



Task Force

- ATTENDEES:** Sam Litke/City of Keizer, Stephen Dickey/Salem-Keizer Transit District, Anthony Boesen/FHWA, Mike Jaffe/MWVCOG/SKATS, Steve Cooley/ODOT, Russell Beaton/Land Use, Mike Karnosh/Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, Fred Harris/North Salem Business Association, Darlene Strozut/Highland Neighborhood, Doug Parrow/BTA, Tom Clark/West Salem businesses, Warren Bednarz/Downtown Business, Betsy Belshaw/Parks, Karen Odenthal/Marion County Public Works, Eric Bradfield/Grant Neighborhood Association, Jean Palmateer/Grant Neighborhood Association, Austin McGuigan/Polk County Community Development Director, Mark Becktel/City of Salem Public Works, Kim Moreland, City of Salem
- UNABLE TO ATTEND:** Leon Fischer/Freight, Glenn Gross/City of Salem Community Development
- STAFF PARTICIPANTS:** Dan Fricke/ODOT, Julie Warncke/City of Salem, Rod Thompson/ODOT, Tim Burkhardt/CH2M HILL, Michael Hoffmann/CH2M HILL, Diane Kestner, CH2M HILL
- GUESTS:** None
- DATE:** March 1, 2011, Broadway Commons, Salem, Oregon

Welcome and Agenda Review

Tim Burkhardt welcomed the group. He then reviewed the agenda which focused on the project updates and associated discussion.

Public Comment

No members of the public were present.

Project Updates

Status of Draft EIS and Key Milestones

Tim provided a recap on the project history and key milestones, and reported anticipation of publishing Draft EIS (DEIS) document this summer (2011). Further milestones include selecting a Preferred Alternative in early 2012. Subsequent milestones include preparing the Final EIS, preparing local land use approvals, and securing the Record of Decision (ROD) at project completion.

Review of DEIS Alternatives

Tim explained that an EIS is required when there is federal funding and environmental impacts. An EIS discloses impacts and considers reasonable alternatives.

Tim said that the following alternatives are being studied in the DEIS: No Build plus 3 bridge crossing locations. There are 8 different build alternatives within the 3 crossing locations. He then described each alternative, including the differences in functions, geographic extent, and which roads are affected.

Group discussion related to elevation on different alternatives – which parts are elevated above ground and which parts are at ground level. More specific questions about elevations and whether affected properties are commercial or residential will be addressed in the DEIS.

A member of the task force commented that we need to plan on bilingual discussions of impacts with the community.

Draft EIS: Summary of Preliminary Technical Findings

Tim said that the impacts analysis is based on the notion that we will avoid what we can and minimize impacts that are unavoidable. If impacts are not avoidable then generally they must be mitigated. Tim then provided summary of preliminary technical findings in terms of what topics will be addressed in the DEIS:

- Traffic and Roadway -how is congestion affected, travel times, transit travel times
- Right-of-Way, Land Use, Visual – land affected, displaced, open space, asses key viewpoints
- Social, Economic, Environmental Justice – businesses displaced, parking, traffic in business areas, business access changes
- There are qualitative, not quantitative discussions about the relation of vehicle mobility and other modes of transportation and what that does to the other modes. Bike and pedestrian issues are addressed in parts of several technical reports.
- Mitigation is discussed in general terms for some issues and impacts. With respect to the trail connections along Edgewater Street, some of alternatives would sever the connections so mitigation is needed.
- Natural Environment - Water Resources, Wildlife, Wetlands – Tim mentioned it is possible to come out ahead with mitigation of resources.
- Air, Noise, Geology – A task force member said that air quality is an issue that could receive extra scrutiny from the public, as it did on the CRC project with respect to greenhouse gases. Michael explained that the ODOT policy for Greenhouse gases is that they are addressed on a programmatic (state-wide) level, rather than at the project level.

Schedule

In response to a question, Tim clarified that we hope to publish the Draft EIS in August or September. The team is currently revising the document in response to ODOT and City of Salem comments. The next step is to send to FHWA for their two rounds of review and comment.

If there are conflicting comments between ODOT and FHWA, FHWA will make the final decision. FHWA is looking for a legally defensible NEPA process. Most changes are not hard to resolve, some additional fleshing out may be needed. NEPA documents are not typically challenged from technical standpoint. Over the course of the project, we have met monthly with FHWA to address their concerns and to anticipate what they will be expecting in the document.

After publishing DEIS, there is a public comment period of 60 days, followed by public hearing (one or two). The normal DEIS comment period is 45 days, but because the project is so large, we have been granted an extension to 60 days. Several task force members said that because there are differing opinions on this project, there should be a west side hearing and an east side hearing to avoid any concerns about bias due to location.

Once it is published, there will be multiple places to review DEIS document – at ODOT Region 2 offices, City of Salem offices, public libraries. The public will be able to provide comments in writing, mail or website. Spoken comments can also be provided to the court recorder at the public hearings. A task force member said that we need to be aware that some of the public have no internet access and cannot speak English.

Preferred Alternative Decision Process

Tim described how a decision a preferred alternative will be made. He referred to the decision making structure prepared at the beginning of the project which shows the Task Force making recommendations to the Oversight Team, who then makes a recommendation to their respective governments. It is then up to ODOT to make a recommendation to FHWA who makes the actual decision. The public is involved throughout this process.

Tim said the decision process will focus on key differentiators – the things that actually differentiate the alternatives from each other. From there it will be a step-wise comparison process to narrow down the alternatives. The Task Force will be expected to meet and discuss their recommendations to the Oversight Team as part of this process.

The preferred alternative process could take about 6 months. It could take longer to get through it depending on how much mixing and changing of alternatives is needed, including the possibility of forming a “hybrid” alternative from those already studied.

Project Funding

Tim reminded the group that the project is not currently funded. The City of Salem has some funds that could be used to purchase right-of-way. Funding will be addressed in earnest following the selection of a preferred alternative. If full funding is not available, phasing of the preferred alternative is possible. At the public hearing for the Draft EIS, general information on funding options will be presented. The DEIS does not address how the project will be funded but will disclose project costs. There was concern expressed about potentially leading people to think there are many possibilities to fund the project and that we need to give people an idea of what the costs are and how they will be paid for. While some members of the public may expect that public (government) funds may be available, in reality significant local funds will be required.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at about 8:00 p.m.