

Cornelius Pass Road Safety Improvements Project Community Advisory Committee Meeting #5 Summary

Meeting 5: May 7, 2015, 6:00–7:30 pm
Skyline Grange, 11275 NW Skyline Blvd., Portland, OR 97231

CAC Members in Attendance:

- Jason Ascher
- Wayne Bauer
- Jan Campbell
- Carol Chesarek
- Dave Linden
- Bruce Penney
- Steve Robertson

CAC Members Not in Attendance:

- Kirk Augustin
 - Drew Dubois
 - Tim Love
 - Michele Roy
 - Sarah Hanson
 - Senator Betsy Johnson
 - Bob Russell
 - George Sowder
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County Staff in Attendance:

- Sandra Prock, Project Manager
- Riad Alharithi, CIP Program Manager
- Mike Pullen, Communications
- Ian Cannon, County Engineer
- Tom Hansell, Road Services Manager
- John Niiyama, Road Maintenance Manager
- Don Pfister, Dist. 1 Road Maintenance Supervisor
- Megan Beyer, Chief of Staff for Commissioner Jules Bailey

Consultants/Partners in Attendance:

- 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 Who Signed In:

- Clifford Babad, Personal
- Rich Conklin, Personal
- Rosaline Elfick, Neighborhood
- Tanna Godfy, Personal
- Amanda Heel, Personal
- Dee Hidalgo, ODOT Community Affairs
- Marg Leney, Personal
- Wayne Mayo
- Raquel Miller, Personal
- Steven Nehl, Personal
- Diane Shaw, Personal/Neighborhood

Actions

- The CAC will reconvene before the County accepts the design package (at the 30% design stage).

Outstanding items/requests for information

- Mike Pullen will contact Senator Betsy Johnson to establish the best avenues to petition for funding and provide this information to the CAC and project stakeholder list.
- Request for weather condition indicators to be considered as part of signage improvements.
- Request to investigate new technology guardrails for constrained shoulders/steep drop-off areas.
- The project schedule was inadvertently left out of the meeting handouts; it will be put on the project website.

Welcome, Introductions and Agenda Review

Vaughn Brown of JLA Public Involvement introduced himself as the facilitator and welcomed everyone to the meeting. He acknowledged the death of Scappoose teenager Kerrigan Clark on Cornelius Pass Road the previous day and held a moment of silence.

Vaughn explained the purpose of the meeting and reviewed the agenda. He said there was not a lot of new information; however, the project team wanted to update the CAC and members of the public on how the project had evolved and plans going forward. Since many people in attendance had not been involved in previous project meetings, Vaughn recapped the project process. He said this was the fifth meeting of the Community Advisory Committee (CAC). The first few meetings were spent identifying hotspots and discussing what improvements could be made. After discussion with the CAC and a public open house, an improvement package was adopted. Due to a funding issue, it had been more than a year since the CAC met. The current meeting was intended as an update and no decisions would be made. Vaughn noted that another community open house was planned for further along in the design phase and that another committee meeting may be held if any major changes to the improvement package arose during design.

Project Update

Mike Pullen of Multnomah County provided more background on the project and explained what had happened since the CAC last met. In 2012, the legislature approved \$9.5 million for improvements to the Multnomah County portion of Cornelius Pass Road. In 2013, the Oregon Legislature negated the agreement but approved \$650,000 for design. The remaining funds were allocated to projects that were shovel-ready. He noted that, when the CAC first commenced in 2014, the County had been assured that originally promised funds would be renewed and the project team had worked with the that budget in mind. Mike noted that the decision not to renew the funding was made at a legislative level in 2014 and all work on the project paused. Since that time, ODOT had provided funding to complete the design phase of a more limited project and had said they will look for funding for construction of an approximately \$3 million project.

Mike reviewed the updated safety improvements package. Skyline Boulevard intersection improvements had been removed, since this was the highest cost item and would have required almost the entire budget. Mike said that the decision was between only doing Skyline Boulevard improvements or doing almost all of the other improvements and the County considered input from the committee when deciding which improvements to keep.

Mike said that the County had learned that shovel-ready projects were more likely to get funding. He said that the reductions were not good news, but it was positive that the modified project was moving forward once again.

Mike explained changes to the project team since the last CAC meeting. **Riad Alharithi** had taken over from Brian Vincent as leader of County Road Engineering. Riad told the group that he had worked in similar roles for other agencies and he had also experienced that projects that are ready for construction were easier to fund.

