

Meeting Summary

St. Helens US 30 & Columbia Blvd./St. Helens St. Corridor Master Plan

Technical Advisory Committee Meeting #2

March 17, 2014

1:15 – 3:15 pm

St. Helens City Hall

1. Introductions and Meeting Objectives

- Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) members attending:
 - Ann Batten, Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) , Region 2 Traffic Analyst
 - Christopher Cummings, ODOT Freight Planning Program Manager
 - Rodger Gutierrez, ODOT Pedestrian & Bicycle Facility Specialist
 - Scott Jensen, Port of St. Helens
 - Bill Johnston, AICP, ODOT Senior Region 2 Planner
 - Eliseo Lemus Magaña, P.E., ODOT Region 2 Designer
 - Christina McDaniel-Wilson, P.E., ODOT Senior Transportation Analyst
 - Michael Morales, ODOT Region 2 Senior Environmental Project Manager
 - Sue Nelson, P.E., City of St. Helens
 - Neal Sheppeard, City of St. Helens
 - John Walsh, City of St. Helens (City Administrator)
 - Lonny Welter, Columbia County
 - Janet Wright, Columbia County

- Project Management Team (PMT) consulting team members attending:
 - Matt Bell, Kittelson & Associates
 - Jacob Graichen, AICP, City of St. Helens
 - Matt Hastie, Angelo Planning Group
 - Tim Strand, GreenWorks
 - Naomi Zwerdling, ODOT

Note: CAC member Al Petersen attended this meeting instead of the CAC meeting due to schedule conflicts.

1. Project Overview and Status Report

Matt Hastie reviewed work completed to date and next steps. He noted that the project team has completed a set of draft streetscape design concepts, including three options for each corridor segment in the project area, as well as a number of intersection improvement options. The next steps will be to review these concepts with the Planning Commission (PC) and public on April 8; summarize comments from all advisory committees, the PC and the public; and then identify a preferred streetscape design for each corridor segment for further review. Matt also noted that the project team met with local business and property owners to review the draft streetscape design concepts earlier in the day and was scheduled to meet with the project Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) after meeting with the TAC.

2. Streetscape Design Concepts

US 30 Corridor

Tim Strand reviewed streetscape design concepts for this corridor, including special opportunity area sites. Committee members provided the following comments.

- Do the concepts provide opportunities for transit pullouts on either side of the highway? The County is working on a transit plan that calls for improvements to service and facilities throughout the County, including on US 30. Currently buses need to pull off the highway to stop which takes a lot of extra time. Ideally we would like to eventually have stops on the highway. We understand that would require changes to the design of the road in those locations.
- Who would be responsible for maintaining the medians? *Response: We don't know that yet. They would be in the right-of-way so they would be owned by ODOT. However, the City and ODOT would need to reach an agreement regarding maintenance. The City currently maintains the landscaping on the east side of the highway.*
- Implementing the medians would result in a reduction in capacity because of effects on oversize vehicles and the inability to park in that area. ODOT's Motor Vehicle Carrier (freight) Division should look at these concepts to make sure there is no fatal flaw with the medians.
- The medians were assumed in the City's TSP and ODOT was a partner in that process (including providing the funding for it). So they have already reviewed the concept of medians here. This Corridor Plan would be a Refinement Plan to the TSP so we expect that medians will be OK. That said, we can ask the Motor Carrier Division to review the concepts.
- Have you reviewed the fence concept with ODOT Rail yet or with the railroad? *Response: We have provided these concepts to ODOT Rail and the railroad for review and have received preliminary comments from them. Also, the fence concept originated from previous discussions with the TAC and railroad representatives. They indicated that a walkway likely would be acceptable on the west side of US 30 as long as a fence is provided between the walkway and the rail right-of-way.*
- What about having a hedgerow instead of a fence?
- The fence could end up collecting a lot of trash which will be a maintenance issue.
- ODOT has several comments on Option 3:
 - You might want to consider the option of acquiring additional right-of-way, rather than moving the curbs. That ultimately may be less costly.

- You need to be clear that these are only concepts, not specific proposed designs. Colored pavement for the crosswalks alone likely won't be adequate. ODOT typically requires striped crossings on state highways. Those could possibly be combined with colored, reflective or stamped pavement.
- You also should consider maintenance costs of colored or painted crosswalks which typically have to be repainted after a certain amount of time.

