



Bethany Boulevard Improvements Project Focus Group Meeting #2 Notes

Meeting Date: July 8, 2010
Time: 5:00-7:00 p.m.
Location: Sunset Presbyterian Church

FOCUS GROUP MEMBERS:

Doug Alvarez		Paul Enriguez	
Debra Ashe		Bob McMillan	
Hal Ballard	√	Charles Murphy	√
Chris Biggs	√	Steve Murray	√
Ann Bryan	√	Jeff Oberst	√
Robert Bueermann	√	Sandra Peterson	√
Stephen Collins		Norm Rose	√
Rob Saxton	√	Brian Irish	√

PROJECT MANAGEMENT TEAM:

Washington County			
Matt Costigan	√	Jan Wilson	√
		Magdalena Campuzano	√
Howell Consulting			
Leslie Howell	√		
WHPacific			
Wayne Bauer	√	Ken Rehms	√
Kittelson & Associates			
Wade Scarbrough	√		

OTHER ATTENDEES:

Gary Cooper	Suzanne Walker	
Betty Cooper	Micki Sparr	
Rick Morrison		
Fran and Shirley Bates		

Welcome and Introductions - *Leslie Howell (Howell Consulting)*

- Leslie welcomed everyone to the meeting. She then asked if everyone had received their emailed agendas and meeting notes. This confirmed that the email list is accurate.
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- Leslie gave an overview of tonight's agenda.

- Leslie indicated that the process for the meeting notes: the “draft” notes from the previous meeting will be reviewed at the following meeting and once approved, will be considered final posted on the project website. She asked the committee for comments regarding PFG #1 meeting notes.
- Chris Biggs indicated that on page 4 the word “extensive” should be removed from the following paragraph: *Matt explained that Bethany Blvd. has been identified on the county’s Transportation Plan as a 5-lane arterial since the 1988 plan and was reaffirmed in the 2002 Transportation Plan, both of which went through an “extensive” public involvement process.* Also on page 6, the answer to the 3rd question is not complete. The answer will be completed and added to the final meeting notes posted on the website.
- Leslie went on to review the Issues Bin.
 1. The Project Prospectus for this project was distributed. Matt reminded the group it is still a draft and has not been finalized as it has not been signed.
 2. The list of PFG members was handed out. Matt introduced Brian Irish as part of the Project Management Team. Brian will be representing the county’s Operations and Maintenance Division (Operations). Brian indicated that the operations department has not had much input into the design process of capital projects prior to this. Operations want to be a part of the group to ensure that once the road is built, they will be able to maintain the road adequately.
 3. There seems to be a glitch with posting of the Right-of Way map on the website. The issue is being addressed by the consultant and will be posted as soon as possible.
 4. Historical traffic counts for Bethany Blvd were distributed. The counts go back as far as 1994. Traffic counts are done by the County on all major streets once a year.
 5. The Public Involvement Process chart was distributed. Leslie reminded the group that this was discussed at the last meeting but we forgot to distribute. Leslie noted that this chart is a work in progress and is subject to change. It is intended to give the group a general idea of the flow of activities.

Question: Were you able to solve the problem for the link not working on the website to access the comments for the Open House in March?

Answer: We are aware of the problem and are working on it.

What Is Important To You About This Project?

Leslie went around the room and asked each member what is most important to them about this project. Matt summarized the comments on a flip chart.

Sandra Peterson - representing the Touchstone neighborhood:

- Delivered a report to all of the 81 homes in her subdivision and received 6 responses. The 6 responses seem to indicate that the 5 lane plan is inevitable because it will be needed eventually.
- Five lanes will make it difficult to get onto Bethany Blvd. without a light at the intersection of Oak Hills and Bethany Blvd.
- Currently, it is impossible to make a left turn onto Bethany Blvd. to go to Bethany Village even though it is a mile and a half away. With five lanes people will have to go a different way.
- Safety is a key concern. With four travel lanes she is concerned that speed will pick up without a light.

- Compared the need for a light @ Oak Hills to the light on Saltzman @ 129th Terrace. The conditions are very similar. If a light can't be installed at Oak Hills there needs to be a crosswalk or pedestrian bridge.
- It appears that the public is mixing up the "3not5" group with the PFG.

Deanna Middleton - *representing Cypress Point (Arbor Glen) HOA (sitting in for Paul Enriquez):*

- Echoed the concern for safety.
- Crossing at Oak Hills is currently not an option. When biking with her family, she puts the bikes in the car, drives across Bethany Blvd and then gets the bikes out. She would not cross Oak Hills with her children, it is too dangerous.
- School bus routes have been changed because it is too difficult to cross at Oak Hills.

