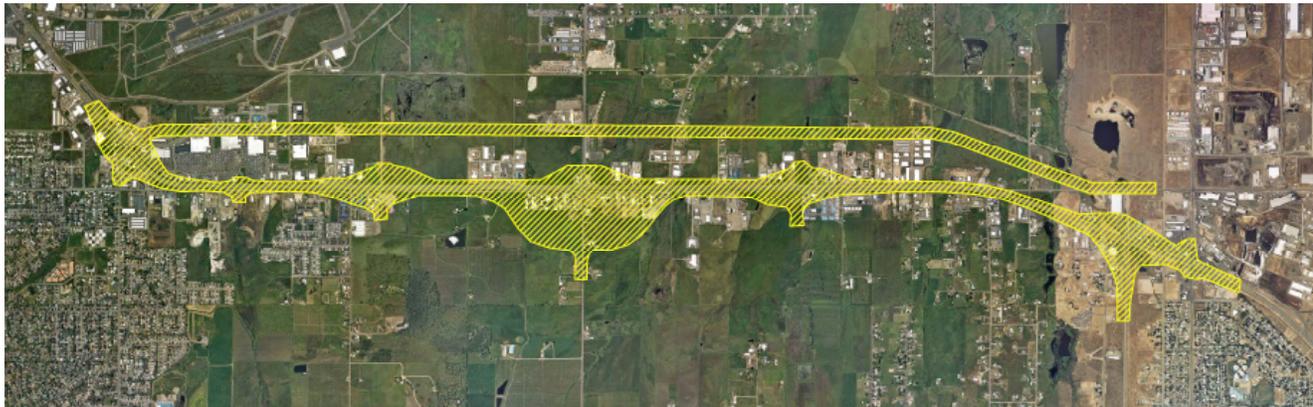
The alternatives generally fell into one of five groups:

- Improve the Existing Highway
- Bypass OR 62
- Regional Transportation Improvements (including extending OR 140)
- Couplet
- Realign I-5

The map below shows the general locations of the alternatives considered. A project engineer converted each alternative from a hand-drawn sketch to a conceptual design for further analysis. Following is a summary of the alternatives considered and information about whether they were dismissed or advanced for further study.



Improve Existing Highway Concepts



Improve existing highway concepts included designs that would:

- Convert OR 62 to a limited-access highway

- Add lanes to OR 62

- Remove all at-grade intersections on OR 62 and replace some with interchanges

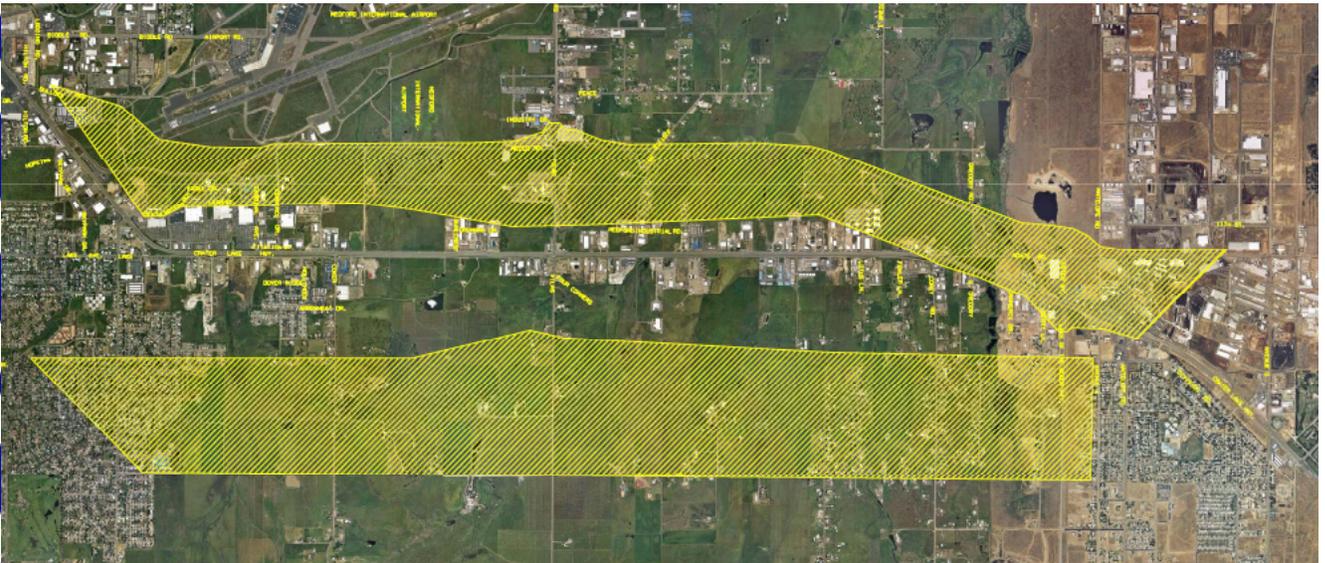
- Add local access roads -- frontage or “backage” roads -- to replace closed accesses

The details of the designs varied, but two of the most promising designs were refined and studied for a number of months during the alternatives analysis phase of the project.

The “Existing Highway Build” alternative would have converted OR 62 to a limited-access highway. All of the direct accesses to OR 62 that currently exist would have been closed. Crater Lake Avenue would have served as a frontage road on the east side of OR 62 (as it does currently) and Lear Way would have been extended to serve as a “backage” road to provide access to the businesses on the west side of OR 62.

The “Texas Turnaround” alternative would have converted OR 62 to a limited-access highway and would also have closed all of the direct accesses to OR 62. One-way frontage roads would have been built on either side of OR 62 for business access. Interchanges would have used the “Texas Turnaround” design that maximizes free-flow by providing protected left turns between the highway and the frontage roads.

Bypass Concepts



Bypass Concepts included designs that would build a new limited-access highway on either the east or west side of OR 62 (in the shaded areas of the map above). These concepts varied in the number and locations of interchanges as well as the location of the bypass. Some concepts also called for improving local streets or realigning I-5 or OR 140.

