

Salem Willamette River Crossing Alternate Modes Study

Stakeholder Advisory Committee Meeting #1

Monday June 22, 2009

4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Mid-Willamette Valley Council of Governments

105 High Street / Salem

Attendees

Stakeholder Advisory Committee Members	Consultant Team
Bob Cortright, DLCD ¹	Theresa Carr, CH2M HILL
Sherrin Coleman, ODOT ² Public Transit Division	Jessica Roberts, Alta Planning + Design
Steve Dickey, Cherriots	
Dan Fricke, ODOT Region 2 Planning	Alternates/Visitors
Rodger Gutierrez, ODOT Bicycle/Pedestrian	Wayne Baum (Citizen)
Mike Jaffe, MWVCOG ³	John Gear (Citizen)
Doug Parrow, BTA ⁴	Paul Gellar (Citizen)
Robin Rolls, Cherriots	Eric Lundgren (Alternate/BTA)
Julie Warncke, City of Salem	Alison Wiley (Alternate/ODOT Public Transit Division)

¹ Department of Land Conservation and Development

² Oregon Department of Transportation

³ Mid-Willamette Valley Council of Government

⁴ Bicycle Transportation Alliance

Meeting Summary

This meeting summary documents the major conversation items from the June 22, 2009 meeting of the Salem Willamette River Crossing Stakeholder Advisory Committee. The summary is organized by agenda item. Only discussion and action items are documented in this summary. See meeting handouts¹ for additional information.

¹ Meeting handouts included Technical Memorandum 1: Summary of Stakeholder Interviews; Technical Memorandum 2: Review of Available Information; and Technical Memorandum 4: Markets, Opportunities, and Constraints.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Theresa opened the meeting and led the introductions. All SAC members were present except for one (Tom Clark) who was working out of state.

2. What is the Salem Alt Modes Study?

Theresa and Jessica provided an overview of the Salem Alternate Modes study including its relation to the Salem River Crossing project. The Alternate Modes study is separate from the bridge crossing project though related in that it looks to remove eight percent of peak hour traffic from the current and future bridge crossings in the future (Year 2031).

Several attendees commented that they questioned the need for an additional bridge. Theresa responded that the Salem River Crossing project would be addressing purpose and need for a new bridge as part of their work under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Another participant commented that the eight percent value was too low, that more could be done by addressing alternate modes. Theresa responded that all of the stakeholder agencies (City of Salem, Cherriots, MWVCOG, and ODOT) have voiced a similar desire, that eight percent be the minimum accomplished as part of this study.

Another participant asked whether the recommendations of this study would be incorporated into the Salem River Crossing project. Theresa responded that it would depend on the recommendation. The study areas for the two projects are different – the Alternate Modes study considers the origins and destinations of those using the river crossings in the future (Year 2031) peak hour analysis. Some recommendations may make sense for the Salem River Crossing project (facilities on the bridge, for example) though others (additional transit service to Monmouth, for example) might not.

3. What we've learned so far

Theresa and Jessica presented the major findings of the work prepared to date, including Technical Memorandum #1: Summary of Stakeholder Interviews; Technical Memorandum #2: Review of Available Information; and Technical Memorandum #4: Markets, Opportunities, and Constraints. Findings from those documents can be found on the Internet at <http://www.salemrivercrossing.org/AlternateModesStudy.aspx>.

Discussion from the SAC focused on additional opportunities and barriers not covered by the presentation. This discussion is organized by mode below:

Transit

- Barrier – look at total trip time on transit compared with driving.
- Barrier – transfers. Perception that transfers are not timed. Even if they are, if you miss your connection you wind up waiting a long time due to long headways.
- Opportunity – Cherriots is shifting to fewer but higher-quality transit lines – which creates more desirable service but exacerbates the “last mile” problem. Link up the bike network and the transit network, and provide secured bike parking at these connection points.
- Barrier – land use patterns (sprawl) both on the residential side but also on the employment side makes providing effective transit service to Salem’s residents difficult.

