

BEFORE THE METRO COUNCIL

FOR THE PURPOSE OF ADOPTING THE) RESOLUTION NO. 06-3658
RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE HIGHWAY 217)
CORRIDOR TRANSPORTATION PLAN) Introduced by: Councilor Carl Hosticka

WHEREAS, on August 10, 2000 the Metro Council adopted Ordinance No. 00-869A, For the Purpose of Adopting the 2000 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP); Amending Ordinance No. 96-647C and Ordinance No. 97-715B, Metro's 2000 Regional Transportation Update with the intent to adopt subsequent amendments from specific outstanding corridor studies; and

WHEREAS, the 2000 RTP, adopted by ordinance, together with portions of the 1996 Urban Growth Management Functional Plan serve as the regional Transportation System Plan (TSP) required by the State Transportation Planning Rule; and

WHEREAS, on July 26, 2001 the Metro Council adopted Resolution No. 01-3089, For the Purpose of Endorsing the Findings and Recommendations of the Corridor Initiatives Project, which identified a work program for completion of the corridor refinement plans; and

WHEREAS, on June 27, 2002 the Metro Council adopted Ordinance No. 02-946A, For the Purpose of Adopting the Post-Acknowledgement Amendments to the 2000 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) amending the RTP to incorporate the corridor refinement work program; and

WHEREAS, due to the current and anticipated growth and congestion and the need to provide transportation access to support the 2040 Plan, that Resolution identified the Highway 217 Corridor as a priority for completion in the first planning period; and

WHEREAS, on September 24, 2002 Metro executed a three-party Grant Agreement with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) to receive \$400,000 in FHWA funds and provide \$100,000 local match that would fund the Value Pricing portion of the Highway 217 Corridor Study; and

WHEREAS, on June 12, 2003, the Metro Council adopted Resolution No. 03-3331, For the Purpose of Confirming Appointments to the Highway 217 Policy Advisory Committee (PAC), which appointed twenty members to the Highway 217 Corridor PAC to guide the study technical and public involvement processes and to provide interim and final recommendations; and

WHEREAS, the Committee was comprised of 17 jurisdictional members representing interest areas within the corridor and three at-large citizen members selected through a public solicitation process and a list of members is Exhibit C to this Resolution; and

WHEREAS, the Highway 217 Corridor planning has been completed in partnership with Washington County, and the Cities of Beaverton, Tigard, Tualatin and Lake Oswego, ODOT and TriMet who participated in advisory committees and reviewed key products; and

WHEREAS, the project included a significant public involvement program as outlined in the Staff Report to this Resolution; and

WHEREAS, Metro has coordinated extensively with the various land use and transportation planning efforts in the corridor; and

WHEREAS, the Highway 217 Corridor Study has investigated a number of multi-modal options in the two phases of study; and

WHEREAS, the Highway 217 Corridor PAC was involved in the development and evaluation of options, and provided recommendations at the end of Phase I and II of this study; and

WHEREAS, Metro Council has been briefed on the study findings and PAC recommendations at the conclusion of Phase I and Phase II of the Highway 217 Corridor Study and the final PAC recommendation is attached as Exhibit B to this Resolution; and

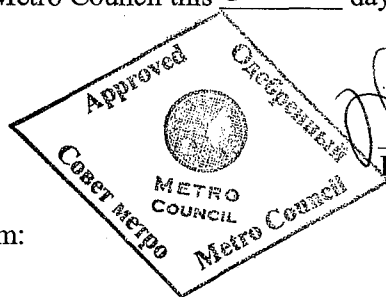
WHEREAS, Attachment 1 to the Staff Report, the Highway 217 Corridor Study Phase II Overview Report (November 16, 2005), contains study findings and summary conclusions and Attachment 2 to the Staff Report is the Highway 217 Corridor Study – Public Involvement Summary (November 2005); and


WHEREAS, Exhibit A of this Resolution contains the Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation (JPACT) recommendations for the Highway 217 Corridor Transportation Plan and outlines specific subsequent next steps for planning and project development work (“next steps”), now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED by the Metro Council;


1. That the Highway 217 Corridor Transportation Plan Recommendation (Exhibit A) is hereby approved and adopted as a program for additional project development and planning work in the corridor; and
2. That Metro Council directs staff to prepare amendments to the RTP in accordance with the Recommendation (Exhibit A); and
3. That Metro Council directs staff to work with other jurisdictions to implement appropriate amendments to local plans and additional planning and project development efforts as outlined in the Recommendations.

ADOPTED by the Metro Council this 23rd day of February, 2006.




David Bragdon, Council President

Approved as to Form:


Daniel B. Cooper, Metro Attorney

HIGHWAY 217 CORRIDOR TRANSPORTATION PLAN RECOMMENDATION

Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) Recommendation With Changes From the Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation (JPACT)

Note: For brevity this Exhibit does not include study findings or conclusions, which are summarized in the Staff Report.

I. Overall recommendations for regional consideration

1. The PAC recognizes that the region needs additional transportation funding and supports efforts to increase funding at federal, state and local levels.
2. Due to the large funding gaps under all options, in the near term, seek higher funding priority for Highway 217 improvements at federal, state and local levels.
 - Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT), Metro and local jurisdictions should seek to include priority interchanges or other appropriate elements of the Highway 217 project in any state, regional or local transportation funding measure.
 - ODOT, Metro and local jurisdictions should consider seeking a federal earmark for Highway 217 in the next federal transportation reauthorization.
 - Seek funding to commence a corridor study of the section of I-5 between Highway 217 and Wilsonville. The Highway 217 study highlighted the severity of the future bottleneck at this location. Each of the options worsened this bottleneck, particularly Options A and C, which drew the most new traffic to the corridor.
 - If the list of Highways of Statewide Significance is reopened by the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC), JPACT should consider nominating the Highway 217 project.
 - ODOT and Metro should develop a financing strategy for this project.
 - ODOT should seek to include the Highway 217 project in the next round of solicitations for the Oregon Innovative Partnership Program to assess the private sector interest in financing this project.
 - PAC members shall advocate for the above policy recommendations as appropriate.

II. Highway 217 traffic lanes

Recommendation

All of the options improve transportation performance on the corridor.

- The PAC recommends that the general purpose and express toll lane options be carried forward.

- The tolled ramp meter bypass option should not continue as a separate option due to lack of public acceptance, limited potential revenues and the lack of projected usage for many of the tolled ramp meter bypass locations. Tolled ramp meter bypass locations that have potential should be evaluated further in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process as part of the tolled lane option.

Next steps

Amend the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) to indicate that the third through lane in each direction could be either a general purpose or a tolled lane. Metro, ODOT, Washington County, and the Cities of Beaverton and Tigard should seek to amend the RTP to advance the project development work of the new through lane in each direction into the Financially Constrained RTP.

