

Memorandum

July 7, 2015

To: Transportation and Public Facilities Subcommittee
Cc: Project Team
From: Joanna Valencia, Senior Transportation Planner
Jessica Berry, Transportation Planner
Re: Policy Recommendations – Transportation and Public Facilities

OVERVIEW

This memo presents draft proposed policies and strategies related to topics discussed by the Transportation and Public Facilities Subcommittee at their June 15 meeting.

Note that some of the transportation policy issues presented here were also relevant to Sauvie Island and were discussed extensively during its recent RAP process. Therefore, staff is recommending that applicable policies from the SIMC RAP be applied countywide either unchanged or with minor revisions as reflected below.

ISSUE SUMMARY

TRANSPORTATION

BICYCLE INFRASTRUCTURE

Bicycle use has become increasingly popular in the Portland Metropolitan Region as a desirable commuter alternative to the passenger vehicle as well as a recreational activity. Within our heavily populated urban areas, significant investment is being made to improve the transportation system for the safety of bicycles now sharing the roads with vehicles. For the more sparsely populated rural areas, much less investment has been made in improving the road system to accommodate bicycles and to reduce road sharing conflicts with vehicles. Promotion of bike touring as an economic engine will likely draw an even greater number of bicyclists in the future to our rural roadways and bike paths.

***Questions:** Given the current conditions of the County's rural road system and the potential increase in bicycle recreation, how can Multnomah County best address increased bicycle/vehicle conflicts? How should the County's rural roads be improved to safely accommodate vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian traffic and to reduce conflicts between them? Are there particular designs the County can adopt for temporary bike/pedestrian infrastructure (assuming larger capital projects may still be 10-20 years in the future).*

Policy

Identify and implement short- and long- term solutions to safely accommodate bicyclists, pedestrians, and motor vehicles on ~~Sauvie Island~~ County roadways including on-road bikeways, separated multi-use paths, and funding options. (*Sauvie Island/Multnomah Channel Rural Area Plan (SIMC RAP) draft policy, modified to apply county-wide*)

Policy

Consider context sensitive design when reviewing rural roadway standards to determine appropriate paved shoulder widths to preserve the rural character of roads. Shoulder widening should aim to achieve a minimum 3 foot paved width. (*Sauvie Island/Multnomah Channel Rural Area Plan (SIMC RAP) draft policy*)

Strategies:

- Explore options for bike pull outs to allow for resting and passing
- Consider bike-friendly roadway treatments, especially in regards to maintenance of the roadway
- Explore services to support bicyclists and reduce impacts on surrounding land uses

Policy

Maintain and improve the transportation system for all modes of travel that reduce conflict and minimize impacts to the natural environment, and reflects the community's rural character while ensuring efficiency and connectivity. (*Modified version of existing County Framework Plan and SIMC RAP policies*)

IMPROVE TRAFFIC FLOW ON WESTSIDE ROADS

Many of the transportation related comments from the Westside open house held last November talked about the need to improve traffic flow on roads in the West Hills. In addition to traffic slowdowns that come from more bicyclists on the road, traffic flow is also hampered by other factors, most notable of which is the increased number of vehicles that now use these roads – far more than the roads were originally designed to handle. Higher traffic volumes can be attributed to residential development in the West Hills and in surrounding areas that interface with it, causing more traffic between where people live and where they work and shop. The County has begun to address some of these issues through planning for safety improvements to Cornelius Pass Road and other improvements identified in Rural Area Plan transportation system plans.

Questions: What are some specific Westside road system improvements or design alternatives that would improve traffic flow? What are the highest priority projects for improving traffic flow on West side roads? Are County roads in the West Hills appropriately classified on the Functional Road Classification Maps? Should the County consider singling out a particular road where bike improvements would be the highest priority?

Policy

Promote effective use of signage designed to educate the public about farm equipment using roadways, wildlife crossings and bicycle and pedestrian safety, as well as ~~and~~ additional way finding signage. *(Modified Sauvie Island/Multnomah Channel Rural Area Plan (SIMC RAP) draft policy)*

Policy

Support projects that address regional freight mobility and explore alternative routes to West Hills routes through unincorporated Multnomah County for freight. *(New policy)*

Policy

Implement a range of Transportation Demand Management (TDM) policies encouraging existing businesses and requiring new development (beyond single family residential use and agricultural uses) to help reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT), maximize use of existing facilities and alleviate congestion on ~~US 30 and~~ county roads caused by ~~seasonal and special event~~ increasing traffic. *(Sauvie Island/Multnomah Channel Rural Area Plan (SIMC RAP) draft policy, modified to apply county-wide including removal of specific SIMC TDM strategies.)*

