

Cornelius Pass Road Safety Improvements Project

Community Advisory Committee Meeting #3 Summary

Meeting 3: March 18, 2014, 6:00-9:00 pm

Skyline Elementary School Gym, 11536 NW Skyline Boulevard, Portland, OR

CAC Members in Attendance:

- Jason Ascher
 - Kirk Augustin
 - Wayne Bauer
 - Jan Campbell
 - Carol Chesarek
 - Drew Dubois
 - Sarah Hanson
 - Senator Betsy Johnson
 - Dave Linden
 - Tim Love
 - Bruce Penney
 - Steve Robertson
 - Michele Roy
 - Bob Russell
 - George Sowder
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County Staff in Attendance:

- Sandra Prock, Project Manager
- Brian Vincent, County Engineer
- Mike Pullen, Communications
- Karen Schilling, Planning Director
- Liz Smith Currie, Policy Advisor
- John Niiyama, Road Maintenance Program Manager
- Don Pfister, Road Maintenance Supervisor
- Monte Reiser, Sheriff's Office

Consultants in Attendance:

- Chris Link, Murray, Smith & Associates
 - Troy Bowers, Murray, Smith & Associates
 - Gabe Crop, Murray, Smith & Associates
 - Vaughn Brown, JLA Public Involvement
 - Jamie Harvie, JLA Public Involvement
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Members of the Public in Attendance:

- Craig Anderson, Resident
- Josette Hugo, Rep. Brad Witt
- Brian Lightcap, Resident
- Larry Luethe, Resident
- Miles Merwin, Resident
- Ken Schechter, Resident

Outstanding questions/requests for information

- Data on gap dissipation
- Wildlife report regarding proposed improvements

Welcome and Agenda Review

Vaughn Brown of JLA Public Involvement welcomed everyone and reviewed the agenda. The purpose of the meeting tonight is to review public feedback from the open house and for the CAC to provide recommendations to help narrow the set of safety improvements to be moved into more detailed design. Vaughn reminded the group that the project team needs to narrow down improvement options because designing all options would use budget that could otherwise go toward construction.

Vaughn said that the more detailed designs will be presented at a second public open house (likely in August) and then the project team will come back to the CAC for final input (likely in September). The team expects to finalize design and let the bid in late 2015 and for construction to begin in 2016.

Approval of Meeting #2 Summary

Vaughn asked for comments or changes to meeting #2 summary. There were none; it was approved.

Project Update

Mike Pullen of Multnomah County said that CAC members were provided with handouts containing answers to their questions from the previous meeting and a summary of Cornelius Pass Road closures dating back to 2009.

Mike said that Brian Vincent, Multnomah County Engineer, met with the Multnomah County Bicycle and Pedestrian Citizen Advisory Committee (BPCAC) February 12. That group was most interested in proposed changes to the intersection of Skyline Blvd and Cornelius Pass Road. They were slightly more in favor of a roundabout, but not strongly. They noted that, as bicyclists, they would use the roadway rather than sidewalks to cross this intersection.

Mike provided a legislative update. The Oregon Legislature had been considering a bill to change the jurisdiction of Cornelius Pass Road between US 30 and US 26 from Multnomah and Washington Counties to ODOT, however this legislation did not move forward during the 2014 Interim Session.

- Senator Betsy Johnson said that the bill was intended to look for deeper pockets for improvements to Cornelius Pass Road. There may be an attempt to revive that process in future legislative sessions. Senator Johnson encouraged anyone who is interested to participate in this process. Senator Johnson also introduced Josette Hugo in the audience, who represents Rep. Brad Witt.
- A CAC member said she had participated in a similar process years ago and was told that ODOT was not interested in taking jurisdiction of Cornelius Pass Road. Senator Johnson replied that ODOT would prefer not to take jurisdiction due to the problems on the road, but that the road had become a more significant route that deserved state support.

Open House Findings Discussion

Vaughn reviewed the public feedback from the open house, including graphs showing attendee preferences for each hot spot and the corridor-wide improvements.

