

Chapter 21: Outstanding Issues

Introduction

The improvements, funded and unfunded, called for in this Plan do not solve all of the identified transportation issues. In fact, some of the more obvious issues are not fully addressed by the improvements identified in this Plan. The reasons for this are:

- 1) The nature of these issues is very complex and further analysis is required to adequately understand the underlying travel demand contributing to the issues;
- 2) Several potential approaches might be useful, either alone or in combination, to address these issues;
- 3) The lack of funding available to implement the solutions, or restrictions on the funds available that preclude their use in being applied toward a particular issue;
- 4) No consensus solutions are currently identified to address these issues, and additional public deliberation and input is required before a preferred alternative can be selected and included in the Plan; and
- 5) Several of these issues are the subjects of current ongoing planning studies and as such do not have any recommended solutions at this time.

This chapter summarizes the outstanding issues that were identified in the preceding chapters, along with some broader issues facing the region. In addition to those outstanding issues discussed below, other problem areas will likely be the subject of further study as part of the development of local Transportation System Plans by jurisdictions in the region, or as part of specific study processes associated with updating local comprehensive land use plans.

Although interrelated packages of improvements for each of these outstanding issues will likely be identified as a result of the ongoing planning studies, there may be instances where specific projects or actions to preserve right(s)-of-way for eventual improvements are warranted prior to the completion of the entire study. If such actions can successfully demonstrate consensus support and operational separability (i.e., the action or improvement is warranted on its own merits and will not preclude elements of a comprehensive solution), then they may be advanced individually and remain consistent with this Plan without being specifically identified in it.

Bend Urban Growth Boundary

The City of Bend is assessing its needs for economic and residential lands for the next 20 years. The goal is to ensure Bend satisfies Oregon state planning laws with a 20 year supply of buildable land inside its Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) for needed housing and employment. In June 2007, the City submitted its proposed Urban Growth Boundary expansion map and supporting materials to the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development for review. An adopted UGB expansion map is not expected until late 2007. The outcome of the UGB expansion could have profound

impacts on the transportation system. Upon completion of the UGB expansion process, the MTP will need to be reviewed and revised.

Funding Issues

As can be seen in the preceding chapters, the region is facing a shortfall in revenues when compared with the projects that have been identified as being needed and in regards to operating and maintaining the existing system. This shortfall impacts all aspects of the transportation system, from the roads and highways, to the operation of bus service. With no solution to the dilemma of decreasing resources, the area will need to make do with reduced levels of maintenance of roads and bridges, increasing congestion, and constrained transit services.

As shown in the financial chapter of this Plan, there is a considerable difference between the amount of revenues that will be available to the region during the horizon of this Plan and the costs of the improvements necessary to address all the issues that face the transportation system. The financially constrained selection of projects presented in the previous chapters addresses the federal planning requirements related to financial constraint.

Pedestrian

Providing safe and convenient pedestrian links along and across the regional road system is one of the policies of this Plan. Currently, there are several areas where this is not being met.

Ensuring connectivity for all modes is a continuing aim for this plan. Development of the regional trail system and in-fill of missing sidewalk segments along the arterial roadway system would greatly improve the pedestrian system. Additionally, development of the city of Bend's accessway plan would provide extensive pedestrian connectivity throughout the study area. The Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee developed a process for prioritizing sidewalk projects. That project list and prioritization process should be updated. Additionally, annual dedicated funding should be identified to insure the projects are constructed.

Bicycle

Several portions of the designated regional bicycle system cannot accommodate the addition of dedicated bike lanes or even widened outside travel lanes. Two examples are Greenwood Avenue from Wall Street to 3rd Street and much of 3rd Street.. Impediments to the addition of bicycle facilities on these segments range from safety concerns to the financial cost of acquiring the necessary right-of-way. Finding a satisfactory solution to these problem areas will require additional time and effort and remain an outstanding issue in the regional transportation planning process.

Goods Movement

The movement of goods is typically regarded as confidential business information, such that the businesses involved do not share the data with each other or public agencies. The need for additional information regarding the quantity and type of goods being moved in and around the Bend area, as well as a more thorough identification of particular freight-critical routes and associated problem areas, is an issue that needs to be addressed in the future to better design solutions to ensure future mobility.