- Opportunity – allow parking at major transit connections (e.g., Roth’s).

Carpool/Vanpool

- Opportunity – carpool requests skyrocketed during last summer’s spike in gasoline prices. Interestingly, many of the people that tried carpooling last summer have sustained the practice, proving that behavior can be modified if the original hurdle of trying something new can be overcome.
- Opportunity – Oregon and Washington are receiving money to create a dynamic and flexible carpool matching service.
- Opportunity – look for informal and semi-formal locations along OR 22 so that carpool participants do not need to drive out of direction to meet their car-mates. The Fairgrounds in Rickreall is an example of a potential carpool meeting location.
- Constraint – Existing carpool spots may appear to be unavailable due to the permit program. Spots are reserved by permit, even if the permit holder is not using the spot. Does not allow for flexible/spontaneous carpools to use. Permits sold may not be an accurate measure of usage.
- Constraint – some potential carpool users are concerned about security – not knowing who you are riding with.
- Opportunity – remember that carpooling is the largest modal usage past the single-occupant vehicle.
- Constraint – agency culture in some organizations discourages flex time by requiring manager approval. If the manager does not approve of start and end times, or is inflexible, more difficult to coordinate schedules with other carpool occupants.

Parking

- Barrier – the act of purchasing a parking permit serves as a barrier for other modes as the permit holder feels they should make best use out of the sunk cost of the permit, and often does not (a) perceive the invisible cost of driving (wear and tear on the car, wear and tear on the roads, gasoline) and (b) does not wish to spend further out-of-pocket costs on transit fare or investments in using other modes (e.g., bicycle rack/bags).
- Barrier – some felt that employees of downtown Salem still park on street and move their cars every two hours (the two hour shuffle). It was noted that the City of Salem was making this practice more difficult through better parking enforcement.
- Barrier – the amount of parking districts around the Capitol Mall provides an indication of demand for state employees to drive and park at work.
- Barrier – The state manages the parking program based on “seniority” – best spaces go to those who have participated in the parking program the longest. This provides a big disincentive to give up one’s parking pass, as they would “lose their place in line” for a good parking spot.
- Opportunity – remove the “seniority” benefit from the parking permit program, and/or move completely to a daily program.

- Opportunity – focus on major employers as opposed to on-street parking.
- Opportunity – create a parking program whereby if people give up their parking pass for walking/biking/transit, they receive a certain number of daily passes per month (and have an identified area where they can park); also, if they regret this decision within 6 months, bump them to the top of the parking pass queue (or to their former level of seniority).

Bicycle/Pedestrian

- Barrier – City of Salem code would not allow removal of parking to put in a bike corral. Corrals would only be allowed if they did not displace parking.
- Barrier – most of the potential crossing locations for SRC are not ideal for bicyclists as it would require out-of-direction travel. The most direct path for majority of West Salem residents who work in downtown Salem would be near the location of the current bridges.
- Opportunity – provide more bike parking at Roth’s.
- Opportunity – use money that would be spent on bicycle and pedestrian facilities on the Salem River Crossing project on making downtown cycling high quality (several participants raised legal constraints associated with doing this).
- Opportunity – address and consider more long-term bike parking in key locations around downtown and West Salem.

TDM

- Opportunity – include “miscellaneous strategies” to include telecommuting, staggered start time, and car sharing services, among other strategies (this was included in meeting materials but not presented).
- Opportunity – consider tolling as part of alternate mode concepts but implementation is likely beyond the control of the alternate modes study (state policy creation, Salem River Crossing project discussion).
- Constraint – low funding levels and certainty is a major problem for all TDM providers; causes them to compete with each other or work within silos. Consider ways to stabilize and increase funding.

4. How will we make decisions?

Theresa led the group in a discussion of what makes a difference for people when they are making mode choices. The items raised by the SAC will be woven into a decision-making framework for evaluating project concepts.