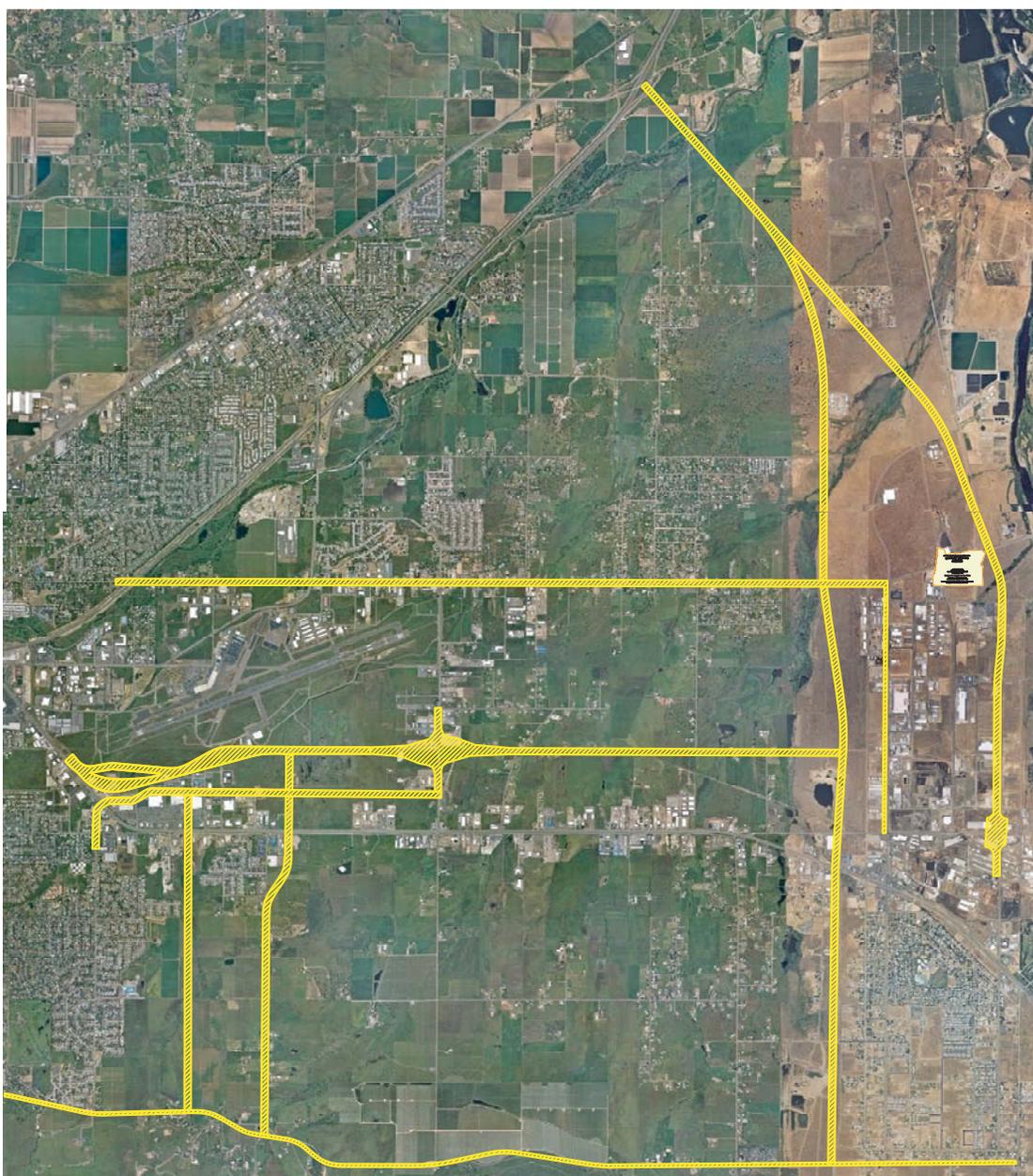
The bypass concept was refined to become the alternatives currently being studied in the DEIS. These design refinements included:

- Locating the bypass on the Medco Haul Road as much as possible in order to minimize impacts.
- Designing interchanges that respond to traffic needs, comply with ODOT spacing standards, and minimize adverse impacts to adjacent land uses.
- Designing access roads that respond to traffic needs.

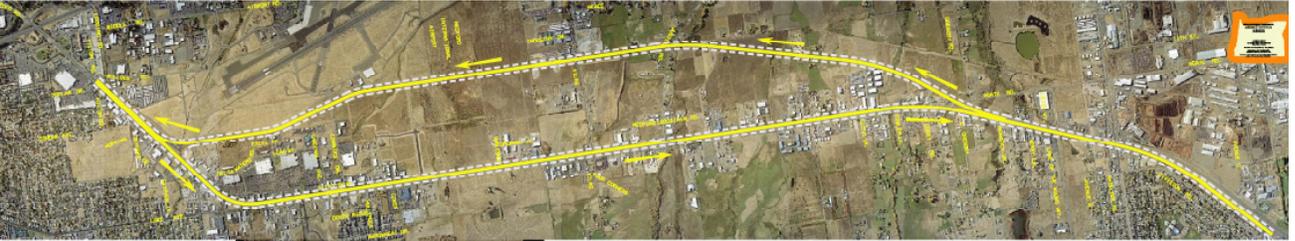
Regional Improvements Concepts

Some alternatives recommended improvements to the regional transportation network. Among the recommendations were:

- Extend OR 140 west to I-5.
- Provide better east/west connections by extending or widening streets like Avenue G and Coker Butte Road.
- Provide parallel north/south routes by extending or widening streets such as Foothills Road, Table Rock Road, Biddle Road, and Lear Way.
- Build a tunnel under the airport to connect Lear Way to Biddle Road.