The MTP establishes a local freight route system. It will be critical to further evaluate this freight system to determine appropriate signage systems and design standards.

ODOT is beginning work on a statewide freight study. The potential outcomes of that plan are not known at this time. As much as possible, the BMPO will be involved in development of that plan and will work to include the findings in the MTP.

Rail

Rail issues include the safety of railroad crossings, traffic congestion associated with rail crossing closures, and at-grade rail crossing impacts on emergency services. Forecast future increases in the number of trains will only exacerbate these issues. Efforts should be focused on providing alternate routes, construct overcrossings, and enhancing the safety of at-grade crossings.

Other outstanding issues that cannot be fully addressed by this document include: 1) the preservation of land that is currently capable of being served by rail and noise associated with the trains, and 2) the study/evaluation of moving the rail line to the east of the current urban growth boundary.

Transportation System Efficiency Management

Transit ITS applications (e.g., electronic fare payment systems, signal preemption) may have some promise in terms of increasing the efficiency of transit operations and customer confidence in the transit system. Improving mobility in regional transportation corridors where the physical and political impediments to adding right-of-way are high is identified as an "outstanding issue" in this Plan. ITS applications should be examined as part of an overall recommended strategy to improve mobility in the regions congested corridors (e.g. Hwy 20/3rd Street, Reed Market Road). It is expected that ITS applications will also be used in other appropriate locations.

Public Transportation

The major difficulty involved in expanding the Public Transportation System is a lack of ongoing, stable funding for significant increases in the level and type of transit services provided in the region. The mass transit system and the ADA/Elderly and Handicapped systems all require additional levels of funding to be maximally effective.

Mass Transit System Funding Shortfall

The transit system can be expected to be able to afford necessary capital improvements (new replacement buses and equipment) over the next 20-25 years but cannot afford to provide significant expansions of transit levels of service beyond those called for in this Plan without renewed or additional sources of funding (see Finance chapter). Securing stable and continuing sources of adequate operations funding for the mass transit system is critical to the ability of the overall regional transportation system to function effectively, and is a high priority. In the near term, in cooperation with the City of Bend, the BMPO and the other jurisdictions in the region will cooperatively seek to identify, evaluate, and recommend appropriate new funding sources for transit operations to the region's citizenry and businesses.

Intercity Bus Service

The feasibility of, and an operating and financial plan for, an ongoing intercity bus service connecting the Bend area with the other cities in Deschutes County should be evaluated. The BMPO will work with area staff to develop and conduct such a feasibility study as funds are available.

ADA/Elderly and Handicapped-Related Services Funding Shortfall

The Bend Dial-a-Ride system is meeting the demand currently. But in the foreseeable future, the demand for service will grow faster than available funding. As a result of this fact, the system will have to pursue additional funding.

Roads

North Corridor Project (US97-US20 NEPA)

The US97/US20 Refinement Plan (2006) identified two possible new alignments for US97 in north Bend. The next step is to conduct environmental, design and public involvement activities necessary to prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to determine a preferred corridor. The EA or EIS will also seek to identify a viable consensus combination of funding sources to construct the preferred alternative. Work on this process began in 2007 and will likely extend through 2008.

US97/Murphy Road

An Interchange Area Management Plan (IAMP) is currently being developed for the proposed interchange connecting US97 and Murphy Road (2007). Upon completion of the IAMP, the next step will be to conduct environmental, design and public involvement activities necessary to prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the preferred design. Results from the IAMP are expected in late 2007. Funding is not yet identified for the EA or EIS.

US97 Mobility

Travel demand model analysis has shown that much of US97 will not meet ODOT mobility standards in the future. The corridor was not examined in detail as part of the MTP. It is recommended that a refinement plan be prepared to evaluate the long-term

operational needs of the US97 corridor. The refinement plan should evaluate several options including: closure of the at-grade intersections, construction of auxiliary lanes, widening, and employment of alternate mobility standards. At this time, there is neither the funding nor consensus regarding future improvements to US97. For these reasons, there are no specific projects in this plan.

US97 Interchanges

Several of the interchanges on US97 are congested and recent developments and proposed developments are expected to place additional demands on the interchanges. The interchanges could be evaluated as part of a larger US97 Refinement Plan or IAMPs could be prepared to identify the severity of the expected problems and to evaluate and recommend preferred solutions.

