OR 99 Corridor Plan

DRAFT Technical Memorandum #1
Definition and Background

Prepared for

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1. DEFINITION AND BACKGROUND

Oregon Highway 99 (OR 99) provides access and connectivity through the Rogue Valley from Central Point to Ashland. While Interstate 5 (I-5) is the high-speed route within the region as well as the link between the Rogue Valley and the rest of Oregon to the north and California to the south, OR 99 serves as the heart of many communities. As such, it influences the patterns of growth and economic activity as well as impacting the quality of life that can be experienced by both resident and visitor.

Study Area

The *OR 99 Corridor Plan* (Corridor Plan) focuses on the section of OR 99 that extends from Garfield Road in South Medford, through the communities of Phoenix and Talent, to South Valley View Road at the north end of Ashland. Figure 1-1 illustrates the study area. This figure and all subsequent figures for the Corridor Plan have been divided into a North section, showing South Medford and Phoenix, and South section, showing Talent and North Ashland.

Corridor Overview

OR 99 threads through a north-south transportation corridor that is bounded to the east by I-5 and to the west by the Central Oregon and Pacific (CORP) Railroad line. Each community along this corridor is unique and diverse serving a wide range of development including commercial and industrial parks, downtown pedestrian-friendly commercial and residential development, greenways and parks, as well as acting as a thoroughfare for freight traffic. The OR 99 corridor can be broken into six segments that reflect the different characteristics of the highway and its environs. Traveling from north to south, the OR 99 segment characteristics as well as the community elements that it serves are described below.

South Medford Segment: As the northernmost segment of the study area along OR 99, the south Medford segment extends from the Garfield Street intersection through South Stage Road. Adjacent land uses have urban characteristics which are primarily light industrial, business parks, and commercial but there are also several nearby parks and a golf course. This section of OR 99 is a typical five-lane urban arterial with a center left-turn lane, traffic signals at several intersections, and a posted speed of 35 to 45 miles per hour (mph). Development along this segment of OR 99 has access to I-5 at Interchange 27 via Garfield Street.

Transition Segment (Medford to Phoenix): The transitional section of OR 99 between the Medford and Phoenix urban areas remains similar to the South Medford segment but with some differences in adjacent land uses. There is more residential along the corridor and many smaller commercial uses but Jackson County has no industrial zoning immediately adjacent to the highway. Industrial uses are located along the rail line to the west. OR 99 maintains a five-lane cross-section with a 45 mph posted speed.

Phoenix Segment: Phoenix is the next community encountered along OR 99 and it extends from north of Fern Valley Road to north of Cabbage Lane. OR 99 transitions from a five-lane arterial (35 mph) north of Fern Valley Road to a downtown one-way couplet system (30 mph) and back

to a four-lane arterial (40 mph). High density residential and commercial business parks are the primary use in the northern half of the segment. The downtown core of Phoenix serves mixed use and office/commercial development as well as the Bear Creek Greenway. OR 99 splits traffic through the downtown core via a couplet with two southbound lanes of traffic on N Main Street and two northbound lanes of traffic on Bear Creek Drive. Part of the downtown core has been identified as a Special Transportation Area (STA), which allows for different access and performance measures to be applied. South of the Phoenix downtown core and couplet, OR 99 is a four-lane facility abutted by high-density residential and commercial land uses. Phoenix residents and businesses have access to I-5 at Interchange 24 via Fern Valley Road.

Transition Segment (Phoenix to Talent): The area between Phoenix and Talent is primarily farmland and supported by freight traffic along the OR 99 corridor. Some rural residential is also located along this segment. The roadway is a four-lane rural facility with a posted speed of 55 mph.

Talent Segment: The Talent segment extends from Colver/Suncrest Road to south of Creel Road. The northern end serves High-Density Residential and the Central Business District (CBD) while commercial uses along OR 99 are more linear and less densely developed in southern Talent. Between Colver/Suncrest Road and Rapp Road, OR 99 was recently improved to provide a five-lane facility with a two-way center left-turn lane or a raised landscaped median, a posted speed of 40 mph, and bicycle lanes and sidewalks are located on both sides. The improvements end south of Rapp Road and the facility tapers to four lanes. Talent residents and businesses have access to I-5 at Interchange 21 via West Valley View Road.

