



## Oversight Team

**ATTENDEES:** Sam Brentano/Marion County, Dan Clem/City of Salem, Bob Krebs/Salem-Keizer Transit District, Cathy Clark/City of Keizer, Steve Cooley/ODOT, Chris Woods/FHWA, Craig Pope/Polk County

**STAFF PARTICIPANTS:** Dan Fricke/ODOT, Julie Warncke/City of Salem, Mike Jaffe/SKATS, Richard Schmid/SKATS, Anthony Boesen/FHWA, Lou Torres/ODOT, Tim Burkhardt/CH2M HILL, Michael Hoffmann/CH2M HILL

**DATE:** March 1, 2011

## Introductions and Agenda Review

Tim Burkhardt welcomed the group and reviewed the agenda. The meeting content included an update on the DEIS, a discussion of the possibility of conducting opinion research related to project funding, and a preliminary overview of information in the draft technical reports prepared for the DEIS.

## Public Comment

There were no members of the public in attendance or public comments.

## Project Updates

Tim provided a brief summary of the project status and the Draft EIS (DEIS) in particular. The consultant team is currently responding to comments from ODOT and the City of Salem on the preliminary DEIS. Once these comments have been addressed, the DEIS will be submitted to FHWA. FHWA has two 30-day review periods – one by Oregon staff and one by legal staff in San Francisco – with revisions in between the two rounds. Once these reviews are complete and the document revised, it will be ready for the public. The estimated date to publish the DEIS is late August or September. After the document is published, key milestones include selecting a preferred alternative, preparing the Final EIS, and securing a Record of Decision.

## Project Funding

Tim reminded the group that the project is not currently funded and that a decision on how to fund the project is not required for NEPA, and the Oversight Team's prior direction has been to keep the two issues separate and focus first on identifying a preferred alternative.

Chris Woods noted that a financial plan is required for projects over \$100 million. Dan Clem asked about the Salem bonding dollars and noted that project started with an earmark. Julie Warncke responded that the City had about \$100K for partial right-of-way acquisition.

Tim said that the consultant's scope of work for the next phase of the project does include tasks to help with funding in the form of a funding feasibility report, and the opportunity to do opinion research. Tim then introduced Su Midghall of the firm Davis Hibbits Midghall, to discuss how and when opinion research could be used to inform decisions related to funding.

Su spoke about doing opinion research before versus after Preferred Alternative selection. Dan Clem noted that he doesn't like the idea of asking public opinion questions about funding before telling public everything (in the DEIS). Su noted that it is best to wait until you have solid financial numbers, but that you could get a lot out of a focus group to get a sense of where people were at. She said it is good to have some more objective community viewpoint to bring to public meetings (since the cross-section of people at public meetings are self-selected and therefore may not represent the general opinions of the public at large). Cathy Clark said she agreed that we need to know what the Preferred Alternative is before we want to go any further (with something like opinion research), in part because Keizer's level of support will depend on whether the preferred alternative serves their needs.

Following further discussion, Tim Burkhardt asked if the group then agreed on NOT doing opinion research before the selection of the Preferred Alternative. Mike Jaffe and Julie Warncke both noted that opinion research task should be in the contract as a contingency item. Dan Clem and Cathy Clark both agreed that the main topic right now should be the selection of a Preferred Alternative, and that tolling/funding should not be discussed prior to the preferred alternative choice, or funding will become THE issue prematurely. Craig Pope said we should select the Preferred Alternative and let the public know what it is – that is the most important thing -- then you can talk about funding. Dan Clem noted that the public opinion research for the Tacoma Narrows project was done very well.

Su Midghall noted that the group should consider the timing of DEIS process ending and the next election in 2013 as it would related to a vote on tolling. The group agreed with Tim Burkhardt's statement of having brief general discussion of funding at the DEIS public hearing, but keeping all the focus on the alternatives.

## Draft EIS: Summary of Preliminary Technical Findings

Tim Burkhardt and Michael Hoffmann presented a draft summary of the preliminary technical findings from the DEIS. The same presentation is to be used with the Task Force in the evening.

General discussion from the Oversight Team was that the presentation given did not stress the beneficial aspects of the project and had some technical details that could be difficult to explain to a general audience. Chris Woods noted that the conveyance of impacts results needs to be put into perspective for people; for example, that this project has less new impervious surface than a new WalMart would have. Tim and Michael noted a number of changes to be made to the presentation to make the results more clear to a general audience (i.e., not overuse of "impacts") and focusing on trends rather than specifics. The group agreed that one of the difficulties of a presentation at this point in the process is that the DEIS has not yet been publicly released.

Craig Pope noted that he feels better about where the project process is going now than before the meeting, due in part to understanding the range of alternatives that will be put before the public in the DEIS.

## Next Steps

Tim indicated that there were no further meetings of the Oversight Team planned prior to publication of the DEIS. ODOT and Salem staff will continue to provide updates at the SKATS policy board meetings.