Metro, ODOT and the local jurisdictions should seek to include in the draft 2008-2011 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) funding for the Highway 217 EIS. The Highway 217 EIS is important so that ramp and interchange improvements on the entire facility can be implemented as funding becomes available. Additionally, the study would determine whether the lane should be a general-purpose lane or an express tolled lane. The EIS should also further consider the revenue contribution and test public acceptance of tolling selected ramp meter bypasses as part of the tolled lane option. It should also consider the advisability of allowing trucks larger than 26,000 pounds on a tolled lane. Finally, the EIS should develop more detailed revenue and usage forecasts for the tolled lane and a financing and phasing plan for the preferred alternative.

III. Highway 217 interchanges

Recommendation

In the short term, the PAC recommends further developing and evaluating the following interchange improvements as part of a National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) process (along with other appropriate options). The following list provides a general order of priority for the recommended interchange improvements, but implementation of these projects should respond to funding opportunities and local transportation needs and could occur in a different order. Engineering and specific design of the improvements should be evaluated in the NEPA process.

First Tier Priority

- Beaverton-Hillsdale/Allen Blvd. ramp braids
- Allen/Denney Road interchange

Second Tier Priority

- Canyon/Walker Road ramp braids
- Scholls Ferry/Greenburg Road ramp braids
- Greenburg Road (major interchange improvement, possibly single point interchange)

Third Tier Priority

- SW 72nd Avenue (additional turn lanes with major interchange improvement – design to be determined)
- Barnes Road (widening with additional turn lanes)
- Progress interchange (interchange improvements including widening and additional turn lanes)
- Highway 99W (revised access lanes to/from Highway 217, widening and additional turn lanes)

Next steps

Seek to amend local and regional transportation plans to add the interchange improvements. ODOT, Metro and local jurisdictions should seek to include the design and construction of the Beaverton-Hillsdale/Allen ramp braids or other high priority interchange improvements in the 2010-2013 STIP.

IV. Arterials

Recommendation

In the short term, design and construct the arterial improvements within the financially constrained plans. The PAC recommends that local jurisdictions further evaluate the priority of the following north-south improvements as part of their Transportation System Plan process. These projects are:

- Greenburg Road Improvement (RTP 6031) – widens to 5 lanes from Tiedeman to Highway 99W;
- Nimbus Avenue Extension (RTP 6053) – a two-lane roadway extension from Nimbus to Greenburg;
- Hall Boulevard Extension (RTP “I”) – a new five-lane arterial north of Center Street to connect with Jenkins Road at Cedar Hills Blvd;
- 103rd Avenue (RTP 6012) – improve existing roadway on SW 103rd and construct new intersection alignments to provide a connection from Western Avenue to Walker Road;
- Nimbus Road Extension (RTP 3037) – a two-lane roadway extension of Nimbus Road from Hall Boulevard to Denney Road; and
- Hall Boulevard Improvement (RTP 6013 and 6030 North) – widen to 5 lanes from Scholls Ferry Road to Highway 99W.

Next steps

Metro and the local jurisdictions should seek to find funding for key corridor arterial improvements already in the RTP Financially Constrained Plan as part of the Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program updates. As part of the next RTP, local jurisdictions should seek to include priority north-south improvements from the preliminary PAC recommendation arterial list in the Financially Constrained Plan.

V. Bicycle and pedestrian facilities

Recommendation

The PAC recommends that priority be given to the following projects that complete a north-south route:

In the Financially Constrained RTP:

- Cedar Hills Blvd. Improvement (RTP 3075) – Butner Road to Walker Road;
- Hall Blvd. Bikeway (RTP 3046) - Beaverton-Hillsdale Hwy. to Cedar Hills Blvd.;
- Watson Ave. Bikeway (RTP 3047) - Beaverton-Hillsdale Hwy. to Hall Blvd.; and
- Hall Blvd. Bikeway (RTP 3074) - gap at Allen Blvd.

In the Priority RTP System:

- Nimbus Ave. Extension (RTP 6053) - replacement for Cascade Blvd.

New projects (not currently in the 2000 RTP):

- Hunziker Street - Hall Blvd. to 72nd Avenue;
- Multi-use path - connecting I-5 to SW 72nd Avenue; and
- Pedestrian path/walk improvements on all improved viaducts crossing Highway 217 and a bicycle/pedestrian connection over Highway 217, or associated with the overcrossing improvements on Denney Road, to the Fanno Creek Region Trail; and a connection to the Washington Square Regional Center trail.

Next steps

The bicycle and pedestrian improvements to overcrossings and viaducts identified above should be included in the Highway 217 project. ODOT, Metro and the local jurisdictions should seek funding to construct the financially constrained projects identified in the PAC recommendation above. ODOT, Metro and local jurisdictions should also seek to include the new projects in the next RTP Financially Constrained Plan and fund them, as funds become available.

VI. Transit service

Recommendation

The PAC recommends continued increases in transit service in the corridor study area over the next twenty years per the RTP. Express bus service on Highway 217, expanded commuter rail service and other appropriate transit service increases should be examined as part of future RTP updates and TriMet's 2005 Transit Investment Plan.

Next steps

TriMet, Metro and local jurisdictions should seek to move up the timeline for implementing planned corridor transit improvements in the next RTP. Express bus service on Highway 217 and other appropriate transit service increases should be examined as part of the EIS and future Regional Transportation Plan updates.

Highway 217 Corridor Transportation Plan

POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PAC) RECOMMENDATION

Note: For brevity this Exhibit does not include study findings or conclusions, which are summarized in the Staff Report.

I. Overall recommendations for regional consideration

1. The PAC recognizes that the region needs additional transportation funding and supports efforts to increase funding at federal, state and local levels.
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 - ODOT, Metro and local jurisdictions should seek to amend the list of Highways of Statewide Significance to include the Highway 217 project.¹
 - PAC members shall advocate for the above policy recommendations as appropriate.

II. Highway 217 traffic lanes

Recommendation

All of the options improve transportation performance on the corridor.

- The PAC recommends that the general purpose and express toll lane options be carried forward.
- The tolled ramp meter bypass option should not continue as a separate option due to lack of public acceptance, limited potential revenues and the lack of projected usage for many of the tolled ramp meter bypass locations. Tolled ramp meter bypass locations that have potential should be evaluated further in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process as part of the tolled lane option.

¹ ODOT did not endorse this portion of the recommendation.

Next steps

Amend the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) to indicate that the third through lane in each direction could be either a general purpose or a tolled lane. Metro, ODOT, Washington County, and the Cities of Beaverton and Tigard should seek to amend the RTP to advance the project development work of the new through lane in each direction into the Financially Constrained RTP.

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Next steps

Seek to amend local and regional transportation plans to add the interchange improvements. ODOT, Metro and local jurisdictions should seek to include the design and construction of the Beaverton-Hillsdale/Allen ramp braids or other high priority interchange improvements in the 2010-2013 STIP.

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Next steps

The bicycle and pedestrian improvements to overcrossings and viaducts identified above should be included in the Highway 217 project. ODOT, Metro and the local jurisdictions should seek funding to construct the financially constrained projects identified in the PAC recommendation above. ODOT, Metro and local jurisdictions should also seek to include the new projects in the next RTP Financially Constrained Plan and fund them, as funds become available.