Transition Segment (Talent to Ashland): The area between Talent and Ashland is primarily rural in nature with forest and commercial land uses. The roadway is a rural four-lane highway with a posted speed of 55 mph. At the intersection with South Valley View Road, OR 99 begins the transition from a rural to urban arterial with a speed reduction to 45 mph and a five-lane cross-section. South Valley View Road also provides access to I-5 at Interchange 19.

Purpose

The purpose of the Corridor Plan is to determine how the existing highway functions as well as projecting operations 20 years into the future. It will identify strategies and improvements to enhance transportation safety and capacity within the corridor consistent with state and local policy. The intent is to build upon other planning efforts including the *I-5 Rogue Valley Corridor Plan* and the *OR 99 Title VI* work.

The corridor planning process examines existing and potential future land use and transportation conditions along with opportunities and limitations and identifies long-range needs. Outcomes include improvements within the OR 99 corridor and potential enhancements to transportation system needed to accommodate anticipated growth in the region.

State and local regulations, policies, and transportation and land use plans provide the framework for preparing the corridor plan. The language contained within these documents provides guidance to the state and local jurisdictions on how to manage transportation and land uses in the corridor, provide for safe and efficient operations, and minimize the need and expense for making major improvements through the planning horizon. Hence plans and policies are reviewed for their relevance to the OR 99 Corridor Plan. The purpose of the review is to ensure the necessary compatibility, consistency, and compliance required by state law and ODOT policy. A summary description of the reviewed plans and policies is attached at the end of this technical memorandum as Appendix **A**.

Corridor Goal and Objectives

The study will culminate in a long-term plan for enabling the corridor to function based on assumed future growth while enhancing the livability within and surrounding the cities of Phoenix and Talent.

Goal 1: Mobility

Improve the OR 99 corridor and identify potential local system enhancements that link communities, neighborhoods, and businesses and address the existing and future transportation needs of moving both people and goods in throughout the corridor.

Objectives:

- Maintain existing roadways and identify improvements to address existing operational and safety deficiencies.
- Facilitate freight travel by identifying key freight connections and maintaining efficient through movement in these corridors.
- Identify key street network connections and establish parallel routes for highway facilities during periods of high demand or when incidents affect through traffic operations.
- Provide for future growth through planning and management of the transportation corridor.
- Consider the transportation needs of both local and regional travelers (tourists) in the corridor.
- Coordinate with the Rogue Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (RVMPO) efforts to develop strategies that reduce vehicular congestion and support economic development.
- Evaluate the need for capacity improvements based on the adopted comprehensive land use plans of Talent and Phoenix, Jackson County, and the RVMPO.
- Develop an access management plan that provides for safe and acceptable operations on the transportation network, and meets OHP requirements and the access spacing standards in Oregon Administrative Rule (OAR) 734-051.

- Incorporate the Greater Bear Creek Valley Regional Plan into the design and management systems for the corridor, including recommended strategies for land use control.

Goal 2: Multimodal System

Provide a multimodal transportation system that accommodates the needs of all users

Objectives:

- Support efforts to maintain current transit service and plan for future expanded transit service.
- Plan safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian networks that connect between residential area, schools, and other activity centers.
- Incorporate bicycle and pedestrian elements, such as sidewalks and bike lanes or shoulders, in roadway upgrades.

Goal 3: Livability

Provide a transportation system that enhances community livability and promotes economic development while minimizing environmental impacts.

Objectives:

- Minimize congestion on OR 99 by maximizing efficiency of the existing system, providing a network of travel routes, and encouraging the use of alternative modes of travel.
- Balance the need for accessibility to adjacent land uses with the need to provide capacity on major travel routes.
- Work to preserve existing neighborhoods when developing roadway capacity improvements.
- Coordinate land use and transportation planning decisions to maximize the efficiency of public infrastructure investments.
- Provide a process to educate and involve the public in the planning and funding for future transportation system improvements.

Goal 4: Safety

Promote the safety of current and future travel modes for all users.