Couplet Concept



The couplet concept would have converted OR 62 into a one-way northbound road, and would have added a new one-way southbound road on the Medco Haul Road alignment. These one-way roads would not be limited-access highways but rather arterial streets with full access and at-grade intersections. As the design was refined, it eventually included extending Lear Way north and adding some east/west local street connections.

The couplet concept was promising enough that the design was refined and studied for a number of months during the alternatives analysis phase of the project.

I-5 Concept

The I-5 concept consisted of alternatives that would realign I-5 in the vicinity of Medford. The alternatives recommended different routes, but generally called for a new limited-access highway that would skirt around to the east of the City of Medford. Some designs included connections to OR 140 and OR 62. The map below shows the general routes of these alternatives.



North Terminus Concepts



As the alternatives were developed more fully and evaluated using the traffic model, it became evident that the project would need to be extended to Dutton Road north of White City. According to the traffic analysis, intersections on OR 62 in White City would fail to meet mobility standards in the future if it were not improved.

North terminus concepts were developed in response to this finding. Although the specific designs varied, there were three general concepts:

- Improve the existing highway
- Bypass OR 62 to the east of White City
- Bypass OR 62 to the west of White City

Improve the Existing Highway



Improving the existing highway, as shown at left, would have converted OR 62 into a limited-access highway. The at-grade intersection with OR 140 would have been converted to an interchange; all other existing OR 62 intersections would be converted to grade-separated crossings or closed.

North Terminus Concepts

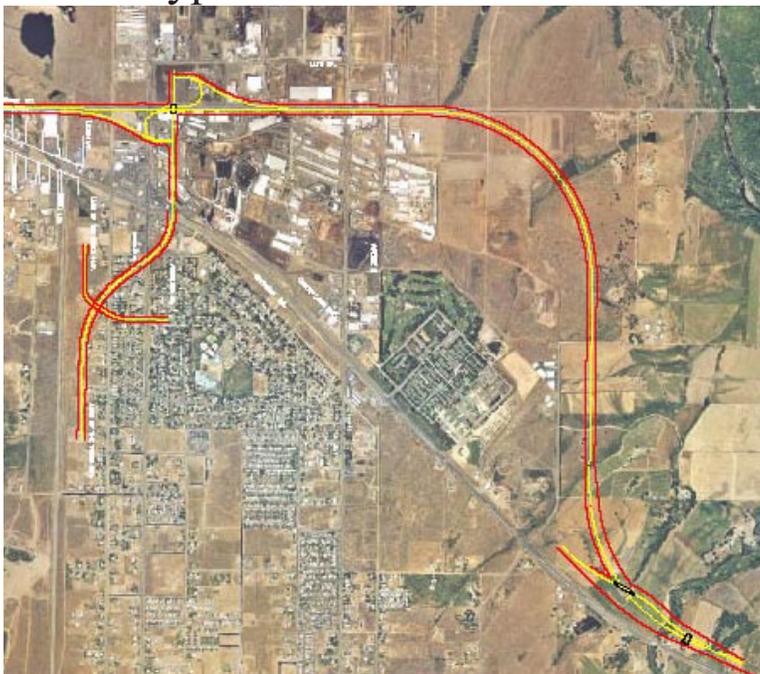
The North Terminus concept of bypassing OR 62 to the east of White City is shown at right. The general concept called for locating OR 62 on a portion of OR 140, then curving OR 62 east around White City and rejoining the existing OR 62 in the vicinity of Dutton Road.

Interchanges would be located at Agate Road, at the new intersection of OR 62 and OR 140 (at the southeastern corner of White City), and at Dutton Road.

Bypass OR 62 to the East



Bypass OR 62 to the West



The North Terminus concept of bypassing OR 62 to the west of White city is shown at left. OR 62 would have continued north on Agate Road and then curved to the east to meet the existing OR 62 in the vicinity of Dutton Road.

This concept was refined (among other things, the interchange at OR 140 was determined to be beyond the scope of the project) and is currently being studied in the DEIS.





Evaluation of Alternatives: Initial Screen

Once a range of alternatives had been developed, the alternatives were evaluated with an initial screening.

Feasibility

During the initial screening, some alternatives were dismissed because they were determined infeasible. For example, the alternative that proposed a tunnel underneath the Medford International Airport, connecting Lear Way with Biddle Road, would not have received FAA approval. Therefore it was not advanced for further consideration.

Alternatives that impacted the Denman Wildlife Area were likewise considered infeasible because the project would not have been able to prove that the impacts were unavoidable. Wherever possible, those alternatives were modified to avoid impacting that wildlife area.

Consistency with Engineering standards

A number of alternatives had features that would have violated engineering and design standards. Some of those violations included curves that would have been too sharp for the design speed and interchanges located too close together. Wherever possible, the designs were modified to comply with the standards.

Similarity

Some alternatives were so similar that they were combined and considered a single alternative. Many of the bypass alternatives, for example, varied only in the interchange locations and the precise location of the bypass. Because interchange locations are dictated by traffic volumes and engineering standards, many of those bypass alternatives were combined to become a single bypass design.

Preliminary Traffic Analysis

After the initial screening was conducted, the remaining alternatives were subjected to a preliminary traffic analysis. This analysis evaluated whether the proposed alternative would adequately reduce congestion on OR 62. Alternatives that reduced congestion on OR 62 to the point where intersections complied with ODOT mobility standards were advanced for further consideration. Alternatives that failed to reduce congestion on OR 62 were dismissed.

Out of Corridor Alternatives

None of the “out of corridor alternatives,” or alternatives that would have made regional transportation improvements but not improvements to OR 62, adequately reduced congestion on OR 62. Many of those alternatives would have solved *other* traffic problems, but they did not solve *this project’s* traffic problem. As a result, those alternatives were dismissed from further consideration for the Highway 62 Corridor Solutions Project because they failed to meet the project’s Purpose and Need.

The schematic at right is an example of the traffic results for a sample out-of-corridor alternative. That alternative would have extended OR 140 to I-5 and widened/extended both Biddle Road and Table Rock Road.

