

17 - Outstanding Issues

The improvements, both funded and unfunded, called for in this Plan do not solve all of our regional transportation issues. In fact, some of our more obvious issues are not fully addressed by the improvements identified in this Plan. The reasons for this are:

- 1) The nature of these issues is very complex and further analysis is required to adequately understand the underlying travel demand contributing to the issues;
- 2) Several potential approaches might be useful, either alone or in combination, to address these issues;
- 3) There is a lack of funding available to implement the solutions, or restrictions on the funds available preclude their use in being applied toward a particular issue;
- 4) No consensus solutions are currently identified to address these issues, and additional public deliberation and input is required before a preferred alternative can be selected and included in the Plan; and
- 5) Several of these issues are the subjects of current ongoing planning studies and as such do not have any recommended solutions at this time.

This chapter summarizes the outstanding issues that were identified in the preceding chapters, along with some broader issues facing the region. In addition to those outstanding issues discussed below, other problem areas will likely be subject to further study as part of the development of local TSPs by jurisdictions in the region, or as part of specific study processes associated with updating local comprehensive land use plans.

Although interrelated packages of improvements for each of these outstanding issues will likely be identified as a result of the ongoing planning studies, there may be instances where specific projects or actions to preserve right(s)-of-way for eventual improvements are warranted prior to the completion of the entire study. If such actions can successfully demonstrate consensus support and operational separability, i.e., the action or improvement is warranted on its own merits and will not preclude elements of a comprehensive solution, then they may be advanced individually and remain consistent with this Plan without being specifically identified in it.

Funding Issues

As can be seen in the preceding chapters and especially in Chapter 5, Finance, the region is facing a shortfall in revenues when compared with the projects that have been identified as being needed and in regards to operating and maintaining the existing system. This shortfall impacts all aspects of the Regional Transportation System, from the roads and highways, to the operation of bus service, to operating the rail station. With no solution to the dilemma of decreasing resources, the area will need to make do with reduced levels of maintenance of roads and bridges, increasing congestion, and constrained transit services.

While the funding situation impacts all the jurisdictions and agencies in the area, it is especially true for the Salem-Keizer Transit District (SKTD). With the area being designated a TMA in 2002, SKTD lost the ability to use a considerable amount of federal funds to support the operation of their buses. That money can now only be spent on capital expenses, such as purchasing new buses or constructing bus stops. SKTD has limited funding sources available to pay for operations and must rely on tax levies and fare box income. SKTD faces the possibility of being in the untenable position of being able to buy new buses but not being able to pay for the operators to drive them.

As shown in the financial chapter of this Plan, there is a considerable difference between the amount of revenues that will be available to the region during the horizon of this Plan and the costs of the improvements necessary to address all the issues that face the Regional Transportation System. The financially constrained selection of projects presented in the previous chapters addresses the federal planning requirements related to financial constraint.

Pedestrian

Providing safe and convenient pedestrian links along and across the regional road system is one of the policies of this Plan. Currently, there are several areas in the Salem-Keizer area where this is not being met. One such area is along Highway 22 between Lancaster and Cordon Road. On the south side of the highway is located a housing development with few to no stores or other amenities. On the north side is located a new elementary school and numerous retail and food stores. Due to the poor pedestrian linkages, and the circuitous route that walkers face, many people walk to the stores by crossing Highway 22, cutting through the fences that were erected along the right-of-way. Due to the high traffic volume and lack of any pedestrian accommodations along the highway, this current situation has the potential for pedestrian fatalities and injuries. This area needs attention in the near term to engage the public, and determine a solution that meets the needs of the residents of the area, those of ODOT, and the people using Highway 22.

Ensuring connectivity between Keizer and Salem for all modes is a continuing aim for the Regional Transportation Systems Plan. One option to address this situation would be the development of a multi-use path either along the Willamette River or in a block or two along existing streets, providing access for the residents of Keizer west of River Road North to downtown Salem. This path would be part of the larger Willamette Partnership (WP) plan to link cities along the Willamette River together via a multi-use path stretching from Eugene to Portland. Currently, this proposal is still in the conceptual stages, with no specific routes through Salem-Keizer identified. The completion of a path as envisioned by the WP is compatible with the goals of the RTSP to provide residents of Salem-Keizer with multiple mode and route options when traveling between origin and destination.

