

Vernonia Transportation System Plan Update

Community Workshop Summary

Thursday, January 13, 2011
5:30-8:30 p.m.
Vernonia Learning Center

This document provides a summary of the Vernonia Transportation System Plan Update Community Workshop held January 13th at the Vernonia Learning Center. The purpose of this open house was to review the work done to date, discuss the goals of the bicycle and pedestrian plan, and gather input on potential transportation alternatives. Approximately 10 people attended the meeting.

The format of the open house included a presentation at 5:45 followed by a question and answer period, and then an informal open house format for the remainder of the meeting (a second presentation was scheduled, but was given informally to one individual who did not attend the earlier presentation).

The Open House displays were organized into five areas:

- *Welcome and sign in* - a staff person at this station explained the format of the open house and distributed an informational handout describing the project background and draft recommendations.
- *Project Overview* - boards at this station included a project overview, goals, study area, project schedule, and who is involved.
- *Key Findings* - this station contained an overview display board describing current and future conditions and deficiencies within the City of Vernonia.
- *Draft Recommendations* - this station contained two boards showing potential street cross sections for both local and collector streets, and two boards for low and high-build alternatives. Community members were asked to vote via a sticker on the street cross section they preferred.
- *Next Steps* - this station described how comments from the public would be incorporated in the plan, and how the recommendations would be refined.

Presentation with Question and Answer

Mike Tresidder from Alta Planning and Design described potential safe routes to school programs and routes in a 15 minute presentation at 5:45. The presentation described existing bicycle and pedestrian conditions, potential bicycle and pedestrian improvements, and potential bicycle and pedestrian programs. Attendees had the opportunity to ask

questions following the presentation. The following paragraphs summarize questions heard from the audience.

One attendee asked about the potential for upgrading the Green Bridge, since it was identified as a pedestrian and bicycle choke point.

Currently the Green Bridge is not included in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), and the bridge itself is not considered to be deficient.

Another attendee asked about the opportunity to provide a link between the existing schools and the new schools, through the wetland and parkland that will be constructed on the old school site.

This led to a discussion about using California Avenue as a walking and biking route off of OR 47.

There was concern about the impact of increased traffic near the new school.

If more students walk or bike to the new school site, or participate in some of the programs that Mike discussed during his presentation, traffic to the new schools could be reduced.

A suggestion during the presentation was to reduce the speed limit on Mist to Knott. Currently it is 45 mph.

Road Cross-section Options

Of the people who attended the meeting, four placed voting stickers next to Option 2: two lane with parking and multi-purpose path, and three placed stickers by Option 3: Narrow street with multi-purpose path. Additionally, two notes were placed on the board; one suggested looking at local and collector right of way to help determine the best options for cross-sections. The second note commented that the path on option 2: two lanes with parking and multi-purpose path would need a curb or other separation.

For the collector road cross sections, four people like Option 2: Path on one side with curb, and three liked option 3: multi-use path and parking one side. Notes on Option 2 include: good alternative for California Avenue. Not great for any collectors because of speed and lack of safety on path. The second note says ODOT will require separation/buffer? It should be noted that there will be a curb between the path and the travel lane, and ODOT does not have jurisdiction on Collector Streets.

One note near Option 3 notes that speed is an issue on Rose (though the speed limit is 25 mph).

Safe Routes to New Schools

The board displaying potential routes to the new schools had a number of comments added to it during the meeting. These comments include:

- Possible separate bike/pedestrian bridge indicated near the existing Green Bridge
- Realign California Avenue to improve sight distance (connect to the east?)

- Stop and Walk at old school site? Using existing sidepath on Bridge Street. Stop and walks are areas where parents drop off school children, who then walk the remaining distance to school.
- Near O-A Hill, the following comment was added: Watershed Council, PCC Landscape Collaboration with School District on O-A Hill
- A couple of comments to staff members regarding the street cross sections included the need to provide a minimum and maximum cross section for both types of streets to fit in with the character of the neighborhoods, etc.
- Carole, the City Planner noted that most local road right of way is approximately 60 feet, and the local cross sections presented do not reflect this.

Potential High-Build Alternatives

The following comments were added to the potential high-build alternatives map:

- At the intersection of Rose and Bridge Street - insert a raised median and increased signage to indicate that the highway continues to the right. Channelize the intersection.
- At the intersection of Stoney Point Road and Keasey Road - Address the vertical curve.
- Near the alleyway between Mississippi Avenue and Arkansas Avenue, a note to continue the pedestrian path up O-A Hill along the alley - more direct for students
- Regarding connecting the C-Z trail to the Banks-Vernonia Trail:
 - The grade between where the C-Z trail comes into Vernonia and the connection to Knott Street (where the trail currently is meant to end) is very steep, with approximately a 15% slope in places.
 - The preferred route for the C-Z trail and the Banks-Vernonia trail is how it is shown on the high-build figure.
 - A secondary option is for the trail to come down Knott Street a bit and then south to the UGB limits
 - The river crossing is going to be a large barrier near the Nehalem River, and there are concerns with the constrained pedestrian and bicycle facilities on the Green Bridge.

Comment Form Responses

A comment form was given to attendees. Three people filled out the comment form and handed them in at the open house. One attendee is a full-time Vernonia resident, one was representing a Vernonia Resident, and the third person lives elsewhere in Columbia County. Most had heard of the meeting via the utility bill mailings or newspapers.

The following section summarizes comments from comment sheets submitted at the meeting, and conversations with meeting attendees.

In response to the question about additional transportation needs or deficiencies, the two responses included concern with the connectivity of the Banks-Vernonia Trail to the Scappoose-Vernonia Trailhead at the upper end of Knott Street. The other response is the ability for elderly to access places of business on Bridge Street via private car.

One commenter liked the trail connection shown on the high-build concept connecting the Banks-Vernonia trail to the future C-Z trail, citing the clear separation of pedestrians and bicyclists from cars and trucks along the highway.

Another commenter liked the idea of extending sidewalks along Bridge Street to Riverside Drive, and expressed concerns about conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians at the entrance into Lake Vernonia. With the relocation of the schools, the existing conflicts would increase.

Additional comments from the comment form included:

- Expand focus beyond "Safe routes to school" to include pedestrian and bicyclist tourism potential
- The biggest challenge is the cost of projects and the ability to find funding.