



Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting #1

Meeting Summary

Derived from Project Team Notes

June 27, 2001

In Attendance:

CAC Members

Cliff Bates
Michael Bendsten
Bob Corkrum
Mike Kelly
Robert Larse
Bob Mathison
Don Miller
Brian Nelson
Doug Pauli
Lynda Pheasant
Mark Spurgeon
Richard Thompson
Arlen Washines

Project Staff

Terry Mattson, WSDOT
Dan Sarles, WSDOT
Jim Catterfield, URS
Rick Chapman, URS
Marcia Wagoner, PRR

Introduction - Terry Mattson, WSDOT

Terry welcomed the Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) members and explained the role the committee plays in the project. The CAC is an advisory group composed of people within the community representing a broad range of views, backgrounds, and interests. The CAC will be employed in order to ensure active and continuous public involvement throughout the life of this project. The committee will serve in an advisory role to the project team and will meet prior to major project milestones to offer advice on significant decisions. While the CAC will not determine project policy or direction, their input will be used to influence project decisions in relation to the community it serves. Members were selected from the participants in the project's stakeholder workshop held in May 2001. In short, the CAC will:

- 1) Provide a link between the project and the community
- 2) Serve the community as an educated group with respect to the issues associated with the Eastside Corridor
- 3) Provide input to the project team

Project Overview - Rick Chapman, URS

WSDOT is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to examine alternatives that will enhance safety and increase mobility on Sunset Highway, between the Odabashian Bridge to the north and the Ninth Street intersection in downtown East Wenatchee to the south.

Screening Process - Rick Chapman

The initial screening evaluation narrowed a field of 34 conceptual alternatives down to 16. The 16 concepts were grouped into 5 general categories of similar alternatives. The 16 concepts were then further evaluated in the secondary screening. Based on the results of the secondary screening, it is being recommended that the top scoring alternative in each category be highlighted for presentation to the public at the June 28 Scoping Meeting. Criteria for both the initial and secondary screenings were derived from the project's purpose and need statement and from criteria proposed by workshop participants.

Alternatives are taken through a careful screening process that considers a variety of factors – technical, environmental, and social in nature. Technical criteria determine such issues as whether or not the concept will enhance safety and increase mobility on Sunset Highway, and whether or not the concept is constructible and able to meet engineering criteria. Environmental criteria include such items as air quality, wetlands impacts, land use compatibility and whether or not the concept is likely to receive required permits, approvals, and funding. Social criteria take into consideration public support or opposition to a particular concept, in addition to a concept's affect on displacement of homes and businesses.

Thirty-Four Alternatives

- ♦ Criteria for rating established from Purpose and Need and the Stakeholder Workshop
- ♦ Criteria includes: Reduce congestion, improve safety, meet WSDOT safety standards, high potential to be permitted, and minimize displacement

First Level Screening

- ♦ Narrowed number of alternatives from 34 to 16
- ♦ Screened out upper bench route
- ♦ Carried 6 of 7 lower bench routes forward
- ♦ Carried Sunset Highway options
- ♦ Carried one way couplet schemes on existing roadways forward

Questions:

Corkrum: Were all criteria weighted equally and was cost a consideration?

Chapman: All were weighted equally, except for feasibility, which only included construct ability, not cost.

Mattson: We are working with the FHWA on criteria and have been cautioned against including cost as criteria because it is not an environmental issue.

Bendsten: The Upper Bench route seemed high on the public's list based on my experience at the workshop, why was it screened out?

Chapman: It does not meet the purpose and need. The traffic study showed that less than 10% of the traffic using the corridor is through traffic, while more than 90% originated in or traveled to destinations in East Wenatchee. This would imply that there would be very little demand for an upper bench route.

Corkrum: That does not take into account planned future development on Fancher Heights.

Chapman: True, but the Workshop participants raised the issue that other areas would also develop, meaning traffic demand would continue to increase in other areas of East Wenatchee.

Corkrum: There will also be drastic changes within industry such as the trucking industry, which is associated with the orchards.

Chapman: Considerations that may drastically change the fruit industry, such as a major reduction of production were not studied.