With those improvements in place, the traffic models showed that there would still be traffic congestion along long segments of OR 62 (designated by a red dotted line).

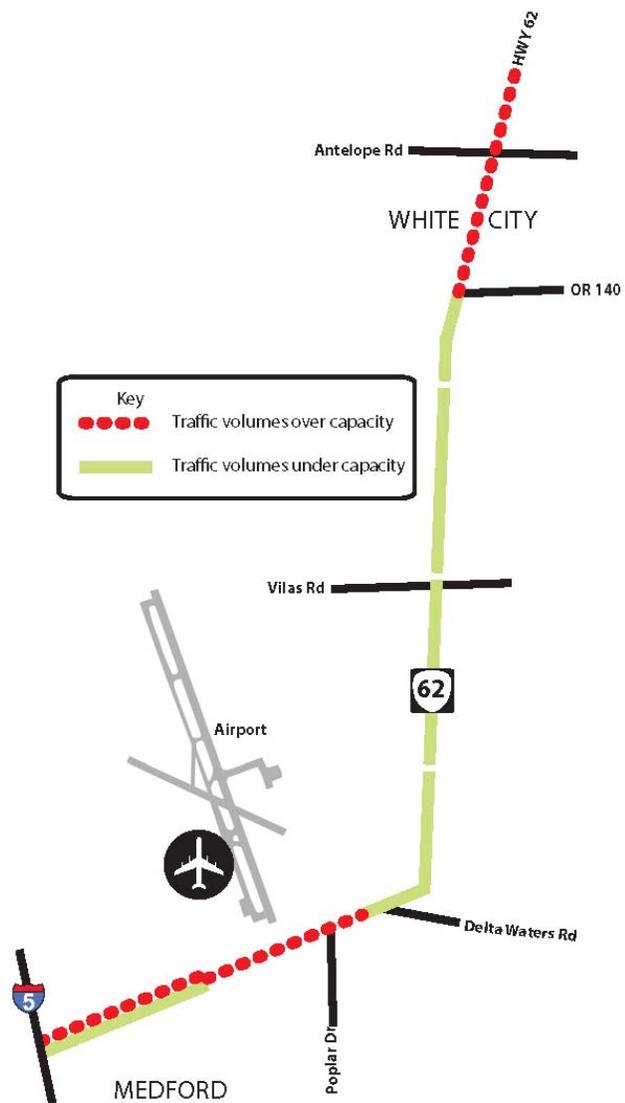
Although those transportation improvements may improve other “problem areas,” they would not reduce congestion on OR 62.

There were similar results for all of the out of corridor alternatives -- none solved the congestion problem on OR 62.

In Corridor Alternatives

Many of the in-corridor alternatives were shown to reduce congestion on OR 62. The preliminary traffic analysis suggested that converting OR 62 to a limited-access highway and adding lanes could result in acceptable traffic volumes. Likewise, the bypass concept would have reduced congestion on the existing highway and would have had acceptable traffic volumes on the bypass itself.

The alternatives that showed positive traffic results were advanced for further evaluation.





Remaining Alternatives

The alternatives analysis process began with more than 30 alternatives, but the initial screening showed that many were either not feasible or would not adequately reduce congestion on OR 62. After the initial screening, four alternatives remained:

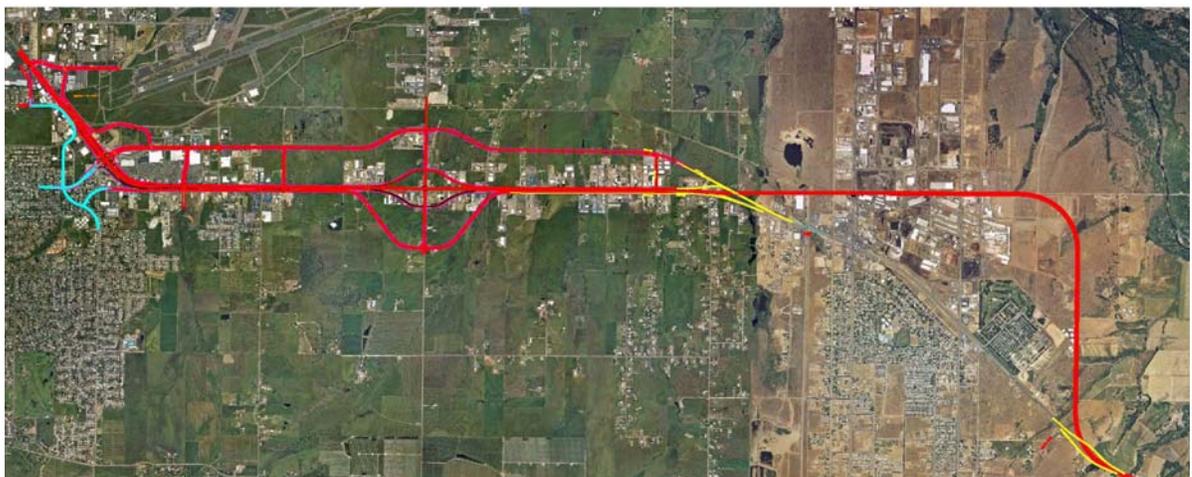
Texas Turnaround

This alternative would have converted OR 62 to a limited-access highway. One-way frontage roads on either side of the highway would have provided business access. The interchanges would have been “Texas Turnarounds,” an innovative design that maximizes free-flow movements between the frontage roads and highway.



Improve Existing Highway

This alternative would have converted OR 62 to a limited-access highway. Crater Lake Avenue would have served as a frontage road for businesses on the east side, and Lear Way would have been extended north to serve as a “backage” road to businesses on the west side.