VI. Transit service

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The PAC recommends continued increases in transit service in the corridor study area over the next twenty years per the RTP. Express bus service on Highway 217, expanded commuter rail service and other appropriate transit service increases should be examined as part of future RTP updates and TriMet's 2005 Transit Investment Plan.

Next steps

TriMet, Metro and local jurisdictions should seek to move up the timeline for implementing planned corridor transit improvements in the next RTP. Express bus service on Highway 217 and other appropriate transit service increases should be examined as part of the EIS and future Regional Transportation Plan updates.

Highway 217 Policy Advisory Committee Members

Brian Moore – PAC Chair; Tigard City Council; PGE

Frank Angelo – Westside Economic Alliance Transportation Committee Chair

Dan Aberg – Westside Transportation Alliance

Steve Clark – Community Newspapers; Westside Economic Alliance

Domonic Biggi – Beaverton Chamber of Commerce; Beaverton Foods

Nathalie Darcy – Garden Home resident

Rob Drake – Mayor of Beaverton; member of Metro's Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation

Matthew Garret – ODOT Region 1

Kent Haldorson – citizen representative, north of Highway 217

S. Joan Hamrick – citizen representative, south of Highway 217

Van Hooper – Sysco Food Systems

Carl Hosticka – Metro Councilor, District 3

James A. Johnson – frequent user of Highway 217

John Kaye – Tektronix

George Machan – Cornforth Consultants, Inc.

Jim Persey – Greenway Neighborhood Association Committee Chair

Lynn Peterson – Lake Oswego City Council

Jack Reardon – Washington Square

Dick Schouten – Washington County Board of Commissioners

Dennis Thomas – Beaverton School District

STAFF REPORT

IN CONSIDERATION OF RESOLUTION NO. 06-3658, FOR THE PURPOSE OF ADOPTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE HIGHWAY 217 CORRIDOR TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Date: December 29, 2005

Prepared by: Richard Brandman
Bridget Wieghart
John Gray

BACKGROUND

Chapter 6.7.5 of the 2004 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) lists the Highway 217 Corridor as a Major Corridor Refinement in which the corridor planning process should be used to determine the mode, function and general location for the project or set of projects needed to meet projected travel demand. In each planning process, a number of transportation options will be developed and evaluated together with the Transportation System Plans of jurisdictions within the Corridor.

In 2001, Metro led a regional effort to develop a strategy for completion of the 18 corridor refinement plans identified in the RTP. That analysis found significant congestion and land use needs and jurisdictional support for finding solutions in the Highway 217 Corridor. In order to provide access between key 2040 land uses including the Washington Square and Beaverton Regional Centers, the Lake Grove, Tigard, Sunset, and Cedar Mill Town Centers, and Hillsboro, Tualatin, Kruse Way and other industrial and employment areas, a corridor planning study was initiated in 2003. The specific goal of the Highway 217 Corridor study was to develop transportation improvements that could be implemented in the next 20 years to provide for efficient movement of people and goods through and within the corridor while supporting economically dynamic and attractive growth within regional and town centers and retaining the livability of nearby neighborhoods.

The study's Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) consisted of 17 members (Exhibit C) representing areas of interest suggested by the jurisdictions of Washington County, the cities of Beaverton, Tigard, Tualatin, and Lake Oswego, Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) and TriMet within the corridor and three at-large citizen members selected through a public solicitation process. Partner jurisdictions participated in technical advisory and project management committees together with members from the affected communities and interested parties worked and developed the recommendation attached as Exhibit B to this Resolution.

The overall objective of the Highway 217 Corridor Transportation Study was to define and preliminarily evaluate an initial range of multi-modal options that will accommodate the 2025 corridor travel demand in a way that supports the 2040 Concept Plan. The study was completed in two phases. In phase I, six multi-modal options were developed and analyzed. Options were evaluated as to how well they addressed the study objectives of travel performance, environmental and neighborhood effects, financial feasibility and cost effectiveness. Based on that evaluation, which was completed in the Fall of 2004, the options were refined to three options that were studied in more detail during phase II. This Resolution adopts the conclusions of phase II as modified by the Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation (JPACT) (Exhibit A). JPACT did not adopt the PAC recommendation which proposed that JPACT should seek to add Highway 217 to the list of Highways of Statewide Significance. Due to concerns

about reopening that list at this time, JPACT adopted modified language which said that JPACT should consider proposing Highway 217 for that list only if the list was reopened by ODOT.

Outreach Activities

The Highway 217 Transportation Corridor Study included an extensive public involvement program. The public involvement program included media advertisement, public forums, online questionnaires, written flyers, direct contact with all employers with over 100 employees within ½ mile of Highway 217, two sets of focus groups and 38 speaker's bureau meetings with community groups. These public involvement efforts together with the Transportation Improvement Plans and Comprehensive Land Use Plans of the Cities of Beaverton, Tigard and Tualatin, the Beaverton and Washington Square Regional Center Plans, the Fanno Creek Greenway Trail and Washington Square Regional Center Trail and the Washington County Commuter Rail Project were reviewed and considered in the course of developing and evaluating options in the Highway 217 Transportation Corridor Study.

Summary Conclusions

The study developed and reviewed multi-modal solutions, which were reviewed and evaluated by mode.

Highway 217 traffic lanes – The findings supported the need for one additional lane in each direction and further study of whether that lane should be a general purpose or a toll lane. The evaluation found that congestion within the corridor will increase from three to eight hours a day if no improvements are made over the next twenty years. There is a need and support for a new through lane in each direction south of Canyon Road on Highway 217.

- The additional general-purpose lane (Option A) in each direction offers the most overall congestion relief and the fastest average drive time on Highway 217. However, it is anticipated to have the largest funding gap (\$504 million) in 2014.¹
- The express toll lane (Option B) offers some overall congestion relief and the fastest travel time on Highway 217 for toll lane travelers. It offers an incentive for carpool travel and possible transit and would have the smallest funding gap (\$332 million) in 2014.¹
- The general purpose lane with ramp meter bypass (Option C) has similar travel benefits as Option A, but projections show limited revenue potential – approximately one-third that of the express toll lane (Option B) in 2014 so the funding gap is \$449 million for this option.¹

The public reaction to the general purpose and express toll lane was much more positive than to the tolled ramp meter bypass. Many people preferred the traditional general-purpose lane to the tolled lane from a transportation perspective. However, due to concerns about the potential timeline for improvements for the general-purpose option and the sense that tolling is a fair way to pay for improvements (i.e. those that benefit pay for it) most people expressed support for further study of the toll lane. Public comments were much more negative about Option C (the tolled ramp meter bypass option). There was a perception that the ramp meter bypasses are unfair and that people will respond negatively to those who travel on them.