- A CAC member asked what the format of the open house was and whether there were any background presentations by staff. The project team said that there was a staffed overview area, though it was not visited very often. The open house was set up for people to lead themselves through designated stations, ask questions of staff located at each station and fill out comment forms as they went through.
- In regards to feedback about Kaiser Road, one CAC member said that the people most affected by this area are truckers and their views may not be represented.
- One CAC member asked what option includes road striping. Staff said that road striping is part of “delineation” in the overall corridor safety treatments.

Vaughn asked if CAC members had any comments on the open house or summary. There were no comments.

Design Team Proposal

Chris Link of Murray Smith and Associates said that, following the open house, the technical team reviewed feedback, considered all the options and suggestions by applying the evaluation criteria, and put together a project team proposed package.

The team initially proposed a “no build” option for Sheltered Nook Road, but following feedback from the open house, the team has proposed improvements to this area as a “second-tier” option, which would drop off if budget is not available.

- A CAC member asked what the red x’s mean on the technical team’s recommendations. Staff replied that red x’s mark second-tier items, which would be removed if the budget does not allow for everything.
- The team clarified that the proposed second-tier changes *would* be carried through 30% design; however they would be the first to drop off in the case of budget constraints.

For 8th Avenue, the technical team has proposed the third option rather than the fourth, because of significant right-of-way impacts with the fourth option.

For the upper S-curves, the technical team proposed to do as much as feasible within the budget while allowing for improvements at other locations. The proposed improvements include minor curve realignment, signage, striping, and drainage improvements. For Boyd’s Lower Driveway, they have proposed the lowest level of changes as a second-tier option, since this area does not have the volume or severity of crashes that the upper curves do.

For the Skyline Blvd intersection, the team has proposed the roundabout option because they believe it will have better capacity and safety benefits.

- Chris provided answers to some questions the team heard at the open house. With regard to whether intersection improvements can be phased, existing capacity requirements today will require turn lanes, which means that savings from phasing would be minimal. With regard to the signalized option providing gaps in traffic, studies have found that these gaps will dissipate within a half mile of the intersection.
- A CAC member asked which of the two roundabout options in the technical memo is being proposed. Chris said that it is the second one in the technical memo, which was the one presented at the open house and has a lower estimated cost.

For Plainview Road, the most often selected option from the open house was “no change,” though many responses also wanted something done at this location. The project team believes that low cost options can make a difference at this spot.

Similarly, the team thinks that low-cost options at Kaiser Road could be a cost-effective improvement.

For the overall corridor safety treatments, Chris said that, though the proposals differ somewhat from feedback received on the comment forms, the team feels that it aligns well with discussions they had at the open house. Chris provided more detail about some of the improvement options. Roadway delineation is second-tier because it may not be cost-effective if the County plans to pave the road within the next five years. The clear zone changes will include inspecting guardrails throughout the project area and replacing and installing guardrail at priority areas; it will not include installing guardrails along the entire road. Illumination is proposed only for the Plainview curves and 8th Avenue, which have high nighttime crash rates. The Skyline intersection will also require illumination, though this is included in the cost for this area. Wildlife crossings do not have a cost associated with them because they will be considered within each of the improvement options. Addressing pavement drop-offs has a very low cost and is a safety benefit. Installation of variable message signs will need to be coordinated with ODOT.

- A CAC member asked whether speed feedback signs are included in the proposal. Chris said this could be wrapped into overall corridor signage. The project team doesn't want to "oversign" but will look at some speed feedback signs as part of further design.
- It was asked what the difference is between speed feedback signs and variable message signs. The project team said that variable message signs are larger overhead signs that often warn of road conditions or crashes, whereas vehicle-activated signs provide immediate feedback such as speed or stopped vehicles ahead.

Staff noted that a comprehensive list of all ideas heard and considered is included in the meeting packet. This includes those incorporated into the proposed package.

CAC Discussion of Improvement Ideas

Vaughn asked the CAC members for any additional improvement ideas or thoughts on the proposed improvement package.