- Larse:** How will the traffic model be taken into consideration?
- Chapman:** Once the model is calibrated, we can test alternatives to see how they perform. We will begin to test alternatives when we have a workable number.
- Bendtsen:** It seems that we need to ease congestion in the City and County rather than relying only on WSDOT. We also need to look further out for a solution, which would be a long-term project.
- Chapman:** We do look into the future when evaluating the alternatives in the EIS. We consider existing conditions, the assumed build year (2006), and twenty years down the road.
- Bates:** There is concern about the amount of concentration on Sunset Highway when considering 20 years or more. I am concerned that you are moving over to Sunset Highway because there is not much room left.
- Chapman:** We have to make certain that the build year works while also looking at a twenty-year projection. The potential areas for development were considered based on the County's land use plan. The Upper Bench route will not solve the problem on SR 28.
- Thompson:** Sunset Highway is basically correct; however, with improvements the problem would be solved.
- Spurgeon:** What you are saying is that if the pattern changed in the future, it could warrant the Upper Bench route. The Upper Bench route would only take thru traffic, which isn't enough to solve the current traffic problems on Sunset.
- Bendtsen:** It is too bad that we do not have the traffic information to influence choices. There was a lot of energy focused on development of the Upper Bench options.
- Miller:** As far as Fancher Heights is concerned, it appears that the Lower Bench route could also serve their needs.
- Kelly:** No one talks about it, but the Growth Management Act directs housing growth to specific locations. There cannot be growth up Badger Mountain until other closer locations have reached full capacity.
- Pheasant:** How important is it to connect the Mall while planning? How can we give advice without knowing solutions to other traffic problems first?
- Thompson:** Is the traffic congestion related to bridge capacity?
- Sarles:** The South end bridge / George Sellar Bridge, is currently used by 45,000 vehicles per day and it has a capacity of around 72,000. The Odabashian Bridge currently carries 16,000 vehicles per day and has a similar capacity. At the south end the problems are not associated with the bridge capacity but rather with the signals. There is a consultant working on the west side approach to the George Sellar Bridge, Entranco Engineering. That effort is just in the process of starting up again to work through the environmental and preliminary design phase. A different consultant is working on the east side approach, INCA Engineering. As alternatives are developed for the east side approach the consultant has been asked to assume that a 5 lane section from the north will tie in at Ninth Street. All of the consultants are also using the same traffic information and traffic model and have been asked to assume the traffic volumes entering their project areas will be at capacity. The Department is also looking at improvements necessary in the corridors leading into Wenatchee. David Evans and Associates has recently been hired to develop a long-range plan for improving Highway 2 & 97, between the Blewett Junction and Wenatchee. Their effort is primarily focused on how to improve or at least maintain the safety and capacity of the corridor given all the intersections. Currently Wenatchee is also, the only metropolitan area in the state that is not connected to the other metropolitan areas with a four-lane highway. Connections via Stevens Pass, Blewett Pass and SR-28 all have environmental

issues that will make expansion of the highway facilities difficult. Currently the best option appears to be a connection via Quincy to Interstate 90 utilizing the SR 28 and SR 281 corridors.

- Pheasant:** How many cars can the five lanes carry?
- Sarles:** It varies depending on the conditions. For example, numerous driveway accesses will slow traffic down and reduce the capacity. We need to remember that this project is looking at Sunset Highway, and we need to come back to the Purpose and Need statement which includes: identifying ways to solve the safety, congestion and freight mobility problems between the Odabashian Bridge and Ninth Street.
- Kelly:** Can we think outside the box, can we think into the future? Can we buy land off the Odabashian Bridge over the bench to plan for needed road capacity in the future?
- Sarles:** Those questions need to be directed to the County and their land use plan and future transportation planning. The County had originally planned to preserve the Lower Bench route. It would be difficult for WSDOT to buy land on the belief that it would be needed in the future.
- Bendtsen:** It seems like it is local transportation solutions at a City and County level that are needed rather than the State highway.
- Sarles:** The Eastside Corridor is a specific project, based on earlier planning efforts, that has its own purpose and need. Each project will have its own purpose and need.
- Thompson:** I concur that it seems like a local problem rather than a concern of State Highways.
- Rick:** The Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is responsible for creating a model for traffic in and out of the area. The base model includes all traffic in the Valley including the bridges.
- Bates:** If you were to have a model, then you could consider input and make a decision. The group may change perspective.
- Larse:** There are four other agencies in the Valley that have responsibility. The Watts Study was an integrated plan for both sides of the river. The State is not doing their Eastside Corridor planning in a vacuum. They are basing this project on past area-wide transportation planning. Each jurisdiction has a set of responsibilities and the State is responsible for SR-28.
- Corkrum:** We need to know the flow of traffic for development. WSDOT, not the County, is responsible for Ninth Street South. The bridge is going to impact us so we need to make sure that we coordinate the effort.
- Sarles:** The alternatives for the east and west approaches to the George Sellar bridge were presented a couple of years ago in the paper, to gather public comment. With the addition of Petco and Fred Meyer, the consultant for the east approach has been asked to come back and modify the alternatives to reflect the new condition. WSDOT was and is very active in both projects. The County took the lead on the east side because the State, following Ref. 49 and then I-695, did not have the money to initially fund the necessary preliminary engineering and environmental work for the project. On the West side, the City of Wenatchee took the lead for the same reason.
- Catterfield:** We need to keep in mind that the purpose of the Eastside Corridor project is to handle north/south traffic flow, not east/west traffic flow, which is accommodated by the bridges. .
- Chapman:** One lane on a limited access road carries more traffic than one lane on another roadway. As you add driveways and intersections, traffic flow slows therefore reducing capacity.