Highway 217 interchanges – Due to the close spacing of Highway 217 interchanges and the growth in traffic volumes, the findings supported the need for major interchange improvements to avoid serious

¹ Based on currently anticipated funding sources

congestion and safety problems on the highway and adjacent intersections. None of the interchanges meet current highway spacing standards and interchange improvements are necessary to meet level of service standards in 2025. These improvement projects are included in the recommendation.

Arterials adjacent to the Highway 217 – The findings supported the need for major improvement to roadways identified in the Financially Constrained RTP and the recommendation to prioritize an additional six north-south arterials in the list of Priority RTP system improvements.

The arterial improvements in proximity to the corridor in the RTP Financially Constrained System are improvements critical for access to regional centers. The evaluation also identified a series of north-south arterial improvements and/or extensions to Greenburg Road, Hall Boulevard, Nimbus Avenue and SW 103rd Avenue that support the corridor travel needs.

While these are not part of the recommended Highway 217 project, the north-south arterials would significantly enhance local access to regional and town centers, reduce congestion on Highway 217 and were better at reducing congestion than a package that also included several east-west arterial improvements

Bike and pedestrian facilities adjacent to Highway 217 – A series of bikeways have been planned on the west side of Highway 217 in the cities of Beaverton and Tigard; however, several portions of that bikeway have not been constructed. The completion of the bikeway trails would provide a continuous route to the west of Highway 217. Therefore, the recommendation calls for prioritization of four projects already identified in the Financially Constrained RTP, one project in the Priority RTP system and three projects not currently in the 2000 RTP.

Additionally, there is a recognized need to provide a route for the Fanno Creek Regional Trail where it crosses Highway 217 (between Denney Road and Allen Blvd.). Phase I considered a trail underneath Highway 217; however, this is not desirable due to seasonal flooding and safety issues. Therefore, improvement should be made to the Denney over-crossing or a separate overpass should be provided. A connection to the Washington Square Regional Center Trail is also needed. Both of these projects will be included in future studies and are included in all options considered in the Phase II evaluation (Exhibits A and B).

Transit Service serving the Highway 217 corridor – The findings supported the recommendation to increase transit service in the corridor as identified in the RTP and to study additional commuter rail service and express bus service on Highway 217 as part of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Peak hour commuter rail service between Wilsonville and Beaverton was assumed in all options. This and other transit improvements in the financially constrained system are needed to provide travel options and reduce congestion. Express bus service studied assumed to be provided on Highway 217 in the tolled options attracted good ridership and achieved significant time savings over existing planned service.

ANALYSIS/INFORMATION

1. Known Opposition

No known organized opposition. The PAC recommendation attempts to address several key messages that were consistently mentioned throughout much of the public outreach and public comment period. These themes include:

- Strong support for increasing road capacity;

- Strong support for finding a long-term solution to area congestion;
- Strong support for a speedy conclusion;
- Strong opposition to the express ramp meter bypass option (Option C);
- Uneasiness with the concept of tolling;
- Interest in other funding sources to complete the project;
- Perception that current funding is adequate;
- Support for improvements to arterials and interchanges; and
- A mixed reaction to transit and bike/pedestrian path improvements.

The full public involvement report (Highway 217 Corridor Study – Public Involvement Summary November 2005) is Attachment 2 to this Staff Report.

The Transportation Policy Alternatives Committee (TPAC) had serious concerns about the recommendation to reopen the list of Highways of Statewide Significance due to the number of unfunded projects in this Resolution already on that list. TPAC proposed alternative language with respect to that one element of the recommendation. Otherwise, TPAC supported the remainder of the recommendation.

2. Legal Antecedents

State:

- Oregon State Transportation Planning Rule (TPR) section 660-12-020
- Oregon State TPR section 660-12-025

The Oregon State Transportation Planning Rule (TPR) section 660-12-020 requires that regional transportation system plans establish a coordinated network of transportation facilities adequate to serve regional transportation needs. Section 660-12-025 of the TPR allows Metro and other Metropolitan Planning Organizations to defer decisions regarding function, general location and mode as long as they can demonstrate that the refinement effort will be completed in a timely manner.

Metro:

- 2004 Regional Transportation Plan
- Ordinance No. 00-869A, For the Purpose of Adopting the 2000 Regional Transportation Plan; Amending Ordinance No. 96-647C and Ordinance No. 97-715B, Adopted August 10, 2000.
- Resolution No. 01-3089, For the Purpose of Endorsing the Findings and Recommendations of the Corridor Initiatives Project, Adopted July 26, 2001.
- Ordinance No. 02-946A, For the Purpose of Adopting the Post-Acknowledgement Amendments to the 2000 RTP, Adopted June 27, 2002.
- Resolution No. 03-3331, For the Purpose of Confirming Appointments to the Highway 217 Policy Advisory Committee (PAC), Adopted June 12, 2003.

On June 15, 2001, the 2000 RTP was acknowledged by the Land Conservation and Development Commission (LCDC). The RTP, as well as the Western Bypass Study and Resolution No. 97-2497, For the Purpose of Endorsing the Recommended Arterial and Highway Improvements Contained Within ODOT's Western Bypass Study and Amending the 1995 Interim Federal Regional Transportation Plan, and all local TSPS have identified a need for capacity increases in the Highway 217 Corridor. In the summer of 2002, the RTP was amended to incorporate a work program for completion of the corridor

refinement studies that are needed to develop solutions to transportation needs. That work program identified the Highway 217 Corridor as a top priority.

3. Anticipated Effects

There are a number of recommendations that are designed to move transportation projects in the corridor forward. The highway and interchange options are proposed for further review and refinement in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Selected arterial, bicycle and pedestrian projects would be prioritized and funded through in local and regional transportation system plans and improvement programs.

Additionally, a number of overall recommendations from the study are for local jurisdictions, Metro and the State to seek funding authorization for priority interchange improvements and other appropriate elements of the Highway 217 study.

4. Budget Impacts

No direct impacts on Metro's budget. The recommendation highlights the need for additional transportation funding. It calls for Metro and local jurisdictions seek to amend the list of Highways of Statewide Significance to include Highway 217. In addition the recommendation asks ODOT, Metro and the local jurisdictions to seek to include priority interchanges and other elements of the Highway 217 Corridor Transportation study in any state, regional or local transportation funding measures. Finally, it directs ODOT, Metro and local jurisdictions to consider seeking a federal earmark for Highway 217 in the next federal transportation reauthorization.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Staff recommends the adoption of Resolution No. 06-3658, which contains the Highway 217 Corridor Transportation Plan Recommendation as modified by JPACT (Exhibit A).

Highway 217 Corridor Study

Phase II Overview Report - Study Findings and Recommendation

November 16, 2005



Beaverton-Hillsdale Highway



Scholls Ferry Road



Allen Boulevard



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FINAL

Background And Overview

Study purpose

Highway 217 is the major north-south transportation route for the urbanized portion of Washington County. Traffic volumes have doubled in the past 20 years as the county has grown into a booming high-tech and residential center. Peak corridor travel is expected to increase an additional 30 percent during the next 20 years.