Steve Murray - *representing the Skyview/White Fox neighborhood:*

- Concerned that there is only one way in and out of his neighborhood. In early 2000, the neighborhood worked with Washington County and came up with 2 lanes out of the neighborhood; a right turn lane and a thru/left turn lane. This eliminated the need to wait in line for those turning left onto Bethany. Now with five lanes, it will have to be completely redone.
- Access to the neighborhood is a key concern.
- Concerned about property values for those properties adjacent to Bethany Blvd.

Rob Saxton - *representing Washington County Engineering:*

- Concerned with mobility by all modes of transportation.
- Safety is also a concern.

Ann Bryan - *representing Oak Hills Elementary Schools Local School Committee (LSC):*

- Concerned with safety. In talking to people, they are concerned that in their own neighborhood they can't get out or cross the street. With 3 or 5 lanes, can't see how crossing the street will get better. Would like assurance that this problem will be alleviated.
- Most people who live in Oak Hills live there because they want to be part of a community. Oak Hills residents value that people walk the Oak Hills Loop. Would like to see improved pedestrian and bicycle access and be able to get out of the neighborhood safely.
- The community needs to feel like the project is money well spent.
- Would like to see something that could be valued and improves livability.

Hal Ballard - *representing the Washington County Bicycle Transportation Coalition:*

- Commented on a law passed in 1979 that calls for bicycle lanes with any improvement to a road that has been designated an arterial.
- Heard the words "inevitable and 5 lanes". Wants committee to know that it should speak for what it wants; if 5 lanes are not what they want, they need to express that viewpoint.

Jeff Oberst - *representing Bethany Village commercial area:*

- With the North Bethany expansion, without an improvement to Bethany Blvd., the problems mentioned will be magnified.
- Somewhere along the line there was talk about the potential to decrease the width of bike lanes to reduce need for right of way. Thinks that bicycle and pedestrian facilities need to be kept at the full standard capacity for safety reasons.
- There is a need to improve access into and out of neighborhoods.

Chuck Murphy – *representing Claremont Civic Association:*

- Polled neighbors and out of the responses, 250 people were *opposed* to 5 lanes and only two were *for* 5 lanes.
- His community as a whole is mostly senior citizens, many of whom cross Bethany Blvd. by foot. If road is widened to 5 lanes, concerned about safety crossing 5 lanes.
- Concerned about the 5 lane impact to homes that back up to Bethany Blvd. and lost property values.
- Impressed with the new Saltzman Road Project and feels traffic is moving on Saltzman. Feels like road improvements similar to Saltzman would be good for Bethany.
- There are a couple of traffic engineers in Claremont who want to know why all the emphasis is being put on Bethany Blvd. when they have been told at the meetings for North Bethany the expected growth is out to the west. Why is the roadway expansion being made to the south?
- Feels the solution is to put an exit and entrance ramp on 174th Avenue off of Hwy 26 which would open up 174th up to Laidlaw for access to North Bethany. This would provide a good alternate to Bethany Blvd. Saltzman could then take a lot more traffic.
- Concerned with livability issues and values the uniqueness of neighborhood.
- His neighborhood association added and maintains over 300 street trees which is a very valuable asset to the neighborhood. Doesn't want to lose the trees.
- Seems like 5 lanes is overkill.

Chris Biggs – *from the Oak Hills neighborhood:*

- There are a lot of people who have lived in the neighborhood a long time who will be affected by the widening.
- Wants to find a compromise that provides livability and access to neighborhood while helping to move traffic. Wants everyone to work outside the box to come up with a solution that fits everybody.
- There are a lot of folks whose home is their main asset and to decrease the value of those homes is very disappointing.
- Agrees there needs to be a signal at Oak Hills Drive. Concerned about impacts to the neighborhood streets of Oak Hills.

Norm Rose – *representing Oak Hills HOA*

- Concerned about the current traffic in Oak Hills. There is a steady stream of cars through Oak Hills and not sure if improvement of Bethany Blvd will fix it.
- Would like to see traffic mitigation through the Oak Hills neighborhood. Hopes that this project would include traffic mitigation for some of the local neighborhoods outside of the main project as well.
- In order to make good decisions about the Bethany Blvd. improvements wants to know about what is going to happen with the overpass at Hwy 26. Would like to have ODOT at these meetings so the group can have a dialogue with them. (*Leslie responded that the PMT plan to invite ODOT to the next meeting to answer the overpass issue.*)
- Concerned about property value impacts to houses which back up to Oak Hills.
- Concerned about the impact of traffic from North Bethany. Would like to have the county address the concerns. If the traffic will increase to the west, why are they doing this to the south? Feels like he is receiving mixed information on traffic depending who he talks to at the county.
- Concerned that the county's right of way process takes 10% off their estimate of the value of a property before they even start. Would like to have right of way people address that issue.
- Wants it stated for the record that the overwhelming number of residents in Oak Hills wants 3 lanes and not five.