Bicycle

Several portions of the designated Regional Bicycle System in the SKATS area cannot accommodate the addition of dedicated bike lanes or even widened outside travel lanes. Two examples are River Road North from Chemawa Road to Shangri-La Street and Liberty Road South, from Commercial Street to Browning Avenue. Impediments to the addition of bicycle

facilities on these segments range from safety concerns to the financial cost of acquiring the necessary right-of-way to outright community opposition. Finding a satisfactory solution to these problem areas will require additional time and effort and remain an outstanding issue in the regional transportation planning process.

Connecting Keizer and Salem is a near-term goal for the Regional Bicycle System. Currently, Commercial and Liberty streets have bike lanes, as does Cherry Avenue. Broadway and North River Road do not have bike lanes, nor is there room in the current right-of-way of either street to expand them to include a bike lane. One option to address this situation would be the development of a multi-use path along the Willamette River, providing access for the residents of Keizer west of River Road North to downtown Salem. This is described above in the Pedestrian section of this chapter.

Combining the two issues above, there needs to be reexamination of the current regional bicycle and pedestrian networks to determine their suitability in facilitating the safe and easy movement of people using these modes. One area of study will be whether additional roads, classified below minor arterial, should be included in the regional bicycle network to facilitate the movement between the region's destinations while bypassing areas where the provision of bicycle lanes is problematic.

Goods Movement

More than any other topic discussed in this Plan, the movement of goods is typically regarded as confidential business information, such that the businesses involved do not share the data with each other or the public agencies. The need for additional information regarding the quantity and type of goods being moved in and around the SKATS area, as well as a more thorough identification of particular freight-critical routes and associated problem areas, is an issue that needs to be addressed in the future to better design solutions to ensure future mobility.

ODOT has completed the Freight Route Analysis Project (FRAP) (winter 2004), which included a recommendation for changes to the designation of several segments of facilities in the SKATS area. As a consequence of their designation as "Oregon Freight Routes," it is possible that these facility segments would also be subject to the provisions of as-yet-to-be-defined "management plans." Inasmuch as the ultimate effects on the responsible jurisdictions of the interaction of these designations, management plans, local land use plans, STA (Special Transportation Area) requirements, etc., is uncertain, the affected jurisdictions have requested a delay in the Oregon Transportation Council (OTC) adoption of the Freight Route redesignations until such time as all the associated impacts can be meaningfully evaluated.

Rail

The principal outstanding issues for the Regional Rail System involve the uncertainty of available funding for the recommended trackage improvements and the lack of identified funding for expanding the service as envisioned in the *Oregon Rail Plan* (2001).

Long-term operations and maintenance of the Salem Railroad Station is another outstanding issue, as the Salem station is the only one in the valley to be owned by ODOT and not the local jurisdiction(s).

Intercity rail service can provide a viable alternative to long-haul automobile travel, be it for commuting or for shopping/recreation trips. The potential and feasibility of additional intercity rail service along the I-5 corridor between the Salem-Keizer area and the Portland Metropolitan area to the north, and Corvallis/Albany to the south, is an issue that needs further study. Two routes are available to the north. One follows the route of Amtrak's passenger trains by using the UP line to the east of I-5 to Oregon City and then to Union Station in Portland. The second option is to use the P&W (ex-BNSF) line that runs to the west of I-5 from Keizer to Wilsonville, where it would connect with Washington County's soon to be implemented commuter rail service linking Wilsonville and Beaverton.

Another continuing issue is the safety of railroad crossings. In the 1996 RTSP, a number of crossings were identified as needing improvement to reduce the possibility of serious collisions between trains and autos. These improvements have been completed and the 12th Street Pedestrian Promenade was constructed in 2001 and 2002 to address the safety concerns facing pedestrians in the 12th Street corridor, with Phase III of the project completed in 2006. However, increases in the number and/or speed of trains along either of the rail corridors in the SKATS area should be tied with a reexamination of the safety of the crossings.

Other outstanding issues that cannot be fully addressed by this document include the preservation of land that is currently capable of being served by rail, and the reduction of land-use conflicts near existing rail lines.

Transportation System Efficiency Management

Transit ITS applications, e.g., transit managements systems and electronic fare payment systems, may have some promise in terms of increasing the efficiency of transit operations and customer confidence in the transit system. Improving mobility in regional transportation corridors where the physical and political impediments to adding right-of-way are high is identified as an "outstanding issue" in this RTSP Update. As part of the implementation of the recommendations adopted as a result of the High Priority Transportation Corridor study, transit ITS applications will be examined as part of an overall recommended strategy to improve mobility in the Broadway/River Road North corridor. It is expected that ITS applications employed in the HPTC Corridor will also be used in other appropriate locations.