Every transportation planning effort that has looked at this part of the region has identified the need for additional capacity on Highway 217.

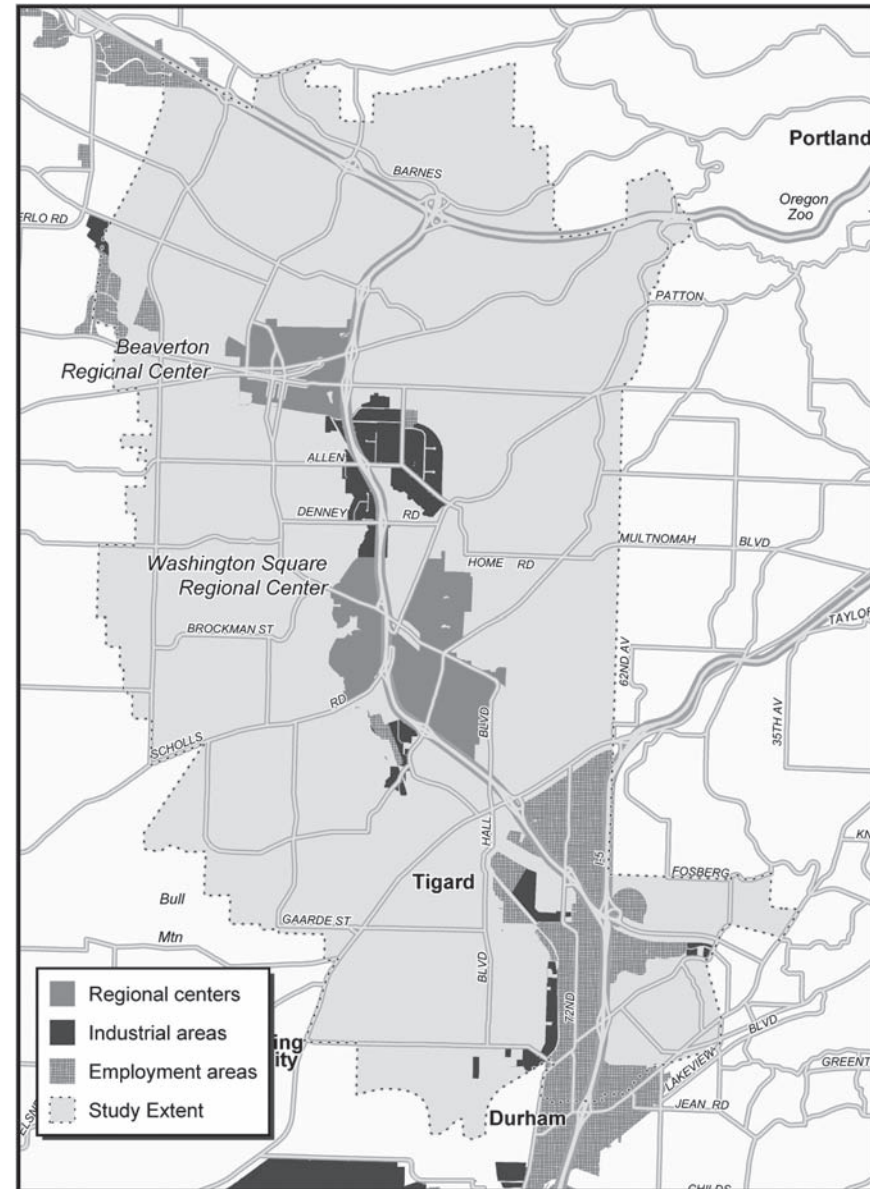
Study goals and objectives

The goal of the Highway 217 Corridor Study is to develop transportation improvements that will be implemented in the next 20 years to provide for efficient movement of people and goods through and within the corridor while supporting economically dynamic and attractive regional and town centers and retaining the livability of nearby communities.

Objectives:

1. Provide a proactive, comprehensive and engaging public involvement effort.
2. Enhance effectiveness of the transportation system.
3. Provide a feasibility assessment of each alternative.
4. Support neighborhoods, businesses and the natural environment.
5. Ensure that benefits and impacts associated with selected strategies are equitable to minority and low-income communities in the corridor.
6. Conduct a conclusive and thorough study with results that can be implemented.

The study, which began in 2003, is a cooperative effort by Metro, Washington County, the Oregon Department of Transportation, TriMet, and the cities of Beaverton, Lake Oswego and Tigard.



Critical issues

- **Increased transportation needs** have resulted from employment and residential growth in Washington County.
- Highway 217 is the **principal north/south access** to Beaverton and Washington Square regional centers, five town centers, and industrial and employment areas in Kruse Way, Hillsboro, Tualatin, and Wilsonville.
- Today's **peak hours of congestion** will nearly triple by 2025 (from 2.5 to 8 hours).
- **Safety concerns** are the result of short distances between interchanges.
- **Freight traffic** has doubled in the past ten years (8 percent of current traffic volume).
- The cities of Beaverton and Tigard have developed a series of **trails, paths and bikeways** which need to be linked together to connect regional centers and community resources.
- **Pedestrian trails** and walks in the corridor have notable gaps that need to be completed.

Policy advisory committee (PAC)


A committee comprised of 20 elected officials, business representatives and area residents has been providing guidance throughout the study process. Final committee recommendations on options to move forward and other next steps will be presented to regional elected officials later this fall.

Study approach

The Highway 217 Corridor Study is being completed in two phases. Phase I developed and analyzed a wide range of multi-modal alternatives in the fall of 2004. Alternatives were evaluated as to how well they addressed the study objectives in terms of travel performance, environmental and neighborhood effects, financial feasibility and cost effectiveness. Based on this evaluation, the alternatives were refined to three options that have been studied in more detail. This report summarizes the findings of the Phase II evaluation, and the preliminary PAC recommendation.

Highway 217 Alternatives

	Phase I	Phase II
Option 1	Arterial, transit and interchange improvements	Selected arterials to be included with all options
Option 2	Six lane without interchange improvements	Not considered for further action
Option 3	Six lane plus interchange improvements	Moved forward to Phase II as Option A
Option 4	Six lane with carpool lanes	Not considered for further action
Option 5	Six lane with express toll lanes	Moved forward to Phase II as Option B
Option 6	Six lane with tolled ramp meter bypass	Moved forward to Phase II as Option C

 = options moved forward to Phase II

Phase II Options And Findings

Key study elements common to all options

Interchange improvements*

Braided Ramps:

Walker/Canyon
Beaverton-Hillsdale/Allen
Scholls Ferry/Greenburg

Split Diamond:

Allen/Denney

Other:

Barnes Road
SW 72nd Ave.
Hall Blvd.
Highway 99W

* Potentially preferred interchange designs

Arterial improvements*

Parts of:

Walker Road
Cedar Hills
Canyon Road
125th Ave.
Oleson Road
Allen Blvd.
Greenburg Road
SW 72nd Ave.
Gaarde Street
Dartmouth Street
Nimbus Road