- Larse:** Based on a personal count, there are 100 existing access points onto the Sunset Highway from Ninth Street south.
- Kelly:** I don't want you to think that we are beating you up, but we feel that the ball has been dropped and we want this project to be done right.
- Sarles:** There will most likely be an MPO and they will be the responsible party for the area-wide planning that you are looking for.
- Thompson:** I would like to see the traffic analysis in order to be better able to respond.
- Pauli:** I personally like the approach of focusing on the North/South Corridor because I feel that it enables us to concentrate on solutions to those needs.
- Chapman:** The WATS study showed improvements need to happen in a number of locations and one of those identified was the Sunset Highway.

Second Level Screening

Rick Chapman explained the more specific criteria and the process used to screen to five alternatives. Alternatives are grouped into categories of Riverfront, Lower Bench, Couplets, SR28 and Existing Streets. In order to move from sixteen to five alternatives, we have chosen to take the highest scoring alternative in each category rather than the taking the top five scoring alternatives.

Questions

- Corkrum:** If you think about seven lanes, we would have the best service in the state. After hearing the second level screening process, I now feel we are now moving forward.
- Pauli:** Can the final recommendation be a combination of alternatives?
- Chapman:** Yes. I would like to hear from the group about the process. Does it sound logical and are the criteria correct?
- Spurgeon:** When looking only at the top scoring in each alternative, I am concerned that there might be more than one good idea, part of the alternatives that will also be dropped.
- Spurgeon:** Have you thought of deleting categories? Do we want to keep options open or should we delete categories? I do not want to lose any of the good ideas.
- (Arlen Washines departed. The second week of August is out for him as a meeting time).
- Pauli:** The thinking seems to be pretty linear, to what is a very complex problem. It is unrealistic to think that one alternative will be the answer. It may be a combination of alternatives.
- Spurgeon:** I'm not completely comfortable with offering one per group though I understand the reasoning quantitatively. Maybe for now, we should look at the top two or three per category.
- Mattson:** We can only study four or five alignments in the EIS.
- Chapman:** Maybe we should eliminate the Lower Bench route.
- Thompson:** I would like to be given a recommendation by the Engineers and Planners to respond to. I think this is a reasonable process. I want the Valley to stay beautiful and a freeway just doesn't fit in.
- Pheasant:** A freeway does not fit but regardless, it will happen. I am concerned about putting a highway through a community because it is so divisive. We are risking the permanent division of the community. We need to rethink the strategy because it is only a short-term plan. The purpose and need is to solve the purpose and need.
- Kelly:** I do not know if this is a good strategy but it seems fine. It is important to move ahead.

- Larse:** I have some concern because the rating numbers between alternatives are relatively insignificant. Should you look at a more statistically significant difference? I do like the matrix, because it is a good decision making tool and I also like the grouping of alternatives into categories.
- Bendtsen:** I have mixed feelings. I feel misled by looking at all solutions and would probably have focused differently if I had known it was unlikely that the Upper Bench route would materialize. I have some concern about how impacts of the alternatives will have on the community. The Riverfront is important to everyone and it will be unfortunate if we cut the residential areas off from access to it. Making improvements on Sunset Highway, such as funneling lower traffic and shifting the problem could help significantly. Alternatives are not going to have any distribution change. Our riverfront is our best community asset. Dispersing the traffic can only happen in one way with the river. These are system issues and there is this price of the system.
- Sarles:** Even if we thought Sunset was best, we are required to look at alternatives. One question is how far from the river can we build and in any case what do we do between 13th and 9th streets near the Douglas County PUD complex where the existing highway is already within the 200-foot shoreline zone.
- Corkrum:** Port Commission and the MPO are going to have challenges regardless. It is important to do it right. Weighted criteria should be used in my view. If it is not affordable or environmentally feasible, we should throw it out. Criteria need to be weighted to screen out what can't happen. The Upper Bench route for long-term use is going to be needed. It would currently carry at least ten percent of the traffic if built, and in the future it would carry more. Grant Road, from my perspective, does not carry its full capacity. We need to talk to the County about land use projections so that they are taken into consideration.
- Mattson:** (to Cliff Bates) One question concerns bringing the road within 300 feet of the river. Parts of the Highway already are closer than 200 feet, such as between 13th and 9th streets, so we would have the Save the Riverfront group challenge the project if it brought the highway improvements closer than 300 feet in the areas where that has already happened.
- Bates:** I was not really prepared to respond to that type of question. But generally speaking, that area that has already been damaged and is not our area of concern. Our area of concern is beyond that point. If you are tying it into the existing roadway, that will not pose a particular problem.
- Mattson:** For the stretch between Ninth Street and Thirteenth Street by the PUD, you would widen it effectively to the east.
- Bates:** My concerns in general are that you should have had all the information as 8 1/2"x11" handouts. We need information, we need traffic flow counts, and you heard tonight that Grant Road need to be part of this. An engineering answer may not be the only choice. The lack of information creates a lack of trust.
(?) The language of "riverfront" highway creates a false sense of intent. Maybe we need to use a different title.
- Pheasant:** The information on road capacity and projected counts of population are necessary to know if a seven-lane road is required.

The CAC meeting was adjourned, and the next meeting will be scheduled in the beginning of August.