In May 16, 2001, the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) hosted a day long stakeholder workshop to further its efforts to enhance safety and increase mobility in the East Wenatchee urban area. The workshop provided a unique opportunity for a group of about forty stakeholders to work together to identify potential solutions and evaluation criteria. Participants included residents, property owners, orchardists and business owners, as well as representatives from citizen groups, government agencies, and the Colville and Yakama tribes.

A series of panel presentations allowed stakeholders to learn about the various points of view held by their fellow community members. In small working groups they identified community assets, key destinations, and locations of traffic bottlenecks in the corridor. The groups then brainstormed potential alternatives, developed rating criteria, and evaluated alternatives by their criteria.

The alignments developed by the working groups complement those suggested at the Introductory Open House held in March. One group decided that a modified route along the riverfront was the best option. The second group felt that a new bench route coupled with improvements to the SR-28/Cascade corridor would best address both short-term and long-term needs. The third group suggested either construction of a lower bench route or expansion of the existing highway. Group four rated construction of a new bench route highest. Finally, group five opposed any new highway construction, opting instead to further develop Sunset Highway and Cascade Street as one-way couplets.

Overall, the workshop provided the project team with valuable information. While each of the five breakout groups came up with different solutions, together they clarified specific right-of-way, traffic, safety, and freight mobility information that needs to be gathered in order to determine the best possible route.
The scoping process for the Eastside Corridor effort began with an introductory open house in March, continued with a Stakeholder Workshop in May and includes two more open houses—the next on June 28, 2001, and another slated for August 2001.

The alternatives on display at the open houses 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, land use compatibility, impacts to wetlands, parks, cultural resources and recreational areas 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.

The broad range of alternatives on display at the June open house will be narrowed down to the most promising alternatives and a no-build alternative that will be presented at the August 2001 open house. These alternatives will be developed and carried forward in the EIS for a complete environmental review. The next step is the publication of the Draft EIS (DEIS), which will be presented to the public for comment in spring of 2002. The end result of the Eastside Corridor EIS process is the selection of a preferred alternative and completion of preliminary design to the 30% level, which allows for the development of final contract documents and construction of the proposed improvements.