* Included in the RTP Financially Constrained list

Transit improvements

Bus service enhancements
Commuter rail from
Wilsonville to Beaverton

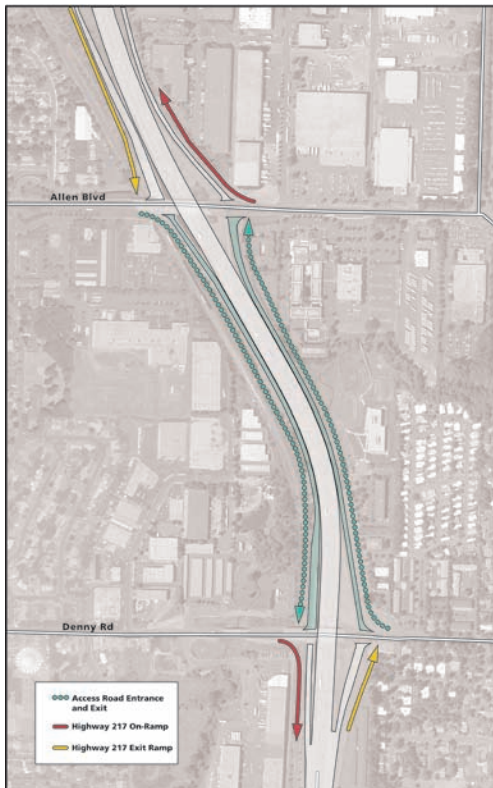
Bicycle/pedestrian improvements

Parts of:

Cedar Hills Blvd.
Watson Ave.
Beaverton Creek Greenway
Hunziker Street
Hall Blvd.
Multi-use path between
I-5 and Hwy. 217

Regional trails improvements

Fanno Creek Trail
(crossing of Hwy. 217)
Washington Square Greenbelt



Split diamonds

address the merge/weave conflict by reducing the number of interchanges and connecting them with frontage roads. This solution was applied at Canyon Road and Beaverton-Hillsdale Highway on Highway 217 where access to two streets is combined into one interchange. Drivers entering Highway 217 going north from Beaverton-Hillsdale Highway use a frontage road to enter at the Canyon Road entrance.

Braided ramps

separate exiting traffic from entering traffic by creating a bridge for vehicles entering the freeway that does not descend to the lane of traffic exiting the freeway. In this way, traffic engineers "braid" ramps with some traffic crossing over and some crossing under to prevent accidents.



Phase II Options And Findings

Overall findings

Access to regional centers: All options would improve access to regional centers within the study corridor. However, the study has identified a series of north-south arterial improvements that would significantly enhance local access. These include improvements and extensions to portions of Greenburg Road, Nimbus Avenue, Hall Boulevard and SW 103 Avenue.

Bicycle/pedestrian recommendations: After several months of study, meetings with the bicycle/pedestrian community, and an open house, a series of bike lane and multi-use trail improvements were identified to complete a north-south route about a half-mile west of Highway 217. Bicycle/pedestrian recommendations are included in all options.

Transportation opportunities/limitations: All options include intersection improvements that significantly improve both the flow and safety on Highway 217. All of the options currently under consideration draw more traffic to the bottleneck on I-5, south of Highway 217.

Freight: Highway 217 is a critical connection for the movement of goods and services from and to industrial areas in Hillsboro and Tualatin and to the centers of Beaverton, Tigard, Lake Oswego and Washington Square. All of the options provide time savings for trucks. The general purpose lane options provide overall congestion relief for all vehicles. The express toll lane offers the most benefits to small trucks who were assumed to have access to a fast and reliable trip on the toll lanes. The tolled ramp meter bypasses offer benefits to small and large trucks who could pay to bypass the queue.

Base case: In the evaluation of all multi-modal portions of this study, the Base Case assumed the current 4-lane highway design and existing intersections evaluated with 2025 levels of residential and employment development. It also includes arterial and transit service improvements which are anticipated to be built by 2025.

Level of study analysis: Approximately one to three percent of actual engineering for each option has been completed. More detailed design and environmental analysis is needed before a final alternative can be selected and built.

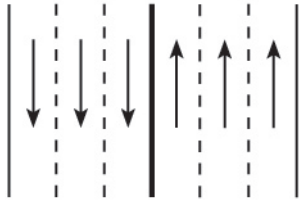
Funding considerations: Due to a lack of state transportation funds available, funding considerations have been a major focus of the study. State and regional policy requires every major project to consider tolling. In the proposed options, tolls are a “user fee” charged only to people who use the new tolled lane and/or ramp meter bypass. Other funding options have been and will continue to be considered. Due to the large funding gaps and the size of the project, a phased project is likely.

Phasing of construction: Given traditional funding amounts, a combination of interchange reconstructions and arterial street improvements could be made prior to the construction of new through lanes on Highway 217. Making these improvements first will address some immediate congestion and safety problems and will assist in reducing construction disruption. If additional funds become available, the project could be constructed in geographic segments. Priority interchange improvements include Beaverton-Hillsdale, Allen and Denney. The earliest completion date has been calculated to be 2014, however this assumes an immediate start to a preliminary engineering/environmental impact statement as well as securing funding.

Equity for all users: Results from other tolling projects around the country indicate that all income groups use and favor an express toll lane, although it is used more often by those in higher income groups. With a tolled lane, everyone has travel choices including using the regular (untolled) lane, driving on the tolled lane at a reduced fee during less congested times of the day, carpooling to share the fee and taking transit.

Congestion is greatest during traditional commuting hours (early morning and late afternoon). Studies of existing tolling projects show that higher income drivers tend to travel more during these peak hours. Unlike a peak toll, the gas tax requires everyone to pay the same fee, even if they are traveling during uncongested hours.

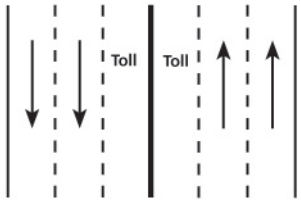
Option A – Six Lanes



Overview: This option would include an additional travel lane in each direction that will be open to all traffic on Highway 217. Like all options, includes substantial interchange improvements to resolve merge and weave conflicts which create safety and congestion problems.

- This option offers the most overall congestion relief and fastest average drive times for all drivers on Highway 217 (saves 3 minutes over base case).
- Wetland impacts: approximately 2.8 acres.
- Largest funding gap – capital cost \$523 million with an estimated funding gap of \$504 million (in 2014).
- Without supplemental revenues, estimated construction completed in 2089.
- Overall congestion relief benefits all trucks.
- Public acceptance: prefer ease of general purpose lane but concerns about projected construction timeline with traditional funding sources.