Objectives:

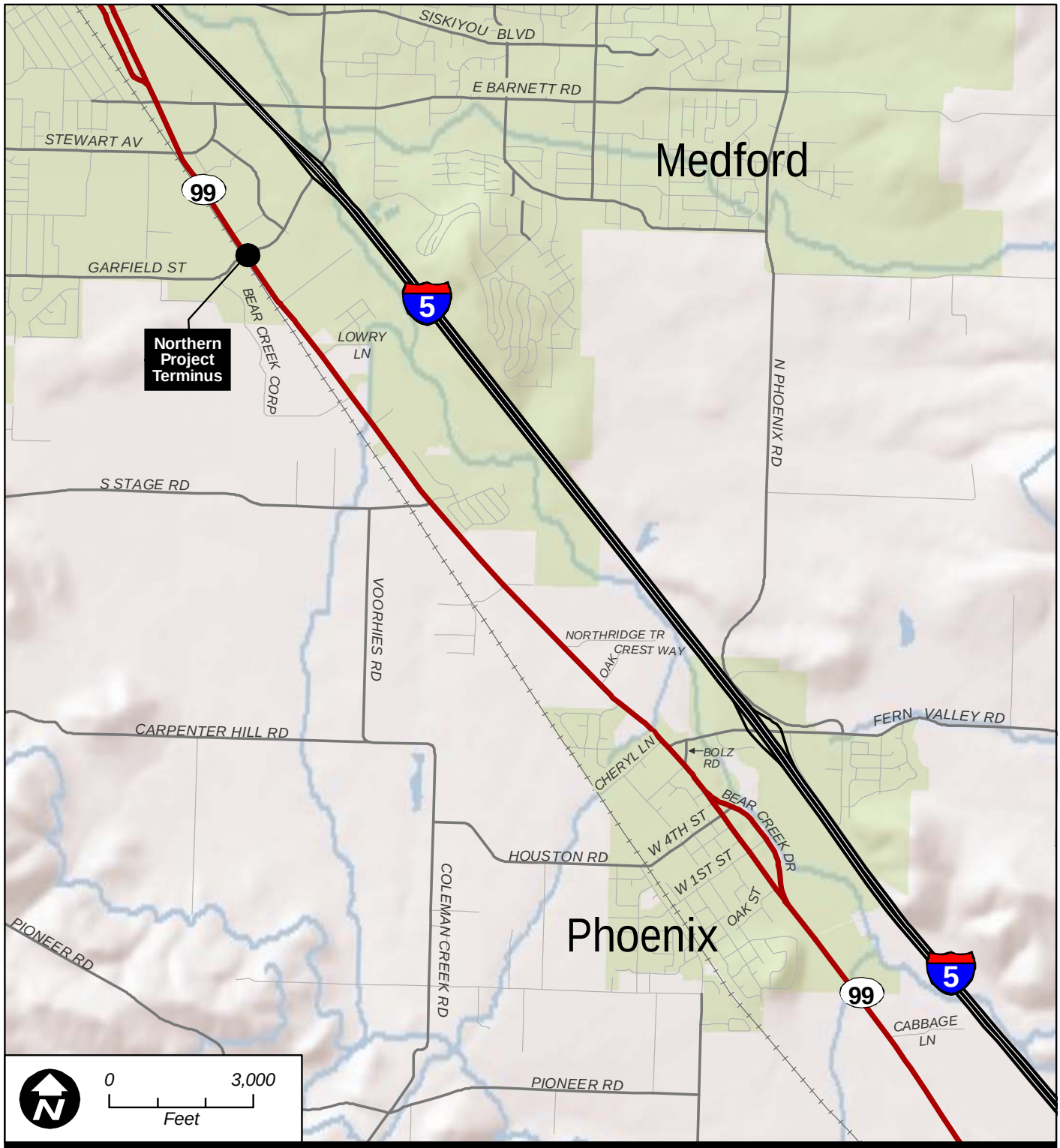
- Review crash patterns and implement improvements at locations identified as priority through the state rating system.
- Identify and improve intermodal conflict points, including rail crossings and pedestrian/ bicycle crossings of major roadways near transit stops, schools, and other activity centers.

- Coordinate between transportation service providers to identify and address existing safety concerns and prevent the creation of future conflict points.
- Maintain existing emergency routes and identify improvements to the transportation system that allows may enhance emergency vehicle access.
- Implement measures to better enable enforcement of traffic laws and to expedite incident response times.