Discussion

- A CAC member asked whether the committee had input on whether to improve Skyline intersection or keep the other Improvements. *[No, this decision was made by the County and project team.]*
- The CAC member asked whether it was possible that more funding could be provided from Columbia County, since they had an interest in the road. She said that more people from Columbia County used the road than from Multnomah County. *[Mike had spoken to an audience member who wanted to raise funds to help with the safety improvements. Mike said, in his experience with projects of this scope, advocacy is the most powerful tool to get funding. He also said that Multnomah County leaders see this issue as a priority to address.]*
- Another CAC member said the priority should be to get the money to complete the revised list of improvements and focus on getting additional funds later on. She said the S-curves were a priority over Skyline Boulevard intersection. She said that any advocacy should focus on getting funding for the current project.
- Mike Pullen said that he will get in touch with Senator Betsy Johnson to establish the best avenues to petition for funding and will provide this information to the CAC and project stakeholder list.
- A committee member said that citizen advocacy was very influential in getting funds for the new Sauvie Island Bridge.

Modified Safety Improvement Package

Gabe Crop of Murray, Smith & Associates reviewed all of the project improvements in the original package and explained the changes.

Sheltered Nook: In 2010, the county installed several safety improvements and there had been a significant reduction in overall crashes since then. For this reason, it was one of the improvements that had been scaled back as part of the project reduction. In prior meetings with the CAC, this was considered a “second tier” improvement, which meant it was a lower priority compared to other projects.

8th Avenue: Improvements include shoulder widening and minor curve realignment to increase to a 30 mph design speed. The curve was currently functioning at about a 20–25 mph design speed.

Boyd’s Lower Driveway: Improvements included shoulder widening and additional guardrail on the outside of the curve to allow drivers additional room for correction.

S-curves: Many options were considered for this area; however, most of them were prohibitively expensive. The option selected includes straightening out the transition between the upper and lower curves, easing the transition into the tightest curve.

- A CAC member asked whether this improvement included fixing the camber. *[Yes.]*

Skyline Boulevard Intersection: Numerous options were considered for this area, including a signalized intersection and roundabout. The CAC recommended a signalized intersection; the cost for this option was estimated between \$3–5 million. With the new limits to funding, improvements to this intersection would have used most of the budget so the decision was made to fund most of the other improvements and not to make improvements at this location.

Plainview Road: Sight distance would be improved by clearing vegetation. Improved signage and guardrails will be installed.

Kaiser Road: Improvements would include signage, sight distance improvements, and a vehicle-activated beacon similar to the one installed at Sheltered Nook Road.

Proposed overall corridor safety treatments include:

- Updating all signage to meet current standards.
- Vehicle pullouts where room allowed.
- Clear zone and roadside barrier analysis, which included reviewing the entire corridor and identifying areas where guardrail was deficient or warranted.
- Roadway delineation.
 - Gabe said that this improvement had been reduced because getting value out of new durable striping would require additional rehabilitation on the road. He noted that improved roadway delineation would still be included in hotspot areas as part of other improvements.
- Illumination upgrades would not be done corridor-wide but would still be considered as part of hotspot improvements.
- Wildlife crossings would still be considered as part of hotspot improvements but not corridor-wide.
 - A CAC member asked whether the 8th Avenue culvert would be improved. *[Yes, this will be part of the 8th Avenue project and will improve fish passage.]*
- Reducing pavement drop-offs where practical by laying aggregate to provide more room on the sides of the pavement.
- Variable message signs, where deemed appropriate, to provide information to drivers on either end of the corridor.
 - A CAC member suggested color-changing signs to indicate when the road is freezing to watch for ice. *[This is a low-cost option that will be considered as part of the signage improvements.]*

Discussion

- A member of the public asked for clarification on reducing drop-offs by laying aggregate. He said that in a lot of places, there would be nowhere for aggregate to go and said that guardrail would be an option that should be considered. He said that guardrail would be low-cost compared to some other safety improvements and asked how much it cost. *[There were a number of options to be considered in regards to guardrail. Standard guardrail cost about \$20 per foot; however, it could get much more expensive if other improvements such as road widening or retaining walls were required to install it. Putting guardrail along an entire road could actually increase the number of accidents. The guardrail analysis would weigh the benefits and drawbacks. Particularly in high-risk areas, the benefits could be high. Flatter areas where the drops were not so severe may not warrant guardrails.]*
- A committee member asked whether it is possible to put a guardrail along the section north of Skyline Boulevard intersection where the pavement drops off abruptly. *[Typically two feet between lane and guardrail would be desired. Closer than this and it becomes a maintenance issue because guardrail would become ineffective when hit. The improvements to Boyd's Lower Driveway,*

which include shoulder widening along with guardrail installation, would be an ideal way to add guardrail. However, this is expensive to do.]