Robert Bueerman – from the Telshire neighborhood:

- Represent 54 homes in the northwest corner of Oak Hills. Primary concern is the entrance and exit out of Telshire and Ridgetop Lane. Would like a traffic light at Telshire at least.
- With the North Bethany improvements and the traffic pattern developed from it, what guarantee is there that the traffic would flow to the west and not come east and then south on Bethany? Wants more information.

Traffic – Wade Scarbrough, Kittelson

Since not everyone was able to attend the Traffic 101 workshop, Wade presented the PowerPoint presentation that was given at the workshop. Purpose is to educate the group on how traffic analysis is conducted and specific results for the Bethany Blvd. improvements. The following are questions asked during the presentation.

(PowerPoint presentation has been put on the project web site)

Question: Emily Lane and Oak Hills is a level of service F, why doesn't it warrant a traffic signal?

Answer: Level of service F, is not the only factor considered in deciding if a traffic signal is warranted. There are a total of 9 standard warrants to evaluate whether installing a signal at an intersection is justified. The purpose of these warrants is to preserve the function and safety of the major street. When intersections, such as Emily Lane at Bethany, are at LOS F but don't meet the warrant for signalization, the typical strategy would be to provide for alternate routes so that vehicles within the neighborhood can get to a signalized intersection to more easily access the major street. Thus, installing new traffic signals at Bronson Road and Oak Hills Drive could help neighborhood streets connect with improved access to Bethany.

Question: The 1988 Transportation Plan defined arterials as *major* and *minor* arterials. When did that change?

Answer: These designations were changed in 2002. Now there are just arterials and principal arterials. Bethany Blvd. is an arterial. The principal arterials within Washington County are **not** under County jurisdiction, but ODOT's. An example would be TV Highway.

Question: Why isn't there an exit ramp on 174th?

Answer: ODOT has strict guidelines as to how close exit ramps can be. The interchanges need to be at least a mile apart, so it is unlikely ODOT would approve a new interchange in this location.

Question: Besides function, is there anything in common about arterials? Saltzman and 174th are also arterials, but the County's solutions to them are very different in terms of planned lane numbers.

Answer: Design solutions are driven by traffic projections, existing conditions including accesses etc. The number of lanes planned for various arterials within the County are outlined on a separate figure in the Transportation Plan and generally ranges between 2 lanes and 5 lanes.

Question: Does the interchange on Bethany Blvd have something do with the project being 5 lanes?

Answer: Yes, as an arterial providing a connection to Hwy 26, Bethany Blvd carries a higher volume of traffic than some other arterials that do not connect directly to the highway (such as Saltzman and 174th Avenue). Also suggest that everyone should take a look at the County Transportation Plan to help get a feel for the road designations.

Question: Can anyone provide statistics of children who cross at Oak Hills?

Answer: Ann Bryan answered this question: about 100 students live within a half mile radius of the school and about 200 live within one mile. These numbers are not counts of students who walk across Bethany, but of the students who could potentially make that crossing.

Question: Why is there a light at 143rd and Oak Hills? What would have justified a traffic signal there and not at Oak Hills and Bethany?

Answer: This question was added to the issues bin.

Question: Is there a summary from the Traffic 101 class?

Answer: We are working on it and will post it to the website when it is ready.

Question: How many people came to the Traffic 101 Workshop?

Answer: Believe to be between 30 and 40. The team is currently working on a summary and will post it to the web site. We received lots of questions at the workshop and found we were tight on time so we are looking to extend the time a little for the next workshop. Also, the evaluation form showed that a later start would work better. Also noted the room set up was not conducive to laying our large plan sheets so we are checking with PCC to see if an alternate room is available. Next up is the Design 101 workshop on August 5th tentatively scheduled for the same room from 5:00 pm to 7:30 pm.

Public Comment Period

Gary Cooper – lives on Perimeter Drive

- The county has only looked at one alternative and that is 5 lanes. Hasn't seen anything with a 3 lane design.
- Questions the traffic projections for 2035.
- The county needs to look at alternative north/south access routes such as 185th, Cornelius Pass, 143rd, 174th and Saltzman.
- Asked a question regarding the widening of Walker Road near the Nike campus that was tapered to accommodate an old redwood tree. The answer was this project was completed by a private developer who was able to save the tree by building a wall. He wanted to know how the right of way process would work on his property because he has several giant sequoias in his backyard. Leslie indicated that there will be lots more discussion about the right of way process in later meetings.
- Agrees with all the comments on safety and thinks a signal should be put on Oak Hills Drive.

