

**April 2000**

**From:** Kathy Helmer, RVCOG

**Date:** April 24, 2000

**Attendees:** Tim Alford; Mark Bailey; Jim Buckley; Jon Deason; John Ferris; Teresa Hogan; Mike Mahar; Jean Milgram; Jane Podolski; Wade Six. **Absent Members:** Patty Claeys, Jani Hale, and Michael Montero.

**Re: CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAC) MEETING DRAFT MINUTES for APRIL 19<sup>th</sup>, 2000**

**Location:** Rogue Federal Credit Union, 1270 Center Drive, Medford

**Guests:** Michael Ronkin, ODOT; Alex Georgevitch, ODOT ;twenty-six members of the public.

**Project Team Present:** David Mayfield, URS; Gary Shaff, JRH; John Morrison, RVCOG; Kathy Helmer, RVCOG.

### **1. Introduction/Approval of Minutes**

John Morrison convened the meeting at 5:35 PM. He welcomed the CAC and members of the public and reviewed the agenda. Meeting objectives were: 1) to gain a better understanding of bike and pedestrian engineering issues; 2) to understand the ODOT Value Engineering (VE) process and report; and 3) to understand the decision-making authority for land use and transportation issues.

John explained that the meeting agenda was changed to dedicate an hour to a presentation by Michael Ronkin of ODOT. Michael is an expert on bike and pedestrian design. To accommodate this change, David Mayfield's update on the project and the maps of the three alternatives was the first agenda item.

Regarding the March 2000 CAC minutes, Jim Buckley noted that he had been absent from the meeting. (Kathy Helmer later verified that the minutes stated that he had been absent; the format of the minutes had made it difficult to distinguish the Attendees section from the Absent Members section.) Wade Six wanted the minutes changed to reflect that, during the discussion of Alternative 14, he had suggested that patrons could exit from the northwest corner of the old K-Mart shopping center. He pointed out that there could be a left-in, left-out connection to Boyd. With those necessary corrections, the CAC approved the minutes.

### **2. Project Activity Report**

David Mayfield provided an overview of project activity, stating that the project was at about the same place with the alternatives. A person had asked him if the Single Point Urban Interchange (SPUI) was above or below the freeway and he explained that the "single point" intersection is would be located on the bridge above I-5. With respect to the maps of alternatives, Jon Deason asked for an explanation of improvements just north of Barnett on Highland on Alternative #11. David said that there were two northbound lanes that merged to one. The design shows a sidewalk on the park side, rather than on the apartment complex side. In response to a question regarding how far north the extensions would go before they became single lane, David noted that there would be more lanes south of Barnett, but that Highland north of Barnett would essentially remain the same as it is today.

Jean Milgram suggested that more traffic would go north on Highland, if the extensions went further north, and David confirmed that this was what the model indicated. John Ferris said he thought traffic would back up onto the freeway from Barnett; he asked if there was enough space on Highland to take the traffic. David said that that would be tested in the modeling of the 2030 scenario. When Jim Buckley asked if the northbound traffic would be forced to merge further north, David confirmed that it would.

When told that the exit speed before the Barnett/Highland intersection would be from 35mph, Tim Alford suggested that it would be hard for vehicles to safely merge in a short distance. Either a light or a reduced speed limit would be needed. David noted that it might need to be signed as 25 mph. Wade Six noted that even if it were signed, people would still drive fast, no matter what the sign said.

Regarding new project developments, David said that Jean's idea of another bus tour had been a good one and an event was planned for May 6 which included half-hour tours of the three areas encompassed by the alternatives. He invited all CAC members to attend and to spread the word.

### **3. Bicycle/Pedestrian Issues & Designs**

Gary Shaff introduced Michael Ronkin, saying that he was a nationally recognized expert, integrally involved in developing Oregon's Bike and Pedestrian Plan, a document that leads the way in bike and pedestrian design efforts.

Michael said the S. Medford Interchange project presented a good opportunity for planning bike and pedestrian facilities, since it was starting from scratch. He also noted that it is difficult to make these facilities work in an interchange area. He encouraged solving the Greenway connection and then moved on to share some of the lessons learned about making streets work for vehicles, pedestrians and bicyclists. He noted that these designs are just good road designs; what works for vehicles also works for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Michael spoke about what makes for good commerce, safe streets and agreeable environments. He noted that intersections, driveways, and turnings are the most dangerous areas on streets. Designers need to give people the opportunity to do the right thing. They need to make movements predictable and provide separate lanes for different travel modes.