- A member of the public asked what the public can do to help raise funds for the project. *[Harnessing community support and energy and channeling it towards lobbying the legislature would be the best way to encourage funding. The project team would follow-up by email to the stakeholder list about Sen. Betsy Johnson's recommendations for community lobbying.]*
- A CAC member asked for a reminder of the locations of the two fatal accidents. *[Gabe pointed them out on the map; the recent one was just north of Skyline Boulevard intersection and the other north of Sheltered Nook Road.]*
- A member of the public said that installing guardrails should be the highest priority. He said he had called Sen. Betsy Johnson's office this morning and she was interested in the incident. He asked how much design would cost and how long it would take. *[This question led into the next agenda item.]*

Gabe reviewed the project schedule. The consultant would take improvements to 30% design by late 2015, at which stage budgets will be further solidified, right of way needs would be determined, a public open house to review designs would be held, and the County would accept the design package. He noted that right of way acquisition would likely only be needed at 8th Avenue where the curve was being realigned. 90% design would be complete by late 2016 and final design by early 2017. Contractor bidding would follow and construction was anticipated to start in summer of 2017.

- A member of the public asked how much the design would cost and when the money would be confirmed. *[ODOT had currently allocated \$750,000 to design the project. The construction funds have not been secured.]*
- A CAC member asked whether the design money could disappear again. *[This was not likely because the design funds were obligated, which means that it had been put into an account that was ready to be expensed for the design.]*
- A member of the public requested that an assessment be completed to find out whether it would be possible to install guardrail on the steep section near the intersection with Skyline Boulevard. *[This would be part of the guardrail analysis that would cover the entire road from Highway 30 to just south of Kaiser Road.]*

Gabe reviewed the high-level cost estimates for the proposed improvements. He noted that one of the goals of the next design phase was to establish more solid cost estimates for the improvement package.

- A CAC member said that the original package allocated \$400,000 toward variable message signs, which seemed like a good idea at the time but now seemed out of proportion to the budget and may be better allocated towards guardrails. *[None of the improvements were set in stone, but the project team wanted to pay respect to the improvements that the CAC recommended as important. In addition, variable message signs must go through a feasibility review to see which agency will maintain them, which will be established during the 30% design phase. The project team will revisit the signs issue with the CAC at the 30% design phase, when we have more information.]*
- A member of the public asked whether requiring trucks to take a different route than Cornelius Pass Road had been considered. *[The project goal is not to limit any mode of traffic from using the road. The proposed safety improvements focus on making the road safer for everybody. In addition, trucks did not account for a disproportionate number of accidents; they were roughly 10% of traffic and 10% of accidents.]*
- A member of the public said that, as a new driver, he noticed that the speed limit is 45 mph but the curve speed was much lower. He asked whether it would be possible to reduce the difference between these speeds. *[Enforceable speed limits were determined by a specific process using the 85% rule; advisory speeds around a curve were determined by an engineering process. The risk with putting a lower speed than what is safe was that some people would obey the law and some*

would drive faster, which could increase the risk of accidents. Also, people might begin to ignore or not trust the advisory speeds. The advisory speed recommendations within the corridor have been evaluated and some minor adjustments will be made during the project.]

- A member of the public asked for confirmation about the number of vehicles on Cornelius Pass Road. *[11,500 going through the intersection with Highway 30 was the most recent estimate.]*
- A CAC member said that, since the funding was so much different, he thought the CAC should have a chance to reprioritize the improvement package. He didn't feel it was appropriate for the County to proceed based on CAC recommendations when the premise of available funding was different. He also asked why the County was limiting the number of improvements when the budget was up in the air. *[The reason to narrow the list of improvements was the limit placed on the design phase budget. The project team acknowledged the CAC's interest in reconsidering their recommendations and suggested that the 30% design stage would be the best time for the CAC to do that.]*
- A CAC member said she thought the CAC should be able to reconsider before more money was spent on design. *[It would be difficult for the CAC to reconsider the improvements without a better idea of design requirements and cost estimates. In addition, further delays to the design progress would likely push the project out by another year due to funding cycles and construction windows. The project team reiterated that the 30% design stage would be the most appropriate time to reconvene. Suggestions for balancing various improvements, including guardrails, could be presented at that time.]*
- A CAC member said that the most money should be spent on design work at the 8th Avenue and the S-curves and that more money should be spent on guardrails. *[Many of the proposed improvements would not have many options associated with them. Guardrails were somewhat unique in that the design team could plan on providing several options. The guardrail analysis would be brought to the group to discuss.]*
- Several CAC members agreed that they did not want to see the project slowed down. The decision was made to reconvene the CAC before the County accepts the design package.

Public Comment

Tanna Godfy asked whether it was more expensive to build guardrails on steeper slopes. She said those were the most important places to have them. She said that the girl who had died this week would have still been alive if there were a guardrail there and that this needed to be fixed.

Mike said that the project had been through dramatic ups and downs and that he was glad to see the public offering of support. He said the County would like to encourage that energy to continue.

Next Steps and Meeting Close

Vaughn thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the meeting.