Remaining Alternatives



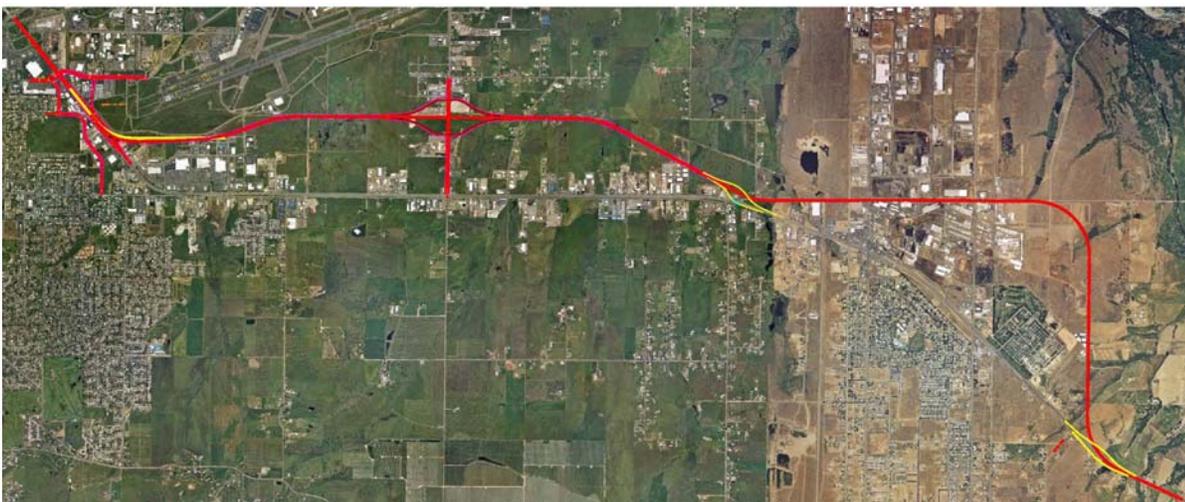
Couplet

The couplet would have converted OR 62 to a one-way northbound road and would have added a new one-way southbound road on the Medco Haul Road alignment. Existing accesses on OR 62 would have remained unchanged. Lear Way would have been extended, along with some east/west connector streets.



Bypass

The bypass would have consisted of a directional interchange at the southern terminus (the split diamond interchange was introduced later in the alternatives analysis process), as well as interchanges at Vilas Road, Agate Road, and Dutton Road. The bypass would have used the Medco Haul Road where possible.



Subcommittees



After the wide range of 30+ alternatives was narrowed to a more manageable number, three subcommittees were formed to address specific issues. The subcommittees met on a regular basis (usually every other week) to resolve the particular issues then reported back to the CAC and PDT with their findings. The subcommittees were: Access Management, Land Use, and Multi-Modal.

Access Management Subcommittee

The access management subcommittee met to develop access control concepts for each of the four build alternatives. They applied ODOT’s established guidelines for access management and worked with project engineers to develop area-specific access control concepts. They did not address parcel-specific access issues. After meeting 4 times, the subcommittee presented their recommendations to the PDT and CAC.

The access management subcommittee’s recommendations provided some new information about potential impacts associated with access control and helped to refine the proposed designs for the four remaining alternatives.

The access management subcommittee ended up rediscovering one alternative that had been developed during the Unit 1 phase of the project: the split diamond interchange. The split diamond interchange was then added to the range of alternatives as a part of one bypass alternative.

Land Use Subcommittee

The land use subcommittee was formed to address the possible need for exceptions to Statewide Planning Goals. The Statewide Planning Goals protect farm and forest lands and regulate the development of transportation infrastructure and urbanization. Projects must first try to comply with the goals; if that is not possible, there must be proof that there is no reasonable and feasible alternative in order to be granted a goal exception.

The land use subcommittee examined each of the alternatives to determine which goals would be violated by each alternative, and whether it would be possible to redesign the alternatives to avoid or minimize the need for a goal exception. Project engineers then took the recommendations and, where possible, refined the designs to minimize adverse impacts and to better comply with the goals.

Multi-Modal Subcommittee

The multi-modal subcommittee was formed to address bicycle, pedestrian, and transit needs. The subcommittee evaluated each alternative and made recommendations for design features that would provide safe, comfortable, and effective facilities for a variety of transportation modes. The subcommittee also ranked each of the alternatives in terms of its effectiveness for multi-modal use and provided the PDT and CAC with an additional basis for evaluating the proposed alternatives.

Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation criteria were developed along with the project goals and objectives. These criteria provided either quantitative or qualitative measures for assessing whether an alternative met the project goals and objectives. Evaluation criteria included such things as the number of stream crossings; whether bicycle facilities were included as part of the alternative; and the number of businesses that would be displaced.

The table below is a summary of how each of the alternatives ranked according to the evaluation criteria.



Goal	Objective	Corridor Alternatives			
		Plain Bypass	Split Diamond Bypass	Existing Build	Texas Turnaround
Goal 1: Multimodal	Ensure solution provides for safe alternative modes of transportation				
Goal 2: Environmental	Protect and enhance the natural environment				
Goal 3: Economic	Maintain economic vitality in the corridor				
Goal 4: Safety	Ensure the solution is safe for all modes of transportation				
Goal 5: Transportation	Provide a solution that addresses capacity and connectivity needs				
Goal 6: Planning	Ensure the solution is compatible with existing land use and transportation plans				
Goal 7: Social	Enhance community livability and quality of life				
	COMBINED SCORE FOR EACH ALTERNATIVE				

Key:



Average Score

○ = # of criteria that **meet** stated goal

◐ = # of criteria that **partially meet** stated goal

● = # of criteria that **do not meet** goal

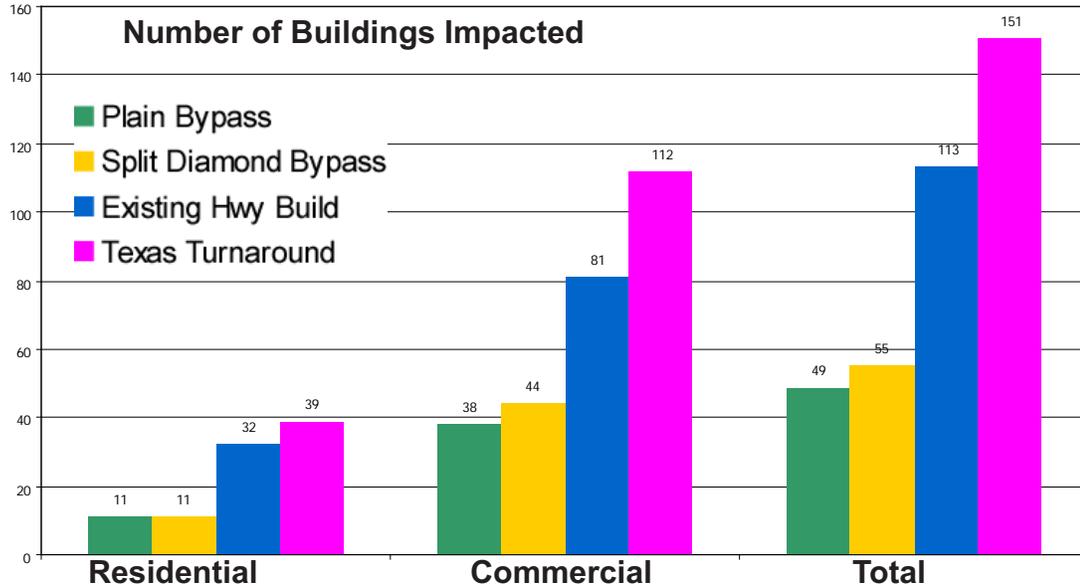
Final Narrowing of Alternatives



The final narrowing of alternatives involved dismissing those that were considered unlikely to be built.

The couplet was dismissed because the detailed traffic analysis found that some of the intersections could not be designed to comply with ODOT mobility standards. This finding showed that it failed to meet the project’s Purpose and Need.

The Texas Turnaround and the Existing Highway Build -- the two alternatives that would have converted OR 62 to a limited-access highway and added local access roads -- were dismissed because of the number of businesses that would be displaced. Both of those alternatives would have required so much additional right-of-way along OR 62 that they would have displaced many of the businesses lining the highway. The table below shows the relative impacts of the alternatives.



After the Texas Turnaround and Existing Highway Build alternatives were dismissed, two alternatives remained: the Plain Bypass and the Split Diamond Bypass. The plain bypass would have had a directional interchange with OR 62 in the vicinity of Bullock Road, while the Split Diamond Bypass would have had a split diamond interchange with I-5, the bypass, and the existing OR 62.

These two alternatives were identified as the ones that would be further refined and then studied in the DEIS.

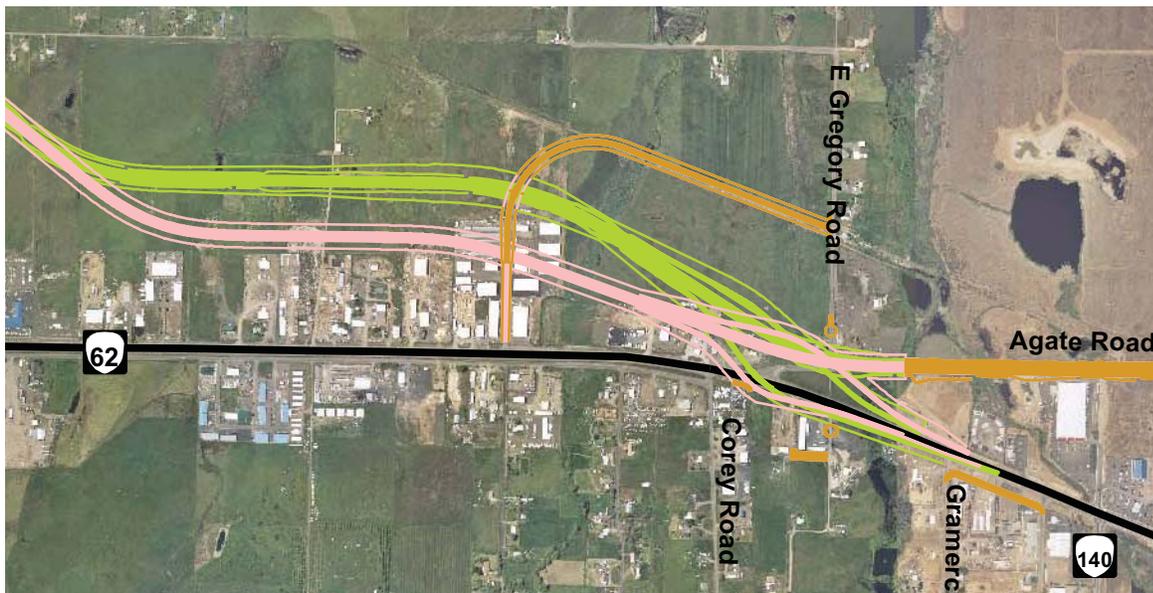
Agency Coordination

Throughout the alternatives analysis process, ODOT had been coordinating with other agencies through CETAS, the Collaborative Environmental Transportation Agreement for Streamlining. CETAS members include:

- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA);
- National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS);
- Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCDC);
- Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ);
- Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW);
- Oregon Department of State Lands (DSL);
- Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO);
- Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT);
- US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE);
- US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); and
- US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

At critical points in the project, ODOT representatives would present a project update at a CETAS to determine whether the various regulatory agencies were comfortable with the project's progress and, if there were any concerns, to find ways to address those concerns early in the project development process.

When ODOT presented the two bypass alternatives to CETAS, some agencies raised concerns about potential impacts to vernal pools in the area north of Vilas Road. In response to those concerns, ODOT engineers developed a design option that would reduce impacts to vernal pools. The alignment shown in green below was the alignment that ODOT presented to CETAS; the one shown in pink is the one designed in response to concerns raised during the CETAS meeting. Both are being evaluated in the DEIS.