- Cost – consider out of pocket, perceived, and invisible.
- Convenience – how much thinking do you ask people to do (where to get bus pass, how to carry personal belongings on a bicycle), as compared to driving their personal vehicle.
- Independence of movement – (aka control), the ability to do what your want when you want to do it.

- Physical constraints/environment – how safe is the alternate mode to use (riding in traffic, what is the speed of passing vehicles) and how secure does the user feel (leaving their car at the park-and-ride lot, waiting for the bus)?
- Comfort – availability and friendliness of information (ex: putting bicycles on the bus). How user friendly is the concept, how intimidating is it for first time users?
- Experience curve – how long does it take to become comfortable with the alternate mode? What skills, special equipment, investment, muscles, etc., are needed to become comfortable with it?
- Trip time – can combine with cost. What is the total travel time of the other mode, when compared to driving? How comfortable is the time, and what is the perceived (e.g., out of pocket) cost? Considering convenience/cost is the sweet spot. Making the “invisible” costs more visible. Charge full cost.
 - Consider personal LOS and delay – moving people not just vehicles. Look at the Transit Capacity Quality of Service Manual.
 - Perceived versus real travel time of alternate modes – how long does it actually take? People think it takes less time to drive than it actually does. People think it takes longer to take an alternate mode than it actually does.
- Health – consider the physical benefits of exercise (walking, bicycling).
- Stage in life – what does the commuter need to do apart from get to work and get home? Do they need to take their kids to school, run errands? What other demands are there on their time, and how accommodating is the alternate mode to these demands?
- Social Incentives – does the commuter’s job require them to jump in their car for a meeting or a site visit? What is the reaction when the commuter says that they rode their bicycle or the bus? Is that accepted? Thought was that this is difficult in Salem but that the City is reaching a tipping point.
- Culture – similar to above with gauging reaction of co-workers, peers. Perception that people who use alternate modes have “done something wrong” (e.g., lost their license).
- Sherrin stated and many agreed that ultimately the recommendations from the study need to be realistic, meaning that they would need to work for the members of the SAC.

5. What is your definition of success?

The group had a roundtable discussion about what the Alternate Modes Study should do, and what it would look like for the SAC members and other participants to consider it a success. Main elements are described by participant below.

- Rodger Gutierrez – a successful plan is one that achieves a decrease in 8,000 peak hour SOV’s to move to another mode safely and comfortably.
- Doug Parrow – a clearly defined way to implement the study’s recommendations.
- Bob Cortright – a comprehensive list of actions to increase the availability and convenience of alternate modes, organized by mode.

- Robin Rolls - a clearly defined metric structure for TDM, a sense of how to measure TDM program success.
- Alison Wiley - a plan that is adopted and implemented.
- Paul Gellar - agree with above.
- Eric Lindstrom - incorporate the principles of least cost planning in the analysis of modal improvements, consider cost effectiveness.
- John Gear - a new TDM paradigm that comes up with creative and compelling projects so that we don't need the Salem River Crossing auto bridge. Stop limiting yourself to failure.
- Dan Fricke - develop compelling and interesting projects that can be implemented.
- Sherrin Coleman - move through the process so that you get to a finished document and focuses on increased mobility options. Shift from moving machines to moving people.
- Mike Jaffe - establish and maintain public credibility by having a comprehensive suite of alternate modes *and* bridge recommendations.
- Julie Warncke - consider the political viability of recommendations. Strive toward things that may be viable in the future but maybe not today. Be able to measure the recommendations incrementally so you know benefit of the piece of the recommendation, as well as the recommendation as a whole, in case you need to implement incrementally.
- Wayne Baum - Come up with concrete solutions, it is a big shift to reconsider need for the Salem River Crossing bridge.

Other general discussion items related to this project's success included that the study should consider recommendations that can proceed before the bridge project is built.

6. Next Steps

The SAC was invited to participate in the July 1 workshop, being held at the Salem Public Library Anderson Room from 1-5pm. All participants, including SAC members, alternates, and members of the public, said they would be able to attend the workshop.