- A CAC member commented that the proposed improvements seem like interim steps given proposed traffic increases and said that the group will be back here in 15 years to discuss the same problems. He said the project should be considering more high-level ideas, such as a new, realigned Cornelius Pass Road.
- A CAC member asked about traffic levels portrayed in the Skyline Boulevard intersection simulations provided in the meeting packet. Staff said that the simulations were based on 2035 traffic levels at peak hours. A CAC member noted that traffic at this intersection varies widely depending on the time of day.
- A CAC member asked why is there such a wide spread in cost estimates for the Skyline Blvd options. Staff said that different roundabout designs being considered affect the cost. The cost for a signalized intersection depends on the design speed. The cost will increase with higher speeds because improvements will need to extend further back on the road. These costs will become more specific as they get further along in design.
- A CAC member said that roadway delineation is very important and the project team should be able to determine whether the County will be doing paving work in the next five years. County staff said that the County has very little money to spend on repaving but that Cornelius Pass Road is towards the top of the list. It is likely a portion of it would be repaved in the next five years, but the budget is typically too small for repaving the entire corridor.
- The group discussed whether Cornelius Pass Road may be eligible for federal funding under Homeland Security due to its designation as a hazardous waste route. A CAC member said it would be possible to check whether ODOT is lobbying for this.

- A CAC member was concerned that the proposed improvements could not be done within the budget and asked whether it is likely the costs will become higher as design progresses. Staff said that they have identified the second-tier options to address this possibility.
- Several CAC members expressed concern about a “race track” effect at Skyline Blvd intersection, in which faster traffic will attempt to pass slower traffic at this point. Staff said that they have heard this concern and will consider it in any designs they do for this intersection, whether a roundabout or signal.
- A CAC member said his understanding is that two lane roundabouts are the most dangerous to mix cars and trucks. There is a state law that says cars can’t pass on inside of trucks; he is concerned this will happen anyway. The design team said there can be some education for truckers to straddle both lanes to avoid this problem; however some CAC members were concerned that this would not be legal. The group discussed roundabouts designed to allow trucks to take the inside lane, however the footprint for these is much larger.
- A CAC member said that roundabouts require everyone to slow down at all times of day, which is inefficient and causes more carbon emissions.

Vaughn noted that the discussion had gone past the allotted time on the agenda. CAC members agreed to pause, hear public comment, and then continue a whole-group conversation in lieu of the planned small group discussions.

Public Comment

Larry Leuthe said the project team needs to listen to truckers and that cars will try to pass trucks in the roundabout. He said that the signalized intersection of Skyline Boulevard and Cornelius Pass Road is the community’s priority and expressed concern that this is not being represented.

Brian Lightcap noted that some of his feedback is included in a letter, which was included in the open house summary. He said that there are a wide range of drivers with different driving skills on Cornelius Pass Road. He thinks the signalized option should be timed so it works differently at different times of day. A roundabout would work better for bicyclists, though roundabouts have other problems. Any options need to slow traffic down.

Ken Schechter lives in the area and said he doesn’t have driving skills he had before. He is worried about being able to use a roundabout. He said the mix of cars and trucks affects everybody.

Continued CAC Discussion of Improvement Ideas

Skyline Boulevard Intersection

- A CAC member said that one of the biggest problems is line of vision; drivers can’t see very far. A large roundabout may be able to help this.
- The group discussed the possibility of a split highway or large roundabout with the option for traffic from Skyline to stop in the middle.
 - Some CAC members thought this seemed like a simpler, more straightforward option. Some thought this had more points of possible collision.
 - Some examples of similar designs were given, including OR 99W.
 - A CAC member said a simpler intersection option may allow for upgrades later on, and that weather and driver confusion should also be considered.
 - Staff said they have considered this option but it is unlikely to work due to points of conflict, operations, safety, cost and geometry constraints. However, they will consider this option further and report back to the group in the next meeting.
- One CAC member expressed concern that the group has been corralled into two medium-cost options when the best option may be an overpass. The facilitator noted that the team is

obligated to come up with a package that fits within the budget. An overpass would exceed the project budget.

- CAC members discussed roundabouts that allow trucks to go straight through the middle. The design team said they have considered this as a way to accommodate large vehicles.
- The group discussed concerns about a “race track” scenario where the lanes merge.
- A CAC member asked whether the team has considered a bicycle/pedestrian overpass.