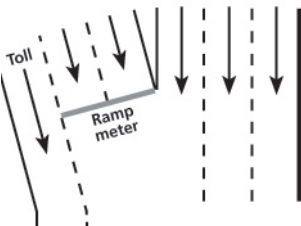
Option B – Six Lanes With Express Toll Lanes



Overview: This option would include a rush-hour toll lane in each direction in addition to the existing lanes of Hwy 217. Drivers would be able to enter and leave the express lane at I-5 and US 26 as well as at one intermediate point between the Washington Square and Beaverton regional centers. Tolls would be collected electronically without requiring stopping at a tollbooth. It also includes bypasses of ramp meters for toll lane users. Express bus service has been provided to take advantage of time savings on toll lanes and ramps.

- Fastest travel time in toll lanes (saves 8.5 minutes over base case).
- Saves travel time in general purpose lanes (saves 1 minute).
- Express trip incentive for transit and carpools.
- Wetland impacts: approximately 3.2 acres.
- Smallest funding gap – capital cost \$581 million with an estimated funding gap of \$332 million (in 2014).
- Without supplemental revenues, estimated construction completed in 2028.
- Small trucks access toll lane and all trucks use ramp meter bypasses.
- Public acceptance: more acceptable as funding mechanism but reservations about complexity and feasibility of tolled facilities and about equity for all users.

Option C – Six Lanes With Tolloed Ramp Meter Bypass

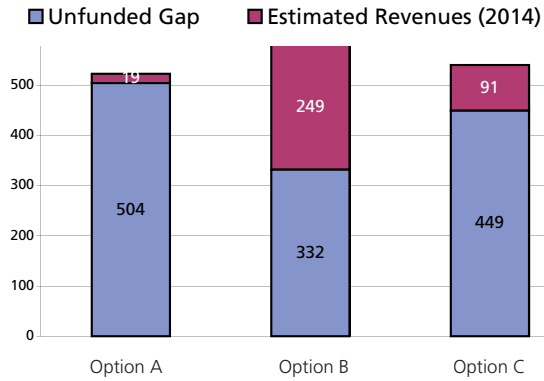


Overview: This option would include an additional unrestricted travel lane in each direction on Highway 217 in addition to a new lane on the entrance ramps. Drivers who choose to use the new express ramp lane to bypass the queue at the ramp meter would pay a toll. Trucks would be allowed to use the bypass lanes. Express bus service has been provided to take advantage of time savings on toll lanes and ramps.

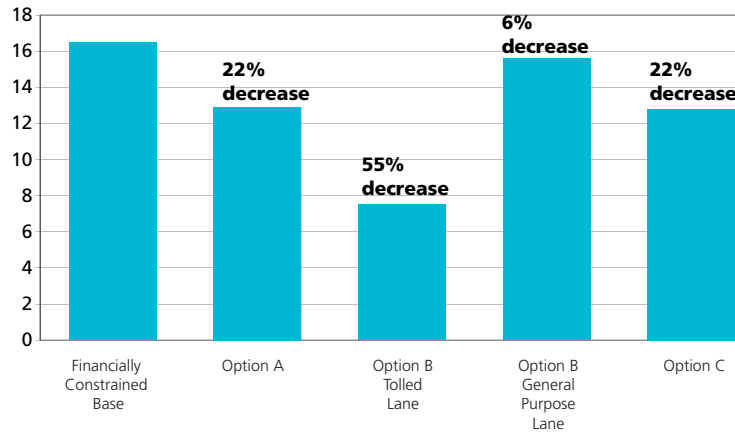
- This option offers the most overall congestion relief and fastest average drive times for all drivers on Highway 217 (saves 3 minutes over base case).
- Wetland impacts: approximately 2.8 acres.
- Significant funding gap – capital cost \$540 million with an estimated funding gap of \$449 million (in 2014).
- All trucks can access ramp meter bypasses.
- Without supplemental revenues, estimated construction completed in 2042.
- Public acceptance: limited toll revenue and negative perception of ramp bypass concept reduces the attractiveness of this option.

Note: All capital costs are in 2005 dollars.

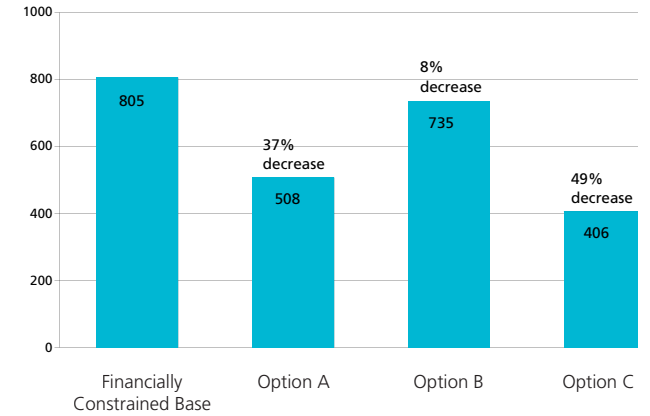
Estimated Construction Costs and Funding Gap (2014)
Phase II Alternatives



Average Auto Travel Time on Highway 217 (in minutes)
Southbound from US 26 to I-5



Hours of Vehicle Delay on Highway 217



Summary of key findings

	Transportation		Environmental	Financial feasibility	Public opinion
	Over-all congestion relief and drive time on Highway 217	Fastest possible drive time	Potential impact to identified wetlands	Projected funding gap in 2014	Acceptance
Option A Six lanes	optimal	moderate	moderate	least optimal	moderate
Option B Six lanes with express toll lanes	moderate	optimal	moderate	optimal	moderate
Option C Six lanes with tolled ramp meter bypass	optimal	moderate	moderate	moderate	least optimal



*From Phase I analysis

For more detailed information on key findings, see the following reports: "Transportation Performance Report", Metro, July 27, 2005, Memo: "Phase II - Potential Environmental Impacts", Metro, August 26, 2005, Memo: "When Could Highway 217 Alternatives Be Built with Traditional Funding?", ECONorthwest, August 29, 2005, "Phase II Public Involvement Summary", Metro, September 2005

Highway 217 Corridor Study Preliminary PAC Recommendation

December 2005/January 2006: The final PAC recommendation will be forwarded to the Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation (JPACT) and the Metro Council for review and approval.

Conclusions from corridor studies are drawn without the level of engineering analysis and detailed environmental analysis that is completed as part of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The EIS would be the next logical step for many projects identified or proposed in this document.

Overall recommendations for regional consideration

The PAC recognizes that the region needs additional transportation funding and supports efforts to increase funding at federal, state and local levels.

Due to the large funding gaps under all options, in the near term, seek higher funding priority for Highway 217 improvements at federal, state and local levels.

- ODOT, Metro and local jurisdictions should seek to include priority interchanges or other appropriate elements of the Highway 217 project in any state, regional or local transportation funding measure.
- ODOT, Metro and local jurisdictions should consider seeking a federal earmark for Highway 217 in the next federal transportation reauthorization.
- Seek funding to commence a corridor study of the section of I-5 between Highway 217 and Wilsonville. The Highway 217 study highlighted the severity of the future bottleneck at this location. Each of the options worsened this bottleneck, particularly Options A and C, which drew the most new traffic to the corridor.
- Policy Advisory Committee members shall advocate for the above policy recommendations as appropriate.
- ODOT, Metro and local jurisdictions should seek to amend the list of Highways of Statewide Significance to include the Highway 217 project.*

* ODOT did not endorse this portion of the recommendation.

