

Project Advisory Committee/Project Management Team Meeting #1: Vernonia Transportation System Plan Update

ATTENDEES: Dean Smith, Vernonia Fire Department
Sean Pickner, Vernonia GIS
Jeff Burch, Vernonia Public Works
Seth Brumley, ODOT
Gary Fish, DLCD
Jeff Harrington, City of Vernonia Engineer
Don Wallace, Vernonia Planning Commission
Carole Connell, City of Vernonia Contract Planner
Randy Parrow, Vernonia City Council
Mark Farmer, Western Oregon Electric CoOp
Janet Wright, Columbia County Transit Division
Larry Weymouth, CH2M HILL
Bill Haack, City of Vernonia
Terra Lingley, CH2M HILL
Mike Tresidder, Alta Planning + Design

COPIES: Seth Brumley, ODOT
Larry Weymouth, CH2M HILL

FROM: Terra Lingley, CH2M HILL

DATE: Thursday, September 16, 2010
3:00-5:30 p.m.
Vernonia Learning Center

Meeting Summary

Welcome and Introductions

Carole convened the meeting, thanked the Project Advisory Committee (PAC) members for volunteering, and started introductions.

Summary of the Project

Terra talked with the group about the purpose and intent of a Transportation System Plan in a "Transportation System Plan 101" presentation and specifically what the TSP update will mean for Vernonia. The presentation discussed goals and objectives of the Transportation Plan, the project's process and defined key terms.

The goals identified in the previous TSP include:

- Operation and Safety
- Transportation Alternatives
- Air Transportation
- Finance

Role of the PAC

Larry then talked about change management, and the role that the PAC will play in advising and guiding the process to make sure that the plan is consistent with the community's needs and desires. He asked for and received an endorsement of the project process from the PAC. He talked about the PAC's role in reviewing documents and providing comments to the Project team to make sure that they are accurate and reflect issues within the City. The City's website will be used for posting information about the project and project documents. E-mail is the primary way the project team will communicate with the PAC.

The group then went around the table and talked about what a successful TSP project would look like for them.

Bill said that this was the first step to initiate an update of all of the City's documents, and it was important to get this baseline data, so if there is another flood event, the City is in a better position to leverage insurance and disaster investments.

Don noted that a successful TSP update would be a document that is used, instead of sitting on a shelf at City Hall.

Janet indicated that a successful TSP is one that would allow for continued transit to be provided to the City.

Jeff Burch is interested in an updated document with more consistent roadway standards in one place.

Jeff Harrington said that a successful TSP would be realistic and consistent with adopted plans in the state and region.

Carole would like a document that creates realistic road standards for Vernonia and that require development to either pay-in for improvements, or make improvements themselves that would make it easy to implement and provide clear guidance for the City Planner.

Randy wanted a TSP that made it possible to maintain the transportation system and had affordable projects that could ultimately be built.

Mark is interested in an update that would be a real working document and provide timelines and potential funding sources that could be realistically implemented.

Discussion: Transportation Issues

The group then brainstormed existing transportation issues including areas of concern and "near misses" that won't necessarily show up in the traffic or safety data. These were grouped by topic below:

Congestion

- Rose and 6th Avenues will be future access to the northwest corner parcel that is partly within the UGB and partly without. The parcel may develop as single family homes
- The traffic impacts from Nehalem View subdivision (49 acres, 67 single family homes) could create congestion on the local access streets
- The School creates congestion, no matter where it is located
- How to manage congestion near the school
- Missouri and Bridge intersection – the fire department has concerns about potential traffic control and impact on response times if rigs are not able to turn onto Bridge Street
- Queuing on Bridge Street in front of the Fire Station
- The property owners could be 6 months to a year away from developing near the airport.

Safety Concerns

- When turning onto Bridge Street from a side street, the parked cars obstruct the sight distance and make it hard to turn onto the street safely
- Some community members drive golf carts on Bridge Street in town – safety issue because of log trucks and other heavy traffic
- Sometimes there are bicyclists riding erratically on Bridge Street, which is another safety issue
- At times motorcyclists visit town in groups, which cause congestion and safety concerns
- The traffic light where OR 47 turns right onto Bridge Street – visitors in the summer are not aware that they need to turn to follow the highway, and don't stop at the light like they should.
- There are sight distance issues for the Stoney Point and Keasey Roads near Mellinger
- The Hawkins Park pull-out onto Bridge street has below standard sight distance; it is dangerous to pull out onto Bridge
- There are a number of scooters and other alternative vehicles on city streets and OR 47

Transit

- There is a need for established stops in town, increasing the safety and accessibility, and also to allow vehicles to move out of the traffic flow and reduce traffic disruptions from the buses.

