



## Oversight Team

**ATTENDEES:** Sam Brentano/Marion County, Dan Clem/City of Salem, Bob Krebs/Salem-Keizer Transit District, Richard Walsh/City of Keizer, Cathy Clark/City of Keizer, Jane Lee/ODOT, Emily Lawton/FHWA, Tom Ritchey/Polk County

**STAFF PARTICIPANTS:** Ken Husby/Polk County, Dan Fricke/ODOT, Erik Havig/ODOT, Tim Potter/ODOT, Rod Thompson/ODOT, Julie Warncke/City of Salem, Mike Jaffe/SKATS, Marcy Schwartz/CH2M HILL, Dave Simmons/CH2M HILL

**DATE:** August 17, 2009

## Introductions and Agenda Review

Marcy Schwartz welcomed the group and reviewed the agenda. The meeting content includes an update on the DEIS and a discussion of various funding strategy approaches that the Oversight Team may wish to pursue prior to publishing the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

## Public Comment

There were no public comments.

## Updates on DEIS

The Oversight Team was provided a one page 2009 Half-Year Progress Report (attached). This handout outlines the activities and accomplishments for 2009. Dave Simmons reviewed the progress report, noting that work has been advanced where possible, but that a number of technical coordination and methodology issues, primarily associated with the traffic analysis work, are taking longer to resolve. This has resulted in additional schedule delay, with the DEIS now estimated to be published in June 2010. This is an additional six month delay from the last published schedule.

Dan Clem asked about the status of the overall project budget. Dan Fricke responded that additional ODOT planning dollars have been secured for the project to cover additional costs. While the level of effort is not yet known, ODOT is optimistic that there is sufficient funding to complete the EIS process.

Richard Walsh asked if the urban growth boundary discussions underway with Keizer and Marion County would impact the traffic work for this project. The response was no, that this project is using the current regional model and will not be impacted if changes to land use occur in the future.

## Funding Discussion

Marcy began the discussion with a review of the EIS milestones and the financial requirements that need to be in place at the various milestones. The key message was that there are no financial requirements that must be met until the Final EIS is prepared and submitted for signature. The focus of this discussion was to review possible funding feasibility work that could be done in the coming months prior to the selection of a Preferred Alternative. The Project Management Team has discussed this topic and recommends that a discussion and decision on a Preferred Alternative be accompanied with some level of discussion about how to pay for the solution.

A one page flowchart titled “Initial Funding Considerations”, along with a page of bar charts titled “Illustration of Hypothetical Funding Packages” was provided to the Oversight Team and attached to this summary.

The flowchart outlines two questions posed to the Oversight Team. They are:

1. Should there be an assessment of the financial feasibility conducted in parallel with the DEIS?

If the answer was yes to question 1, then:

2. Should the project conduct opinion research in addition to financial feasibility and policy decisions?

In summary, the flowchart proposes two paths. Following the yes path, some upfront work would be conducted early so that when the DEIS is published, the decision process to determine a Preferred Alternative would be linked to the fiscal reality of how the project could be funded. The handout with the bar charts illustrates one possible level of detail to pursue. For each alternative, one or more combinations of funding could be developed. This funding information could be provided to the general public, along with the DEIS results.

In order to test the feasibility of raising revenue for the project using one mechanism versus another (e.g., vehicle registration vs. property tax vs. tolls), some level of opinion research could be conducted to support the development of the funding package options. This outreach could take several forms including focus group style meetings with community opinion leaders and/or a random sample of community members. This work would be conducted by public opinion research firms with the goal of providing the Oversight Team with more specific information about what community members like or dislike about various funding sources. With this information, funding packages may be developed that have broader support in the community.

Following a no path with the flowchart, one might feel that a discussion of funding in parallel with the release of the DEIS would be too much information for the general public to consider. Perhaps waiting to discuss funding until after a Preferred Alternative would be a simplified approach.

Following some discussion, there was general agreement for the need to assess financial feasibility in parallel with the DEIS, however the Oversight Team did not agree on whether potential funding options should be presented at the same time as the DEIS - or closer to the

preferred alternative decision. Members of the Oversight Team were not aligned in terms of the value of opinion research and when it would be worthwhile to conduct.

Several members of the Oversight Team felt it was premature to discuss funding at all until after the DEIS is published and people have the information on the alternatives, their cost, impacts, benefits, etc. It was explained that if the Oversight Team would like to conduct opinion research, it could take up to six months to select a firm and negotiate a scope and budget, so some lead time prior to starting the actual work will be necessary.

## **Next Steps**

The next meeting of the Oversight Team will be in early 2010 to present the preliminary findings of the DEIS. At that point, we will again discuss the timing and scope of the financial feasibility work. The Project Management Team will move forward to prepare a scope of work and get a consultant selected to conduct opinion research and financial feasibility work, but review the work plan options with the Oversight Team at the next meeting.