Rick Morrison – has lived in the Touchstone neighborhood since 1985

- Appreciates the time and effort those on the committee are putting into this project. If Bethany Blvd. is changed to 5 lanes all the little communities along Bethany Blvd .will be passed by. He moved here from southern California and saw how roads were built there. When roads were widened they paved everything and took whatever was in the way. The beauty of living in Oregon is they don't do that. - doesn't want the same thing to happen here. Although the county has the right to take the right of way, hopes they consider the quality of life of the local residents in the process.
- Doesn't want a concrete slab from the highway to West Union.
- Likes the idea of a bike lane.
- Currently turns right out of Touchstone to go to Fred Meyers (on 158th and Walker) and doesn't consider going left to Bethany Village. It is bad enough now with one lane of traffic, with two lanes in both directions without a light, it almost be impossible.
- He is a retired teacher who has worked on many committees where he thought he was doing some good and the district did whatever they wanted anyway. Hopes that is not the case here.
- Wants the committee to fight for what they want. There have been a lot of good options proposed here.
- Quoted the following: "There can be no progress without change, but all change is not progress."

Fran Bates

- Mentioned the polls talked about earlier. There are over 1100 voting age people who are opposed to 5 lanes. (*Leslie asked if the petition have been submitted to the County yet – Fran answered not yet*).
- Says 43 accidents that happened at the off ramp were omitted from the accident statistics. If those are added in there have been 55 accidents along this stretch of road. (*These numbers will be verified and added to the traffic report*).
- At the ODOT traffic meeting the other day they said that the ramp capacity was about 900 cars per hour. Fran heard that the HOV lane will be removed and is concerned that if they change the carpool lanes on the freeway, there will still be no more capacity.
- If we have 900 cars per hour capacity on the freeway and Washington County is projecting 3,200 vehicles per hour on Bethany Blvd., are we just creating a longer parking lot? (*Leslie indicated that would be part with the presentation to the PFG regarding the interchange by ODOT's consultant*).

Suzanne Walker – lives in the Telshire neighborhood

- In polling her neighbors, she found one person that wants 5 lanes.
- Doesn't think it is right to have 5 lanes passing through an established neighborhood.
- Understands that north Bethany residents will need a way to get to the freeway.
- Has a handicapped son that needs help now to cross the existing road and can't imagine what it would be like to cross five lanes.
- Over the years she has heard so many contradictions from the county. Every time she has called the county with her concerns, she has been told to wait until the project comes up to voice her concerns. There was one time when someone from traffic came out and put up signs, but other than that she has been told to wait. Now that the project has come up when she asks she has been told, why didn't you speak up years ago. Very frustrated with this.

Micki Sparr – lives in Oak Hills

- Echoes Suzanne's concern.
- Purchased first home in Oak Hills in 1989 which was one year after the 1988 County TSP had been adopted.
- Was horrified to find out after she had purchase her home that what looked like a country road was slated to become a 5 lane road. Began making phone calls to the county and had very similar circumstances to Suzanne. Was told it hasn't even been funded yet, so no need to worry.
- When funding was allocated she went to the meetings and was told there is going to be a focus group and there will be design meetings with plenty of time for input. Has written and called and was still asked why she didn't speak up before.
- At one point spoke with a county official who said there was sufficient right of way for five lanes for the Bethany Blvd. project. When she said part of the right of way was in her backyard, she was brushed off. She went to her CPO 7 group, they argued with her and told her she was wrong because they had gotten word from the same county official that the county already has sufficient right of way.
- She asked a question regarding what queue lengths are on Bethany Blvd. at the present time. It is her perception that if there were more turn lanes then traffic flow on Bethany Blvd. wouldn't be that bad.
- She is not convinced that five lanes would better handle current or future traffic. While she is not a traffic engineer, if you build five lanes, they will come. If you build 3 lanes, some may seek alternative routes.

Shirley Bates – lives in Oak Hills

- In regards to cut-through traffic through Oak Hills, Washington County has done counts 3 different times and the total is already at 1300 vehicles per day.

- Although she is not a traffic engineer wonders if one mile of 5 lanes funnels into two lanes, what happens to those who want to get out of there and can turn right on Oak Hills Drive. She is concerned that an expansion of Bethany Blvd. to 5 lanes will cause more cut through traffic onto Oak Hills Drive.

Question: Are the utility lines going to be buried and if that happens will more right- of- way need to be taken because of the utilities?

Answer: No, overhead lines will stay overhead. County policy will not allow MSTIP funding to be used to underground utilities. We do have to accommodate utility relocation in the design. If the county has the full 90 feet of right-of-way, a portion of it would be used for overhead utilities.

Question: Has any thought been given to sound barrier walls?

Answer: A noise study will be done and results will be brought to the group at a future meeting.

Leslie closed the meeting reminding the group of upcoming events:

Design 101 Workshop: Thursday, August 5th, at PCC Rock Creek: Bldg 7 Room 121 from 5:00-7:30 pm

Next Focus Group Meeting: (tentative dates): All on Thursday evenings from 5:00-7:00 pm

PFG #3: September 9th

PFG #4: November 4th

PFG #4: October 7th

PFG #6: December 2nd