

Project Advisory Committee/Project Management Team Meeting #2: Vernonia Transportation System Plan Update

ATTENDEES: Dean Smith, Vernonia Fire Department
Dan Brown, Columbia Action Team
Jeff Burch, Vernonia Public Works
Seth Brumley, ODOT
Don Wallace, Vernonia Planning Commission
Carole Connell, City of Vernonia Contract Planner
Randy Parrow, Vernonia City Council
Mark Farmer, Western Oregon Electric CoOp
Bill Haack, City of Vernonia
Larry Weymouth, CH2M HILL
Scott Laird, Bicycle and Pedestrian interests
Terra Lingley, CH2M HILL
Tim Bero, Vernonia Airport
Mike Tresidder, Alta Planning + Design

COPIES: Seth Brumley, ODOT
Larry Weymouth, CH2M HILL

FROM: Terra Lingley, CH2M HILL

DATE: Wednesday, November 17, 2010
3:00-4:30 p.m.
Vernonia Learning Center

Meeting Summary

Welcome and Introductions

Carole convened the meeting, went over the agenda, and started introductions.

Schedule Update

Larry talked with the group about the schedule changing, and members present received a copy of the updated schedule in their packet. The Community Workshop is tentatively scheduled for the second Thursday in January, and there is still some discussion about when the PAC/PMT meeting #3 will be held. It may be the same day, it may be later on.

Project Goals

Terra then walked through the general planning process, and talked about the importance of goals. Goals help the project team develop alternatives, and provide guidance throughout the planning process. The group then revised the goals from the 1999 TSP, editing them to be more specific about bicycles and pedestrians, and including the airport in a subheading. The project goals that were agreed on are:

- Operation and safety
 - Preserve and improve function, capacity and level of service and safety of the roadway system
- Transportation Alternatives
 - Support use of other modes, especially bicycles and pedestrians, but including transit, etc.
 - Maintain and look into expansion of airport facilities
 - Support Safe routes to schools programming and projects
- Finance
 - Sound fiscal approach to financing transportation system improvements

Review Existing Conditions

Terra went over the findings from the Existing Conditions Memo (Technical Memo #2 Existing Conditions and Needs). The handout in the packet summarizes the main points.

Land Use Inventory

- Most land in Vernonia is zoned residential
- There are some Buildable lands still available for development, mostly in residentially zoned areas, with some zoned light industrial
- There were approximately 560 jobs in Vernonia in 2008, and the main employers are the school district, government, a retreat and conference center, and WOEC.

Traffic Operations

- All 10 study area intersections operate within State and City standards
- There are currently no vehicle queues that exceed available storage capacity

Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

- There is a bike lane for approximately one third of a mile along OR 47 within the City Limits. The highway lacks shoulders through central Vernonia between O-A Hill and Rose Street due to topographical constraints and on-street parking
- Cyclists share the travel lane over Rock Creek and Nehalem River Bridges
- Most local streets could be considered shared roadways due to their low speeds and low traffic volumes

- There are some newly developed areas with sidewalks, though these are not always continuous
- Downtown and adjacent streets have a connected network of sidewalks with pedestrian amenities
- Maple Street, Cougar Street and Weed Avenue are lacking sidewalks near the downtown area
- O-A Hill is the main obstacle to east-west pedestrian movement within Vernonia – a sidepath along the south side of OR 47 is the only option for pedestrians
- There are very few sidewalks between O-A Hill and the Nehalem River
- Mist drive north of Bridge Street does not have any dedicated pedestrian facilities