Rumble strips

- A CAC member expressed concern that rumble strips present a problem for wildlife and bicyclists. Staff noted that the proposed improvements would include widening the shoulder, so the rumble strips (at those locations) would be placed off the fog line and not on the shoulder.
- The CAC member said he had heard of a recent crash in which the driver hit the rumble strip and overcorrected, which caused an accident. Staff said that rumble strips have been shown to be effective in reducing crashes.

Speeding

- A CAC member said the most common cause of crashes is speeding and he would like to see the enforceable speed limit reduced at key locations.
- A CAC member asked whether design speeds were increasing. Staff said that the design speed for improvements is typically 5–10 mph higher than the posted speed limit. This does mean that posted speeds will increase. The technical team is not following this guideline at all hot spots due to budget and technical restrictions. Rather, they are considering adjacent curves and the context of the corridor. For example at 8th Ave, the team proposes modifying tighter curves to fit more closely with adjacent curves.

Pull-outs

- A CAC member asked to see specific locations being proposed for pull-outs. Staff said that locations will be based on input from the Sheriff’s department and field data. At this point in the process, the project team would like to know whether CAC members think pull-outs are a good concept to move forward.
- A CAC member would like to increase the budget for pull-outs. The project team said they have increased the budget for pull-outs somewhat from the original plans.
- A CAC member noted that he originally supported turnouts because he thought law enforcement would increase. However, because the speed limits (lower than the 45 mph posted speed limit) are only advisory, it’s not clear that enforcement would be effective. He said he would support pull-outs only if it would be possible to change the enforceable speed limit.
- A CAC member expressed concern that pull-outs will become illegal garbage dumps.

A CAC member asked if anything can be done that makes the gap dissipation rate longer (i.e. keep cars further apart for longer). She would like to see data on this.

A CAC member said his impressions from the crash reports are that the majority of crashes on Cornelius Pass Road are with fixed objects rather than cars crashing into one another, so suggested more investment in wider shoulders and guardrails. The project team said they agree, which is why they have moved to more expensive realignment options.

A CAC member asked whether the proposed improvements to the Upper S-curves fix the camber. Staff said this is the primary focus of the proposal.

A CAC member suggested that solid objects may stop vehicles from falling all the way to the creek. This should be considered when removing vegetation to allow for widened shoulders.

A CAC member said the project team should consider the relative safety value of each improvement versus the effect on wildlife. She said any additional pavement, retaining walls, lighting, jersey barriers, etc. can affect wildlife being able to cross roads and/or add stormwater to creeks. She said that some places along Cornelius Pass Road are already unfriendly to wildlife so improvements in these areas would not be as disruptive as other places. She suggested adding budget for wildlife crossings and that these improvements be done as mitigation for wildlife-unfriendly changes.

- Staff noted that the technical team includes a biologist and that the project will require a lot of permitting, which will consider effects on wildlife. Staff noted that putting crossings where work is not being done can be expensive, but they can consider wildlife-friendly crossings where improvements are made.
- The CAC member requested to see the wildlife report that is being considered by the technical team.

A CAC member made a presentation to the group about cost/benefit considerations. He suggested that the team should consider the cost of road closures to all road users, rather than the cost of accidents to individual road users. He suggested that by spending a little more than the current construction budget, the project could be much more effective overall. He expressed concern that some low-budget options, such as minor curve realignment at the Upper S-curves, will not provide enough benefit for the cost and thinks aggressive approaches are important though they cost more.

- Staff noted that option 3.1 for the S-curves addresses some of these considerations and is one of the options under consideration by the group tonight.

A member of the public asked if speeds are reduced, would the project team still propose moving forward with these changes and suggested the money could be saved. A CAC member noted that even if speeds are reduced, law enforcement would likely not be increased.

Safety Improvement Detailed Package for Design

A CAC member proposed a show of hands in regards to the Skyline Blvd intersection options. The group supported this suggestion, though one CAC member expressed concern that the CAC had not heard the technical reasons why the project team prefers a roundabout.