Attachments:

Figure 1-1. North. Study Area – South Medford/Phoenix
Figure 1-1. South. Study Area – Talent/North Ashland

Appendix A. Review of Plans and Policies

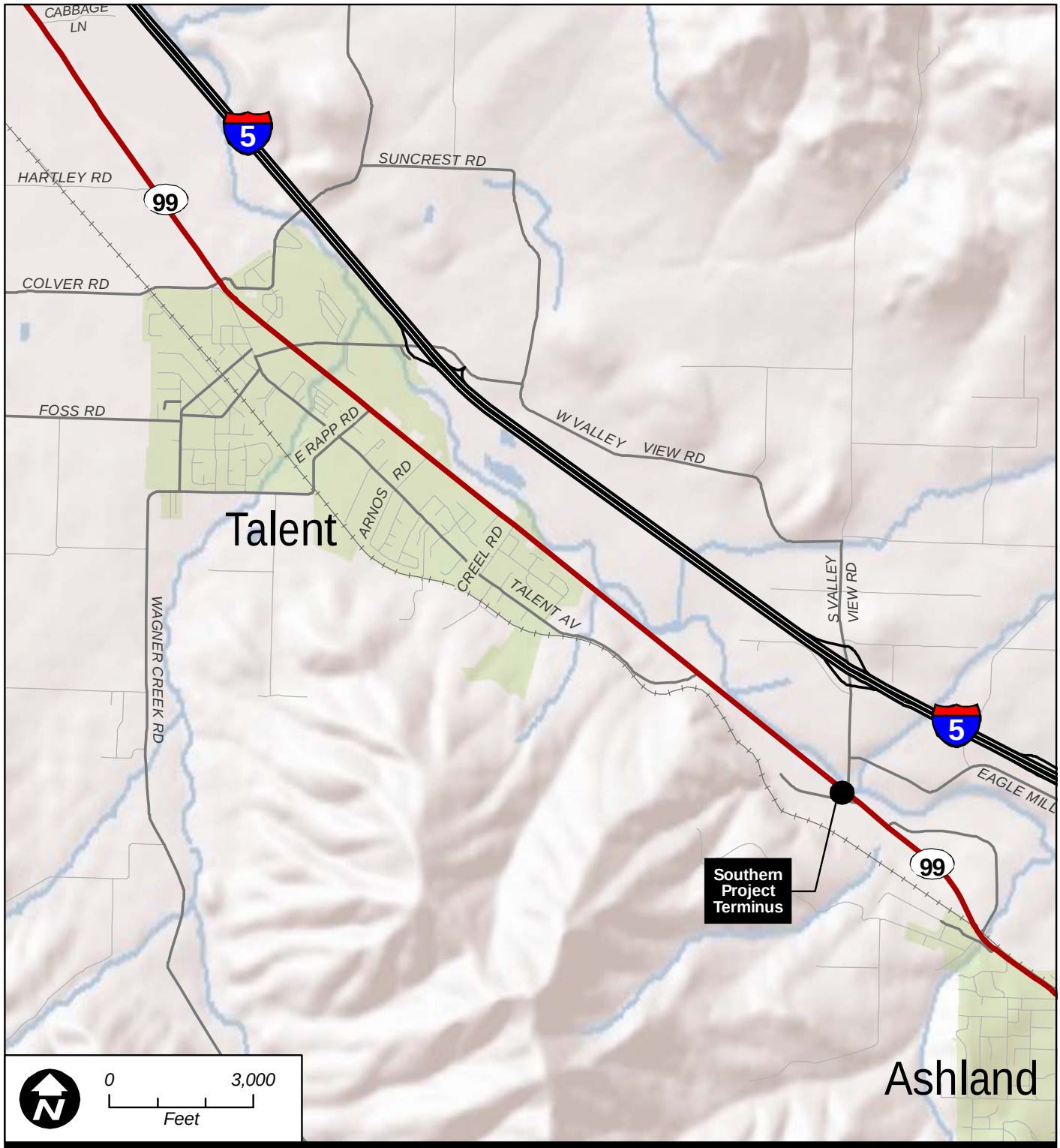


OR 99 Corridor Plan

Figure 1-1 North

Study Area
South Medford/Phoenix

Source Data: Jackson County, ESRI, Oregon GEO



OR 99 Corridor Plan

Figure 1-1 South

Study Area
Talent/North Ashland

Source Data: Jackson County, ESRI, Oregon GEO

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