Houlton/Olde Towne Corridor – West of 13th Street

Tim Strand reviewed streetscape design concepts for this corridor segment, including special opportunity area sites. Committee members provided the following comments.

- How many people are bicycling in this area? I would have a question about whether the scope and cost of facilities proposed for bicyclists in these concepts is warranted by the amount of bicycle activity.
- Columbia Blvd is an important route for kids to travel to the school on 12th/Columbia. Providing good, safe pedestrian and bicycle facilities here could really increase the number of kids and other people walking and bicycling in this area.
- Please consider where you would locate transit amenities in this corridor segment.
- Have you talked to property owners about the impact of trees on visibility of businesses in this area, including in the US 30/Columbia Blvd. gateway area? You might want to consider clustering trees to reduce those impacts.
- Survivability of trees is a big issue, given the underlying basalt layer. We don't want to plant trees in locations where they won't grow or will damage the sidewalks.
- There are tree species that survive well in shallow soils and there are examples of this in St. Helens. We just need to pick the right tree species.
- We also think it is important to come up with a concept that doesn't hinge on the presence of trees, recognizing the cost of planting them and maintenance and survivability issues.
- What about using some type of vertical sculptural element (e.g., obelisks) instead of trees in some locations?
- You talked about no net loss of parking in Option 3 but would you lose parking spaces in Options 1 and 2? *Response: Possibly but we haven't assessed that in detail yet. We don't have the resources to do a parking inventory and analysis of the number of spaces affected but we could provide some general information about potential impacts.*
- It will be important to accommodate delivery truck parking in any of these options. Wayfinding for delivery trucks also will be important so that they know where to go if they take a wrong turn.

Houlton/Olde Towne Corridor – East of 13th Street

Tim Strand reviewed streetscape design concepts for this corridor segment, including special opportunity area sites. Committee members provided the following comments.

- I like roundabouts where there is room for a full roundabout but I don't think mini-roundabouts work well. In my experience, most people do not use them correctly. I don't recommend one at Columbia/1st Street.
- I personally like the reverse angled parking in the "Parklet" concept but I'm not sure people here are ready for it. People will find it confusing and I think the learning curve will be too steep.

3. Intersection Improvement Options

US 30/Columbia Blvd. and Gateway Concept (Options 1A and 1B)

- The US 30 crossing here is very difficult, especially for bicycles. It seems to be timed just right for someone turning to hit a bicyclist.
- You'll need to address truck turning movements with the gateway option.
- Would the Milton Way options allow for car-haulers (trucks) to get through the intersection?

US 30/Wyeth Road (Options 7A and 7B)

- What is the community concern at this intersection?
- A lot of pedestrians cross at this intersection and it is very hazardous for pedestrians, given visibility and crossing length conditions.
- It may be a challenge to find a good, similar example of this kind of crossing in another location.
- The speed limit changes very close to this intersection, resulting in pretty high speeds (50mph+) in this location.
- ODOT would need to be confident that the City supports restrictions on turning movements if we were to proceed with one of these options.
- Restricting left turns will be potentially problematic with either option.
- ODOT will need to look at the number of pedestrians crossing in this area vs. the amount of vehicle traffic in considering a crossing improvement.
- Would restricting left turns cause any backups on US 30?

US 30/Gable Road (Option 8)

- It would probably be more popular with more people to put in a right-hand turn lane than to add the bike box shown in this location.
- There is already a project identified and funded through the Statewide Transportation Improvement Projects (STIP) program to improve a portion of this intersection. Anything you do will need to be consistent with that. The Corridor Plan should tie into that project and improvements on both sides of US 30 at Gable should be integrated with the current STIP intersection project.
- There also is a transit study for US 30 that is proposed to be funded through the STIP.

Columbia Blvd./9th Street (Option 3)

- There is already a lot of queuing at this intersection during school drop-off times. Eliminating the right-turn lane there will make that situation worse. You should probably come out and observe those conditions before moving forward with this option.

4. Next Steps

Matt summarized next steps again, including the following:

- Conduct meetings with local business and property owners, Planning Commission and other community members (April 8)

- Summarize the results of all meetings and public comments (late April)
- Draft a preferred set of Streetscape Design Concepts (April – May)
- Review the results of that work with the TAC, CAC, Planning Commission and other community members (June)