Agency Coordination



The Veterans Administration’s Southern Oregon Rehabilitation Center and Clinics (SORCC) is located on OR 62 near the northern terminus of the project. When the north terminus design was developed, project engineers worked hard to keep the bypass within the White City Urban Containment Boundary as a way to reduce impacts to protected farm and forest lands. That alignment, shown in burgundy at left, would have required the use of some VA SORCC property.

In response to concerns from the VA, project engineers developed a second alignment located further north, away from the SORCC. That alignment is shown in green.

Both of these alignments are being studied in the DEIS.

Coordination with the FAA is also ongoing. The proposed bypass will require the use of some property owned by the Medford International Airport. Because a portions of the bypass would be located within runway protection zones, the FAA will have to approve ODOT’s plans for the bypass to ensure that the bypass does not interfere with safe operation of planes using the nearby runways.

The design modifications that have been made as a result of these ongoing conversations with the airport have been relatively minor.

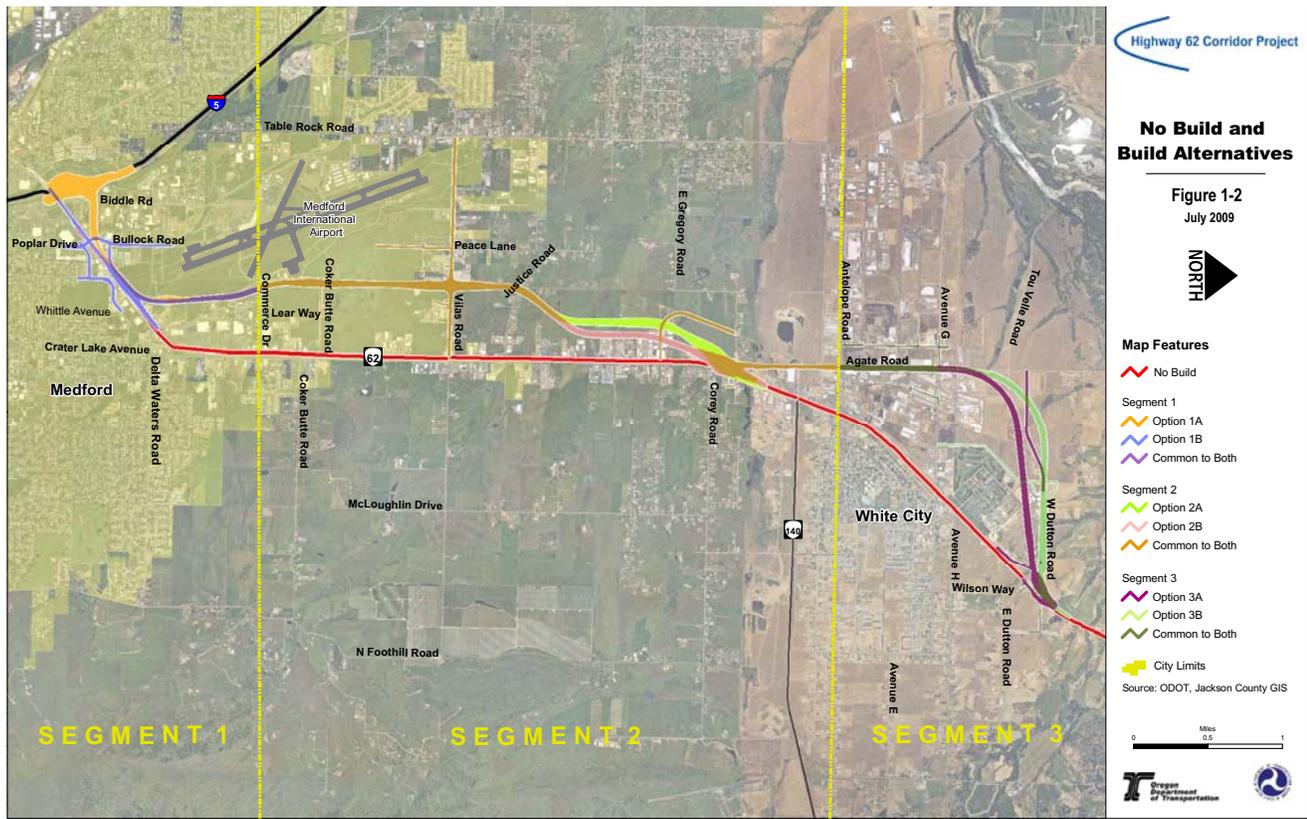
DEIS

The DEIS, or Draft Environmental Impact Statement, will provide a detailed technical analysis of the project's impacts to the built environment as well as the natural environment. The analysis divides the project into three segments, and within each segment are two design options.

In Segment 1, there are two interchange options: a directional interchange (shown in blue) and a split diamond interchange (shown in orange). In Segment two, there are the two alignment options: an eastern one (shown in pink) and a western one (shown in green). In Segment three, there are the likewise two alignment options: the burgundy one and the green one.

Project staff have prepared technical reports for a variety of subjects. Each of these reports includes recommendations for minimizing impacts or, if the impact is unavoidable, potential mitigation measures. The reports also include a detailed list of the permits that will be required and whether any additional agency coordination will be necessary.

The DEIS is based on the findings of the technical reports. Once the DEIS is published, it will be made available for public and agency review and there will be a designated comment period.



Oregon Jobs & Transportation Act



The 2009 Oregon Legislature approved HB 2001, now known as the Oregon Jobs and Transportation Act (JTA), which finances 37 specific projects around the state. The Highway 62 Corridor Project received \$100 million, the largest single investment in the Rogue Valley.

Because the complete Highway 62 Corridor Solutions project -- spanning from I-5 in Medford to Dutton Road in White City -- will cost more than \$100 million, the JTA funding will be used to build a phase of the corridor project. ODOT's goal is to build the bypass as far north as possible with this funding.

In the normal flow of the NEPA process, the phasing plan would be developed after a preferred alternative is selected and before the FEIS is published. The design for the preferred alternative would be developed to 30% and would have enough information to enable engineers to create detailed cost estimates. Those cost estimates would be used to help determine how much of the project could be built based on the amount of funding available.