Other Issues Brought up During Discussion

- Jeff and Bill asked about a local street condition inventory, similar to what was done for OR 47 in Technical Memo #2, and what was in the 1999 TSP. Seth mentioned that the 1999 TSP went above and beyond the information that is normally found in the TSP. Terra and Larry will provide some examples, and suggested that the best way to go about getting a street condition inventory would be to send people out to take photos of streets. Bill noted that the critical streets to have inventoried are the local streets between the two bridges and the tree streets to the east of Mist Drive/OR 47
- Bill also informed the group that the City has been negotiating with Parks and Recreation for the multi-modal path around the sewage lagoons and south of Lake Vernonia will be a permanent easement owned and maintained by the City.
- The group reiterated that the Green Bridge is a serious constraint for bicycles and pedestrian connectivity
- Carole asked that the Collector Streets be called out on all the maps, to make it easy to see where the facilities are, and the priority streets for the City
- Mark noted that with the construction of the WOEC areas, the sidewalks and other facilities on Cougar and Weed will be addressed. Bill will provide that information to the consultant team.
- Carole asked that the memo acknowledge that there are multiple standards for the streets, and that should be addressed. Terra noted that part of the solutions package will be a recommendation to revamp the street standards, which will address the issue of multiple standards. Any new standards will supplant the existing various standards. There was some discussion about whether the City would like to carry forward the urban/rural distinction for characterizing local streets, and if there will be a range of standards (curb, gutter, and sidewalks as opposed to natural drainage, etc.)
- Dan pointed out that on Figure 4a and 4b, very few of the accesses along OR 47 within Vernonia meet ODOT spacing standards. Terra mentioned that this was not unusual, many of the accesses in towns throughout Oregon do not meet ODOT standards. There

was some talk about using the standards when a new permit is issued, and using the standards as a tool for development along the highway.

Review Future Conditions

The future conditions memo (Technical Memo #4 Future Conditions and Needs) will be placed on the City's website for review. Terra went through the summary with the group:

Land Use Future Conditions

- With current zoning, Vernonia's buildable land supply will be adequate to meet both residential and industrial land needs through 2031. Available commercial buildable land is not sufficient to meet the projected demand.
- The alternative land use scenario would add 9 acres of commercial land to the DT commercial district. With these 9 acres, commercial land is more than adequate to meet all land needs through 2031. The 9 acres of commercial will be added at the western end of the existing downtown area, both east and west of OR 47.
- There was some discussion about whether the light industrial and general commercial zoning near the school was included in the buildable lands summary. The project team will verify, but since they are both in the floodplain, it is likely that those two parcels are not included in the buildable lands summary.

Traffic and Transportation

- All study intersections meet mobility standards for the 2031 afternoon peak hour
- One study area intersection, Bridge Street/Rose Avenue will experience vehicle queuing on the northbound right turn lane due to the large number of vehicles who make the right turn to follow the highway. The turning vehicles slow down, causing some minor queuing that extends further than the available space for the right turn.
- Several left turn lane warrants were met for eastbound and westbound left turn movements along Bridge Street. No right turn warrants were met
- Intersection of Rose Avenue/Bridge Street is confusing for visitors.

Safe Routes to New Schools

Mike summarized the findings from Technical Memo #5 (Safe Routes to New Schools). He reviewed the existing conditions for bicyclists and pedestrians, and noted that Vernonia has a high percentage of students that walk or cycle to school, and would like to see that high percentage continue with the siting of the new school. O-A Hill is the main obstacle for students to walk or bicycle, but the current mode split shows that they are willing to traverse the hill to walk to school, and many currently do just that. He summarized the Kittelson & Associates study on how students would access the new school, and provided recommendations on how to encourage the non-motorized mode share of students going to school.

The recommendations include providing non-motorized facilities along OR 47, Texas Avenue, Missouri Avenue, Alabama Avenue and Bridge street East.

Carole asked that the memo be updated to reflect those changes/improvements that were required by the city and that will occur as the development of the school site occurs. Carole will provide that information to the consultant team.

Next Steps

Terra talked about the next two meetings/events coming up: the Community Workshop and the PAC/PMT meeting #3. These will likely happen the second Thursday in January, with more information to follow as details are ironed out. The next steps for the Project team include developing transportation system solutions to address the goals and identified existing and future needs.

Please review the technical memos provided and the technical memo on the website and provide your comments by Monday, November 29th.