Policy

Support the use of bicycle transportation as an alternative to automotive use without encouraging purely recreational bicycle activities that may increase this level of vehicle conflict on roadways. *(Modified Sauvie Island/Multnomah Channel Rural Area Plan (SIMC RAP) draft policy)*

ADDRESS INCREASING TRAFFIC AND SAFETY ISSUES WITHOUT WIDENING/BUILDING MORE ROADS

Although rural County residents recognize the need for improving the local road system, they also cherish the rural character of the areas they live in and prefer not to have more roads built or existing roads widened to a significant degree in order to accommodate increased traffic and to provide greater travel safety. Many of the comments from the November open house point out the traffic problems caused by growing population and commute patterns, but seek solutions that will not result in more road construction. Clearly, residents value the trees and the pastoral countryside characteristic of Multnomah County's rural areas and do not want to see the landscape diminished by construction of new and expanded roads, particularly in areas of steep slopes where large retaining walls would be necessary. Many residents also want to reduce impacts on wildlife in these areas. Rural residents will see even greater demands placed on the local road system as nearby urban lands are developed. Possible solutions for addressing increasing traffic and safety concerns might include public transit, strategically located traffic signals, dedicated bike paths, and sidewalks or wider shoulders in appropriate places.

Questions: Which areas of the county not currently served by public transit ought to be? How do we address increased traffic (e.g. commuters and freight) on County roads? Should Multnomah County consider a policy to encourage minor, low-cost safety improvements when performing basic maintenance such as lane striping or overlays?

Policy

Work with the Oregon Office of Emergency Management, Multnomah County Emergency Management and Multnomah County rural fire protection districts to ensure that the transportation system supports effective responses to emergencies and disasters. (*Sauvie Island/Multnomah Channel Rural Area Plan (SIMC RAP) draft policy, modified to apply county-wide*)

Policy

Coordinate and work with transit agencies and service providers to identify existing transit deficiencies and the improvements necessary to increase access to transit services by potential users. (*Sauvie Island/Multnomah Channel Rural Area Plan (SIMC RAP) draft policy*)

Policy

~~County staff should w~~Work with ODFW and other partners to identify concentrations of wildlife crossings on county roads, and work to ensure that project design is wildlife friendly and mitigated where possible. (*Modified Sauvie Island/Multnomah Channel Rural Area Plan (SIMC RAP) draft policy*)

BETTER ROAD MAINTENANCE

With increased use of the County's rural roads comes the need for more road maintenance. Rural residents have cited better road maintenance as a major concern. The key to sustaining an effective, ongoing maintenance program is funding. State and local gas tax money is the customary source of funding used for local road maintenance. The state gas tax has not been adjusted to keep pace with the growing need, the increasing cost of road maintenance and diminishing revenues associated with improved fuel efficiency. The County has a local gas tax which similarly has not been adjusted to reflect cost increases.

Question: Should the County consider adopting an increase to its current local gas tax or adopting other funding sources such as user fees dedicated to road maintenance?

Policy

Explore supplemental funding sources to improve County's road maintenance, safety projects, and other improvements. (New policy)

SEWAGE DISPOSAL REQUIREMENTS FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENTS

Most rural development relies on its own private septic system for sewage disposal. Current county policy establishes that in order to approve a proposed development a finding must be made that it will not exceed the carrying capacity of the site for sewage disposal. Because of high water tables and other poor site conditions, some developments have been unable to obtain septic permits (i.e., they exceed the carrying capacity of the site) and therefore have needed to install sewage holding tanks as an alternative.

Question: Should the current policy be changed to recognize sewage holding tanks as a valid sewage disposal alternative to septic systems?

A PUBLIC REST STOP OR PARK IN SPRINGDALE OR CORBETT

Historic Columbia River Highway is heavily used by bicyclists traveling into the Columbia River Gorge. Some property owners along this popular route believe that a public rest stop or park should be constructed in Springdale, Corbett or another appropriate location for the benefit of bicyclists. The facility could serve the needs of motorists as well. A park could provide a community gathering spot and recreational opportunities for East County residents.

Question: Should the County explore development of a public rest stop, park or similar facility along Historic Columbia River Highway? Who should the County partner with in this effort, given that it does not develop parks?

Policy

Explore opportunities to provide public restroom facilities for ~~Sauvie Island visitors~~ the most heavily used bicycle routes, especially along the scenic highways. (Sauvie Island/Multnomah Channel Rural Area Plan (SIMC RAP) draft policy, modified to apply county-wide)