The challenge of the JTA funding is that construction must be underway by 2013. In the next three years, all of the permits and agency clearances have to be obtained and a complete set of construction plans needs to be created. In order to meet this ambitious schedule, ODOT has decided to run some of the NEPA process concurrently rather than consecutively. That is, Phase 2* of the project is being finalized while the DEIS and FEIS are still underway.

*Phase 1 of the project was the North Medford Interchange. Phase 2 is the segment that would be built with JTA funding

Phase 2

Phase 1 of the Highway 62 Corridor Solutions Project was the North Medford Interchange between I-5 and OR 62. “Phase 2” is the first phase of the proposed bypass.

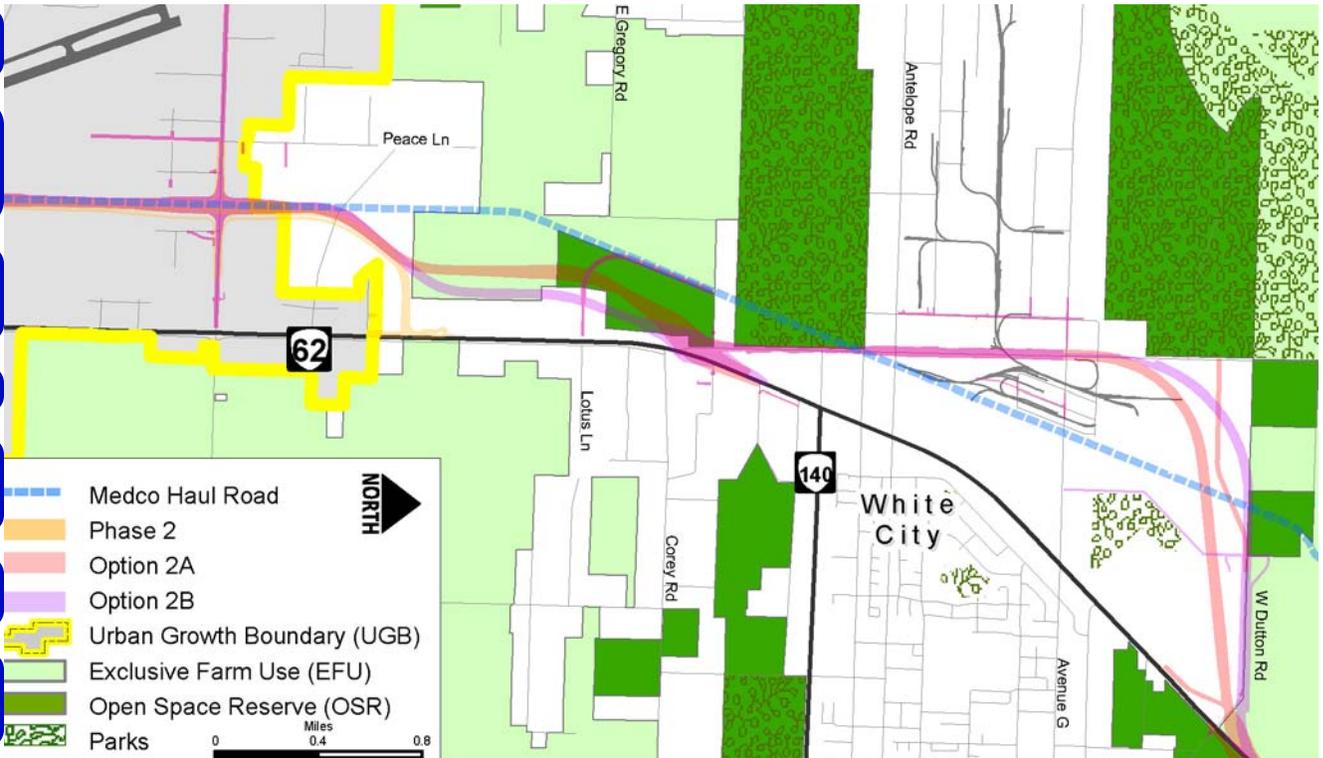
Thanks to the Oregon JTA, planning for Phase 2 is now underway. The challenge is to design a segment of the proposed bypass that has “independent utility” and “logical termini” (the two requirements for project phasing). After this first segment is built, ODOT and FHWA will build other portions of the bypass as funding becomes available.

A major concern with the plans for Phase 2 is that it must stay within the budget. Estimating construction costs becomes easier as the project design becomes more detailed. The hope is to build the bypass as far north as possible, so engineers are refining the design and cost estimates to determine just how far north the design can be brought.

The next steps for this project are to solidify the plans for Phase 2, then work to gain agency clearances and acquire the necessary permits in time to begin construction in 2013.



Goal Exceptions



The foundation of land use planning in Oregon is the set of Statewide Planning Goals. These goals describe the state’s policies on urbanization, transportation, natural resources, and other topics. The Highway 62 project must either be consistent with the goals or else obtain an exception and demonstrate that there is no feasible alternative.

The Statewide Planning Goals include restrictions on highway projects located outside UGBs. The Medford UGB is located just north of Vilas Road, so any bypass design that extends north of Vilas Road (and goes outside the UGB) will need a goal exception.

As shown on the map above, the bypass alignments studied in the DEIS both extend outside the UGB. The current Phase 2 design also extends beyond the UGB. All of these designs would need a Goal exception. The designs that impact EFU and OSR lands would need additional documentation about impacts to those lands, but the basic process for obtaining the Goal exception remains the same.

To obtain a goal exception, ODOT must:

1. Justify why the project is necessary and demonstrate that there is no feasible alternative that would comply with the goals.
2. Evaluate and compare all of the impacts. Impacts include the potential for increased urbanization outside a UGB; use of EFU or OSR land; fragmentation of agricultural parcels; etc.
3. Select the alternative with lesser impacts. Under state law, Goal exceptions may only be granted to the alternative with the least impacts.
4. Have the Jackson County Comprehensive Plan amended.