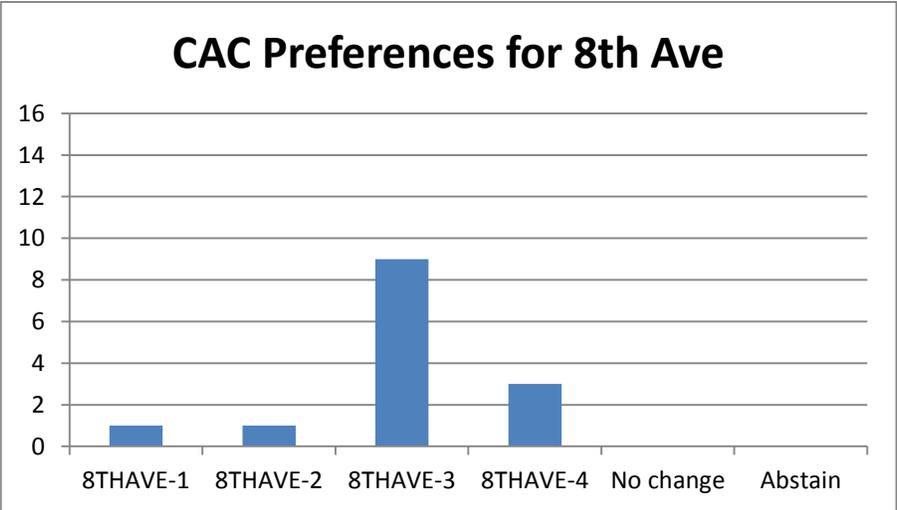
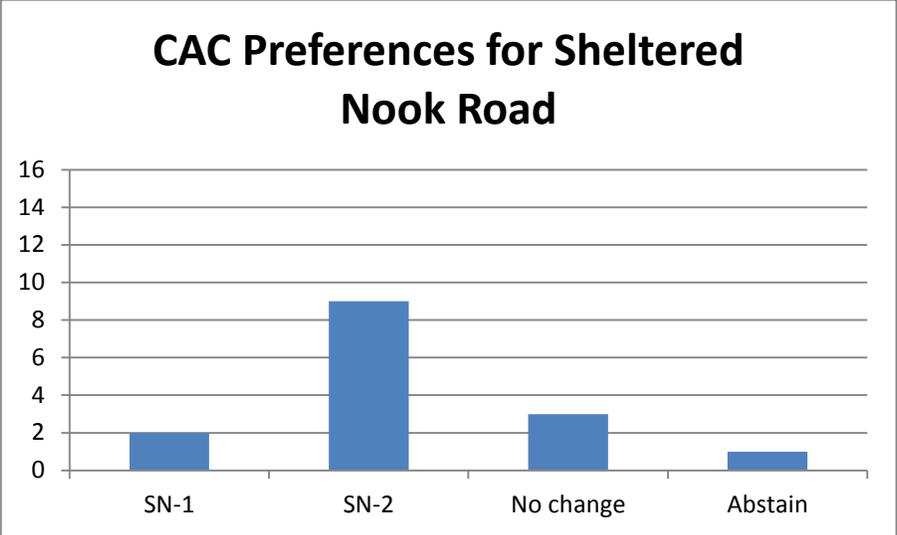
Vaughn led the group in a vote; the results were:

- In support of a signalized option: 11
- In support of a roundabout: 1
- No build/other: 2
- Abstain: 1