Public Transportation

The major difficulty involved in expanding the Public Transportation System is a lack of ongoing, stable funding for significant increases in the level and type of transit services provided in the region. The mass transit system, the passenger rail system, and the ADA/Elderly and Handicapped systems all require additional levels of funding to be maximally effective.

A project is currently (2007) funded and scheduled to convert the existing Union Street Railroad Bridge structure into a pedestrian and bicycle facility. This facility would provide a safe and convenient link between Wallace Marine Park and west Salem to the Riverfront Park, the central business district, and the rest of Salem. Possible further conversion of the bridge into one being usable by transit and/or emergency vehicles will require further study and outreach to both the public and the nearby businesses.

Mass Transit System Funding Shortfall

The transit district can be expected to be able to afford necessary capital improvements (new buses and equipment) over the next 24 years but cannot afford to provide significant expansions of transit levels of service beyond those called for in this Plan without renewed or additional sources of funding (see Chapter 5, Finance). Securing stable and continuing sources of adequate operations funding for the mass transit system is critical to the ability of the overall regional transportation system to function effectively, and is a high regional priority. In the near term, in cooperation with the transit district, SKATS and the other jurisdictions in the region will cooperatively seek to identify, evaluate, and recommend appropriate new funding sources for transit operations to the region's citizenry and businesses.

Regional Passenger Rail Facility and Service Funding

The region will continue to work with ODOT to secure the necessary funding to maintain and improve the Regional Passenger Rail System. Stable, long-term funding for operating and maintaining the Salem railroad station has not been identified. This is crucial to allow this vital piece of the transportation system infrastructure to function as ridership increases as a result of increased service.

Intercity Bus Service

The feasibility of, and an operating and financial plan for, an ongoing intercity bus service, particularly to the west and east, connecting the Salem-Keizer urban area with cities in Polk and Marion counties, needs to be evaluated. The region will work with county staff to develop and conduct such a feasibility study as funds are available.

ADA/Elderly and Handicapped-Related Services Funding Shortfall

The district is currently meeting the demand. But in the foreseeable future the level of service will grow faster than available funding. As a result of this fact the district will have to pursue additional funding.

Roads

Willamette River Crossing Capacity

The Willamette River Crossing Capacity Study (2000) identified the Tryon/Pine Corridor as the preferred location for the eastern terminus of a new bridge across the Willamette. The next step is to conduct environmental, design, and public involvement activities necessary to prepare an

EIS on a project to select the preferred alternative in this corridor. The Salem River Crossing EIS began in 2006, and is expected to reach a Record of Decision in 2009 at the earliest. The EIS will also seek to identify a viable consensus combination of funding sources to construct the preferred alternative. To protect the right-of-way that is identified, \$20 million is allocated over the life of this Plan. This is the first step for the region to take to show its commitment to the construction of a new bridge.

In addition, the Willamette River Crossing Capacity Study also recommended further study of an additional bridge in the Kuebler/Doaks Ferry area to the south of the existing bridges and the consideration of a "beltline" highway around the Salem-Keizer area. At this time, there is neither the funding nor consensus regarding a future Kuebler bridge and beltline. For these reasons, they are not included as specific projects in this plan, but are identified as components of a future vision of the area that will continue to draw attention over time.

I-5 Interchanges @ Brooklake Road, Chemawa Road and Kuebler Boulevard

These facilities are congested and recent developments in the area are expected to place additional demands on the interchanges. Interchange Area Management Plans (IAMPs) are required to identify the severity of the expected problems and to evaluate and recommend preferred solutions.

I-5/Kuebler

An IAMP is currently (2007) being conducted on the interchange connecting I-5 and Kuebler Boulevard. The project is one phase, with the second phase examining the OR 22 E corridor between 25th and Gaffin Road and the operational characteristics of the current interchanges and a possible future interchange linking OR 22 E with Cordon Road. Results from these studies are expected later in 2007.