- Is there a possibility for a park and ride in town to allow riders to park and take the bus? The site of the old WOEC building could be one option, though it should not be paved because of flooding; questions about ADA requirements
- Bus shelters and identified stops would help transit riders know where to catch the bus

Bicycle and Pedestrian Issues

- Where will the kids cut through to school?
- There are trails up and down O-A Hill
- Will the CZ trail connect to Vernonia? Will it be by the lake?
- Bike and pedestrian safety from where the sidewalk ends on the west side of the Green Bridge to and along Mist Drive.
- Intersection of Rose Ave. and Bridge Street

Street and Intersection Design

- Are there problems with drainage on city streets? A need for stormwater management?
- Once the floodplain is established, how do you provide connectivity in the floodplain?
- One issue is that Knott Street was formerly a County road, now it is a City road. It is substandard, and could be impacted by the subdivision, once the parcel sells.
- Is there an alternate route to Green Bridge? McDonald Road and Pebble Creek Road?
- Airport access road – it is substandard to serve the future development, however, it is not within the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB).
- The triangle intersection near Green Bridge sees a lot of “near misses” for vehicle accidents – it is not clear and people are unsure of how to navigate that intersection.
- Is it possible to extend California Street through to the Lake? Would the extension be needed if the land is vacated because of the floodplain?
- In the letter street area in north-central Vernonia, there are topographical constraints – where is it possible to extend the streets?
- Knott is also the only access to the Light Industrial zoning access to the parcel northeast of the City, but won't develop until it sells.
- Is there an opportunity to create a new street to the light industrial parcel? Mark mentioned that they looked a bit at creating a Laurel Street.
- Does or should Alabama Avenue connect Locker Road to Missouri Avenue?

Other Issues

- There are few handicapped parking spaces on Bridge Street and elsewhere.

- How to integrate the schools into the community beyond the transportation system – how to make them the center of the community. Moving the schools could change the “feel” in town.
- What are some other impacts on O-A Hill from relocating the school?
- The City will own 60-70 vacant single family lots, as they buy flooded properties. Could these lots be future parking, sidewalk or bike path opportunities?
- There could be seismic issues with the two bridges in town – the Rock Creek Bridge and the Green Bridge.
- Are there any ODOT plans to replace the Green Bridge?
- There is an issue with siting dumpsters – potential City code to address?

Schedule

The project schedule was reviewed, and a simplified copy of the schedule was distributed that lists the project steps and approximate meeting dates. The Community Workshop will be focused on the Bike and Pedestrian Plan. The two Community Briefings are to share information and technical results and obtain feedback at key project milestones. Tentative dates for meetings were identified, recognizing that these may shift to accommodate holidays and other conflicts. PAC members were asked to notify project leaders of meeting conflicts. The schedule for meetings will be revised as the project progresses and meeting dates are determined.

Tour

Dean Smith, Jeff Harrington, Seth Brumley, Mike Tresidder, Carole Connell, Larry Weymouth, and Terra Lingley joined in a tour of Vernonia, pointing out specific problem areas to continue the discussion about City Transportation Issues.

The project team saw the sight distance issues at Hawkins Park, general turns onto Bridge from side streets downtown, and the unofficial trails up O-A Hill adjacent to the highway. At Riverside and Bridge, there is no connection for sidewalks; a trail could be needed from Riverside up to the school. Additionally, Locker Road is substandard, and there are sight distance issues with Spencer and Texas Avenue.

Next Steps

The PAC meeting summary will be sent out to the group to finalize, and there are a couple of action items for the team to follow up on:

- Seth will look into the seismic stability and bridge condition for the Green Bridge
- The team will verify if the previously discussed expected development is within the County or the UGB.
- Technical Memo #1 will build on goals and policies in the 1999 TSP, background information and documents such as the Comprehensive Plan, and issues and objectives identified in the statement of work. The goals and policies for this TSP update will need to be revisited with the group to see if they need to be amended.

Thanks and Adjourn

The group meeting adjourned approximately 4:45 p.m. which was followed by the city tour until 5:45 p.m.