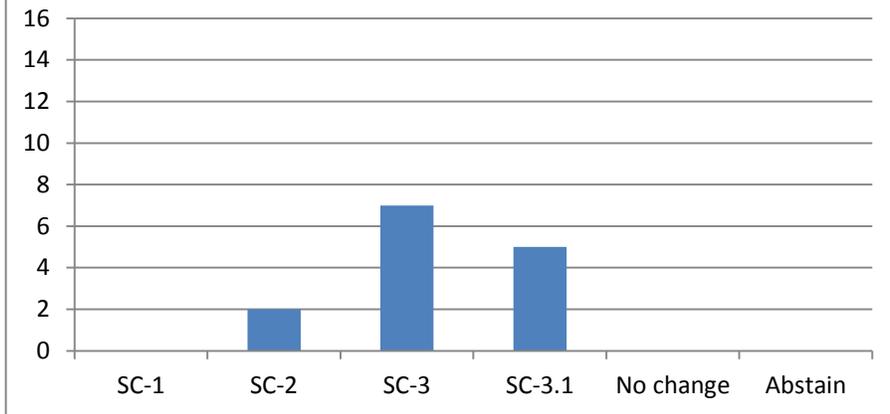
Vaughn asked each CAC member to complete the safety package worksheet. He noted that they should keep in mind the \$8.5 million construction budget. A CAC member said that their selections may be influenced by the possibility of getting more money. Senator Johnson said that there will not be another chance for more money from the legislature until 2015, so they shouldn't let that possibility inhibit this process.

While CAC members completed the worksheet exercise, Vaughn adjourned the meeting but noted that anyone interested in waiting for the results could stay.

The 14 worksheets submitted by CAC members were compiled and tallied. One member chose to not participate in the voting. The results, showing CAC votes for each alternative, are shown in the following graphs.