He noted that same direction travel by bikes, cars and pedestrians is the safest kind. Especially on bridges, this is true. He noted the need for shoulders on bridges; about 50% of all congestion is caused by vehicle breakdowns when there are no shoulder pull-offs. At high speeds, barriers between cars and pedestrians are needed. These barriers are difficult to design along with facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists. Thus, it is better to keep speeds lower and not construct barriers. Dave noted that the project faces the challenge of using the existing Barnett bridge without widening it.

The worst type of road for a pedestrian is a five-lane arterial. Raised medians can be constructed to allow pedestrians to cross. Islands can be used to break up directional traffic. Under-crossings and over-crossings are dangerous because some people will not use them and there is no safe way to cross at grade.

Regarding the Greenway, he urged the project to consider the approach taken at Springwater Trail in Portland. It is important to provide security at crossings of the Greenway.

When Michael asked for questions and comments, Tim Alford noted that the Market Street Interchange in Salem was much smoother and visible than before. David noted that the Barnett/Boyd One-way Couplet presented difficulties because they were one-way streets with multiple lanes. Mark Bailey noted Medford drivers were not used to bicyclists; he wondered if designing for them would work. Michael said that the design principles were still sound and would work. Edgar Hee asked Michael to discuss the use of roundabouts with bicycles. Michael responded that that was a long and important conversation, but that time was limited. When asked if a certain level of demand by pedestrians and bicyclists was required before designing for them, Michael responded that it was important to create an environment where people could cross. John Ferris asked Michael to speak more about separated pedestrian trails. Michael explained that it is structurally unacceptable for barriers to stop and start up again when a crosswalk for pedestrians is needed. It is better to have lower speeds and use conventional crosswalks.

At the end of Michael's presentation, James Buckley said that he had learned a great deal from his one-hour presentation.

#### **4. Report on ODOT Value Engineering Team Study**

Alex Georgevitch clarified the role played by ODOT's Value Engineering (VE) Team, saying that it provided another set of eyes to look at the alternatives and provide some perspective. Their perspective was one among many that would be brought to the Solution Team. The VE Team had spent a week looking at the project. Three principles/goals guided the VE study: 1) the importance of a multi-disciplinary approach; 2) connecting a function orientation with associated costs; and 3) determining if there were other less costly ways to solve a problem. This was a weeklong study to look at the bridges, rights of way, access management and environmental issues.

The VE Team first became familiar with the three alternatives. Then they scored each alternative through a methodical analysis. Their resulting recommendation was that Alternative #11, Single Point Urban Interchange/Highland, was the best. With respect to the scores, there was no close second to #11. He cautioned that there are still many other criteria to be considered in the Environmental Impact process. One of the benefits of Alternative #11 is that it doesn't require design deviations; Alternative #2 does. Environmental impacts might result in a recommendation to move the interchange structure to be located above the existing I-5 bridges. The report is still in draft form.

David stressed that the VE effort is a different process from the Solution Team and CAC. Alex agreed, noting that the idea of the VE study is to bring a fresh perspective, involving staff who have not worked on the project and who come with no preconceptions. Mike Mahar said he saw it as a reality check. Alex said that VE studies are done before a selection is made. After a selection is made, another VE study will be conducted with respect to cost and operation. Mark Bailey asked if the VE study dealt with the displacement of people as a factor and Alex said that the team did not look at impacts on individuals; it stayed at the macro-level. Alex was asked if there was a quick summary of why Alternative #2 was not rated as high as Alternative #11. Alex replied that #11 provided better opportunities for access management and connectivity. It compared well with respect to right of way costs and long-term benefits.

John Morrison then opened the Public Comment Period. One gentleman said that he thought that leaving Barnett was a great idea. He couldn't think of a reason, however, to connect with either Ellendale or Highland, since people are attracted by what lies west of Barnett.

There are businesses along Barnett. David noted that it might be a good idea to erect signs directing people to downtown.

Barbara Griffin asked if she would be able to get to Highway 99 if she were heading north. David said yes, she could chose to do so at the new interchange. Another person noted the importance of placing a sign directing people to the city of Medford at the Garfield/Belknap Road.

Another member of the public asked why the interchange would head people north if all the new development was to happen east of Phoenix Road. She said that the Ellendale option seemed to take people further toward the Southeast Plan. David noted that the project was responding to congestion at the S. Medford Interchange area. Wade Six suggested that some questions were prompted by people waiting for "the other shoe to hit".

Wade also noted that Alternative #14, the Barnett/Boyd One-way Couplet, had once been identified as the most friendly and environmental. What was the cost differential between the alternatives? Alex noted that the preliminary cost estimate was 38 Million for #11 and 45 million for #2. He noted that taking out existing I-5 ramps was fairly inexpensive.

## **5. Adjournment**

John Morrison adjourned the meeting at 7:35 PM.