I-5/Chemawa

The interchange connecting Chemawa Road and I-5 was designated an outstanding issue in the 2002 RTSP Update. At that time, work was ongoing on a Traffic Impact Study (TIS) for the proposed Chemawa/Keizer Station development. Improvements to the interchange were identified in that document as being needed to ensure that the operational characteristics of the interchange and that section of Chemawa Road do not degrade in the future. The implementation of the recommendations and their success will be closely watched in the future.

I-5/Brooklake

The interchange connecting Brooklake Road and I-5 is currently controlled with stop signs on the ramp approaches. As the area's businesses develop, and more residents of the northern part of the SKATS area utilize this interchange to access the Interstate heading north for jobs or shopping, the ability of the existing facility to adequately meet the mobility needs while satisfying safety goals will be diminished. It is recognized by ODOT and SKATS that the question of how best to meet these twin requirements needs to be addressed.

OR 22 East (25th - Gaffin Road)

This is a congested section of a major statewide route, and includes several key intersections, that are severely congested and expected to worsen considerably in the future. The need for an interchange-type connection between Highway 22 and Cordon Road needs to be examined and environmental analyses need to be performed as part of an Expressway Management Plan (EMP) for this segment of Highway 22.

OR 22 West (OR 51 to Willamette River Bridges)

This section of OR 22 in West Salem is currently congested and quite dangerous. In addition, potential new development in the area can be expected to increase travel demand on this section of Highway 22. The BHES identified a TSM-type improvement at the west Bridgehead that has yet to be scheduled for implementation. An Expressway Management Plan (EMP) for this section of OR 22 is necessary to identify the severity of the problem and recommend a coordinated set of preferred solutions for the area. In preparing this plan, ODOT and the local jurisdictions are working together on a study to identify, analyze, and narrow the number of feasible alternatives that address operational, safety and geometric problems, consistent with the 1999 Oregon Highway Plan. In 2004, ODOT decided to focus on the western half of the Expressway Management Plan area, from Greenwood Road to Doaks Ferry Road, and leave development of the Doaks Ferry to Bridge section to a future-year phase. The Greenwood to Doaks Ferry portion of the plan is scheduled for completion in August 2007. One area of focus is the intersection of Highway 22 and 51, for which Polk County has been able to successfully lobby \$3 million in funds from Congress. ODOT has identified environmental document and development work as tasks for the next three years and is planning to start an Interchange Environmental Analysis of this area in 2007. Results from this study will be included in the next RTSP update.

High Priority Transportation Corridor

Many corridors in the area have reached their ultimate physical width. The area will need to use techniques, other than road widening, to provide for the area's mobility.

The High Priority Transportation Corridor Study was completed in 2003. The study's objective was to investigate, identify, and implement methodologies and technologies that relieve congestion experienced by transit vehicles in a corridor. The recommendations from this study will allow transit service to improve to the point of being competitive with automobile travel. The study identified projects costing \$6.5 million in the Broadway / River Road North corridor linking downtown Salem with Keizer. Solutions identified in this study will likely be implemented in other transit corridors in the Salem-Keizer-Turner area.

Increasing Reliance on Non-Automobile Modes

The Oregon Transportation Planning Rule (TPR) requires that the MPO and the local jurisdictions in the urban area develop measures and benchmarks that will demonstrate that the Salem-Keizer area is increasing its reliance on non-automobile modes. Efforts to date indicate

that significant and potentially controversial land use changes will be required in order to facilitate this change from the status quo. Studies are underway to examine the use of mixed land use centers, corridors, and high transit service levels as methods for reducing automobile reliance. These studies are also designed as the basis for meeting the TPR requirement for the area jurisdictions to develop an “integrated land use/transportation plan.” The types of measures being considered to demonstrate increased non-auto reliance include: the number of people who live within a ¼-mile walk to a transit stop; non-auto mode share; number of dwellings close to retail services and employment. The need to work with the local jurisdictions to develop a common “future vision” on which to base an Integrated Land Use/Transportation Plan and measures to demonstrate reduced automobile reliance is ongoing. In terms of the development of the RTSP, recent guidance has reinforced the federal mandate that the MPO plan be based upon *currently adopted Local Comprehensive Land Use Plans*, including only those land uses and developments that can be considered likely to occur over the planning horizon. The MPO *can*, however, provide modeling outputs useful in the evaluation of alternative future land use scenarios, *if such outputs are requested and defined by a member jurisdiction, and those LCLUP changes are in the pipeline for adoption by the affected local jurisdiction.*