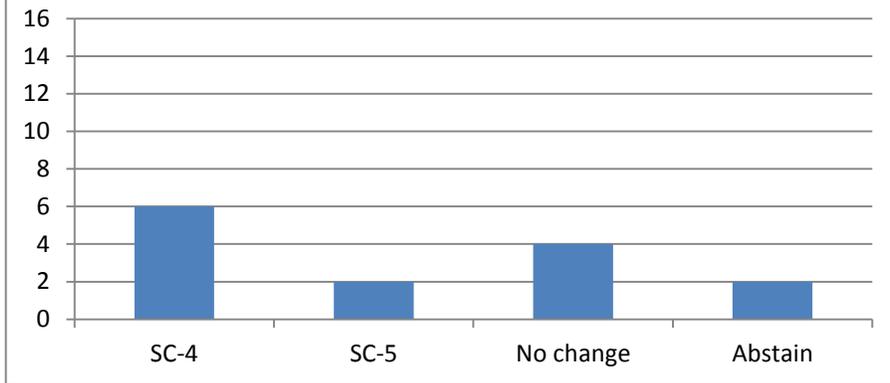


CAC Preferences for the S-curves, Tunnel Curves*

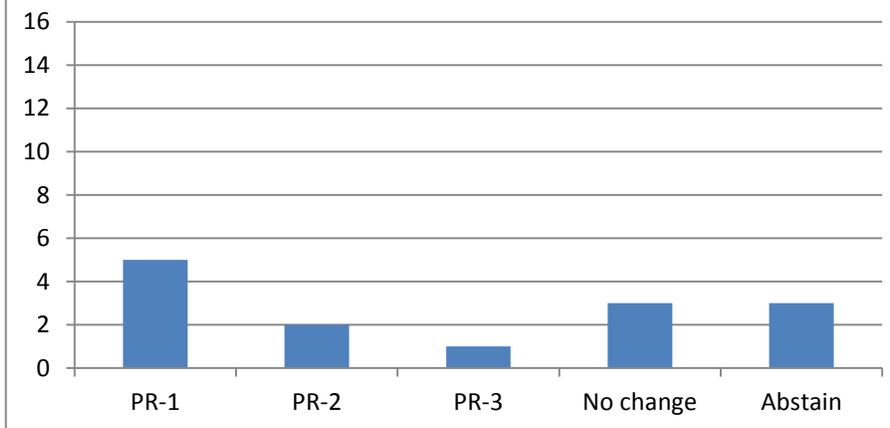


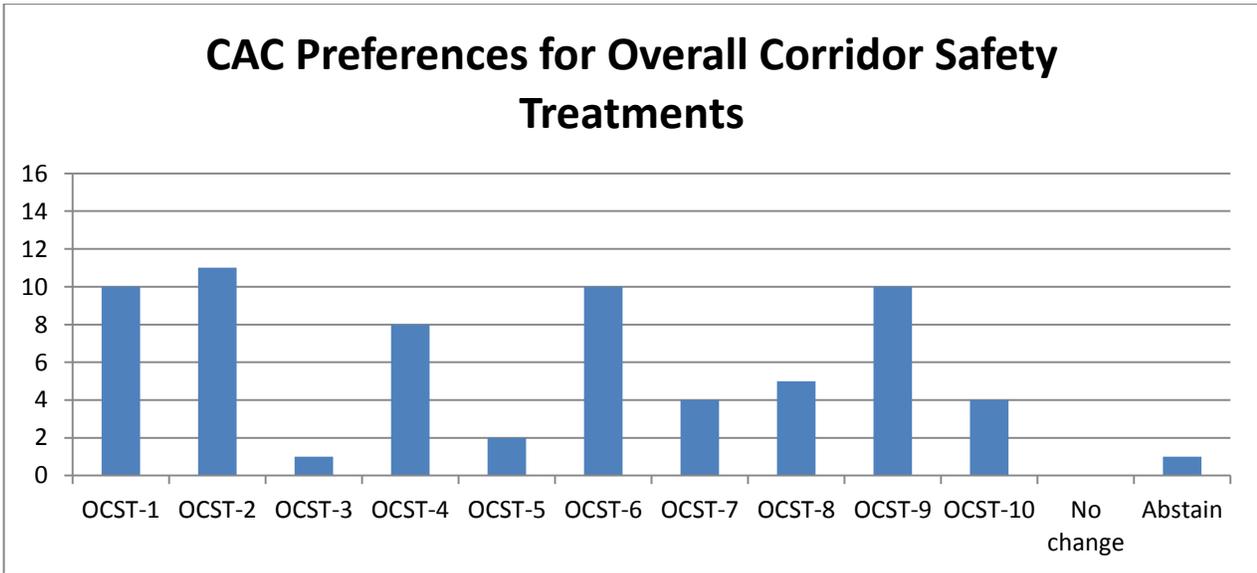
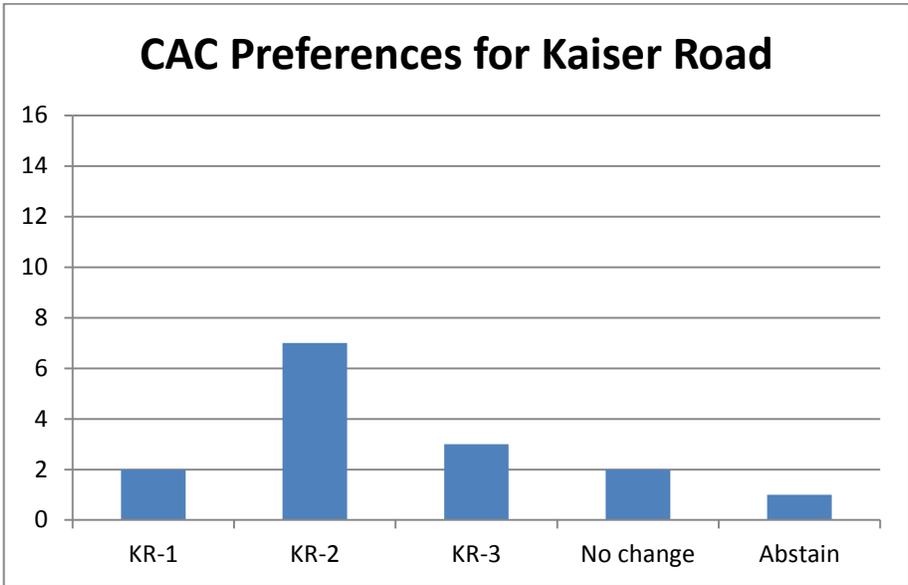
**Note: One CAC member voted for an "other" option – adding a wildlife undercrossing at the north end of the ravine – along with one of the above.*

CAC Preferences for the S-curves, Boyd's Lower Driveway



CAC Preferences for Curves South of Plainview Road





Vaughn reviewed the results of the exercise and noted that, with the exception of the Skyline Blvd intersection, they closely align with the design team’s proposal.

Next Steps & Close

Mike Pullen said that the team will take this feedback into consideration as we move forward into more detailed design. He thanked everyone for coming.