US20 Mobility

Travel demand model analysis and more refined corridor analysis have shown that much of US20 through Bend does not now or will not meet ODOT mobility standards in the future. The northwest section of the corridor was examined in detail as part of the US97/US20 Refinement Plan. A refinement plan is scheduled for the eastern section of the corridor from Purcell Boulevard to Powell Butte Highway. Additionally, detailed operational analysis has been completed through the Central Area Plan and Bend Urban Growth Boundary Expansion for much of the corridor between Butler Market Road and 27th Street. It is recommended that additional analysis be completed to determine a long-term strategy for the corridor including ITS solutions, minor widening, and employment of alternate mobility standards.

NE Bend Refinement Plan

Discussions are just beginning (2007) about development of a NE Bend Refinement Plan. The plan would tentatively examine the entire roadway network in NE Bend to determine appropriate improvements, phasing of those improvements, and funding options.

Eastside Bypass

The discussion regarding the need for an “eastside bypass” can be traced as far back as the 1950s. This idea was also incorporated into the first draft of the Bend General Plan in the mid 1970s. In that early draft of the Plan, an expressway facility was described that would skirt the southern and eastern edge of the urban area as a possibility for meeting the future transportation needs of the community. While the document acknowledged that the need for the facility might not be achieved within the time frame of the plan, it did urge that the corridor be preserved for some type of future facility. In subsequent drafts of the Bend General Plan, and in the adopted Plan approved by the state, the eastside bypass was eliminated from the circulation element of the plan and hence no right-of-way was preserved for this expressway.

In the study of the Bend Parkway, one of several alternatives considered was another version of the eastside bypass. This one deviated from the original plan by connecting to Highway 97 on the north, near Cooley Road. One key issue that led to the rejection of

the Eastside Bypass alternative was the traffic data forecasts. The bypass was projected to pull away only 10,200 of the 75,000+ vehicles expected to travel Bend's central corridor by the year 2015. In addition, other traffic impact and land use issues were related to a bypass. Many of the landowners on the eastern side objected to the intrusion of a major roadway into a rural area. This applied not only to the bypass itself, but also to the east-west arterials that would have to be upgraded to connect to the bypass. Another concern was the potential of the bypass to foster development pressures outside of the Urban Growth Boundary. This would have been inconsistent with the road planning requirements recently defined by the State Transportation Planning Rule.

Some public sentiment for the idea of an east-side bypass has remained even though the decision was made to build the Parkway. In light of this interest, the City of Bend has pledged to continue to evaluate the need for the bypass as the community grows.

North River Crossing

The draft Transportation System Plan map submitted as part of the Bend Urban Growth Boundary expansion package identifies a possible future bridge over the Deschutes River interchange connecting Cooley Road to Skyline Ranch Road. No traffic modeling or detailed traffic analysis has been conducted to evaluate the potential impacts of this crossing. It is recommended that a sketch-level analysis be conducted to evaluate the impacts of such a river crossing and to determine whether to proceed with a more refined analysis.

Increasing Reliance on Non-Automobile Modes

The Oregon Transportation Planning Rule (TPR) requires that the MPO and the local jurisdictions in the urban area develop measures and benchmarks that will demonstrate that the Bend area is increasing its reliance on non-automobile modes. It is believed that land use changes will be required in order to facilitate this change from the status quo. Upon completion of the Bend UGB expansion, analysis will likely be initiated to examine the use of mixed land use centers, corridors, and high transit service levels as methods for reducing automobile reliance. These studies will be designed as the basis for meeting the TPR requirement for the area jurisdictions to develop an "integrated land use/transportation plan." The types of measures that may be considered to demonstrate increased non-auto reliance include: the number of people who live within a ¼-mile walk to a transit stop; non-auto mode share; number of dwellings close to retail services and employment. In terms of the development of the MTP, recent guidance has reinforced the federal mandate that the MPO plan be based upon *currently adopted Local Comprehensive Land Use Plans*, including only those land uses and developments that can be considered likely to occur over the planning horizon.

The BMPO *can*, however, provide modeling outputs useful in the evaluation of alternative future land use scenarios, *if such outputs are requested and defined by a member jurisdiction, and those local comprehensive land use plan changes are in the pipeline for adoption by the affected local jurisdiction.*