Highway 217 Corridor Study Preliminary PAC Recommendation

Highway 217 traffic lanes

Summary conclusion

The evaluation found that congestion within the corridor will increase from three to eight hours a day if no improvements are made over the next twenty years. There is a need and support for a new through lane in each direction south of Canyon Road on Highway 217.

- The general purpose lane (Option A) offers the most overall congestion relief and the fastest average drive time on Highway 217. However, it is anticipated to have the largest funding gap (\$504 million) in 2014.*
- The express toll lane (Option B) offers some overall congestion relief and the fastest travel time on Highway 217 for toll lane travelers. It offers an incentive for carpool travel and possible transit and would have the smallest funding gap (\$332 million) in 2014.*
- The general purpose lane with ramp meter bypass (Option C) has similar travel benefits as the general purpose lane, but projections show limited revenue potential – approximately one-third that of the express toll lane option in 2014 so the funding gap is \$449 million for this option.*

Public comments were much more negative about Option C (the tolled ramp meter bypass option). There was a perception that the ramp meter bypasses are unfair and that people will respond negatively to those who travel on them. The public reaction to the general purpose and express toll lane was much more positive. Many people preferred the traditional general purpose lane to the tolled lane from a transportation perspective. However, due to concerns about the potential timeline for improvements for the general purpose option and the sense that tolling is a fair way to pay for improvements (i.e. those that benefit pay for it), most people expressed support for further study of the toll lane.

Recommendation

All of the options improve transportation performance on the corridor. The PAC recommends that the general purpose and express toll lane options be carried forward. The tolled ramp meter bypass option should not continue as a separate option due to lack of public acceptance, limited potential revenues and the lack of projected usage for many of the tolled ramp meter bypass locations. Tolled ramp meter bypass locations that have potential should be evaluated further in the EIS process as part of the tolled lane option.

Next steps

Amend the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) to indicate that the third through lane in each direction could be either a general purpose or a tolled lane. Metro, ODOT, Washington County, Beaverton and Tigard should seek to amend the RTP to advance the project development work of the new through lane in each direction into the Financially Constrained RTP.

Metro, ODOT and the local jurisdictions should seek to include in the draft 2008-2011 STIP funding for the Highway 217 Environmental Impact Statement. The Highway 217 EIS is important so that ramp and interchange improvements on the entire facility can be implemented as funding becomes available. Additionally, the study would determine whether the lane should be a general-purpose lane or an express tolled lane. The EIS should also further consider the revenue contribution and test public acceptance of tolling selected ramp meter bypasses as part of the tolled lane option. It should also consider the advisability of allowing trucks larger than 26,000 pounds on a tolled lane. Finally, the EIS should develop more detailed revenue and usage forecasts for the tolled lane and a financing and phasing plan for the preferred alternative.

* Based on currently anticipated funding sources.

Highway 217 Corridor Study Preliminary PAC Recommendation

Highway 217 interchanges

Summary conclusion

Due to the close spacing of interchanges and the growth in traffic volumes, major interchange improvements are needed to avoid serious congestion and safety problems on the highway and adjacent intersections. None of the interchanges meet current highway spacing standards and interchange improvements are necessary to meet level of service standards in 2025.

Recommendation

In the short term, the PAC recommends further developing and evaluating the following interchange improvements as part of a National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) process (along with other appropriate options). The following list provides a general order of priority for the recommended interchange improvements, but implementation of these projects should respond to funding opportunities and local transportation needs and could occur in a different order. Engineering and specific design of the improvements should be evaluated in the NEPA process.

First Tier Priority

Beaverton-Hillsdale/Allen Blvd. ramp braids
Allen/Denney Road interchange

Second Tier Priority

Canyon/Walker Road ramp braids
Scholls Ferry/Greenburg Road ramp braids
Greenburg Road (major interchange improvement, possibly single point interchange)

Third Tier Priority

SW 72nd Avenue (additional turn lanes with major interchange improvement – design to be determined)
Barnes Road (widening with additional turn lanes)
Progress interchange (interchange improvements including widening and additional turn lanes)
Highway 99W (revised access lanes to/from Highway 217, widening and additional turn lanes)

Next steps

Seek to amend local and regional transportation plans to add the interchange improvements. ODOT, Metro and local jurisdictions should seek to include the design and construction of the Beaverton-Hillsdale/Allen ramp braids or other high priority interchange improvements in the 2010-2013 State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP).

Arterials

Summary conclusion

The arterial improvements in proximity to the corridor in the RTP Financially Constrained System are critical for access to regional centers. These are listed on page four of the Phase II overview report. The evaluation also identified a series of north-south arterial improvements and extensions to Greenburg Road, Hall Boulevard, Nimbus Avenue and SW 103rd Avenue which support the corridor travel needs. While these are not part of the recommended Highway 217 options, the north-south arterials would significantly enhance local access to regional and town centers, reduce congestion on Highway 217 and were better at reducing congestion than a package that also included several east-west arterial improvements.

Recommendation

In the short term, design and construct the arterial improvements within the financially constrained plans. The PAC recommends that local jurisdictions further evaluate the priority of the following north-south improvements as part of their Transportation System Plan process. These projects are:

- Greenburg Road Improvement (RTP 6031) – widens to 5 lanes from Tiedeman to Highway 99W.
- Nimbus Avenue Extension (RTP 6053) – a two-lane roadway extension from Nimbus to Greenburg.
- Hall Boulevard Extension (RTP “I”) – a new five-lane arterial north of Center Street to connect with Jenkins Road at Cedar Hills Blvd.
- 103rd Avenue (RTP 6012) – improve existing roadway on SW 103rd and construct new intersection alignments to provide a connection from Western Avenue to Walker Road.
- Nimbus Road Extension (RTP 3037) – a two-lane roadway extension of Nimbus Road from Hall Boulevard to Denney Road.
- Hall Boulevard Improvement (RTP 6013 and 6030 North) – widen to 5 lanes from Scholls Ferry Road to Highway 99W.

Next steps

Metro and the local jurisdictions should seek to find funding for key corridor arterial improvements already in the RTP Financially Constrained Plan as part of the Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program updates. As part of the next RTP, local jurisdictions should seek to include priority north-south improvements from the preliminary PAC recommendation arterial list in the Financially Constrained Plan.

Highway 217 Corridor Study Preliminary PAC Recommendation

Bicycle and pedestrian facilities

Summary conclusion

The study found a need for a north-south route to the west of Highway 217. A series of bikeways have been planned on the west side of Highway 217 in the cities of Beaverton and Tigard; however, several portions of that bikeway have not been constructed. The completion of the bikeway trails would provide a continuous route to the west of Highway 217.

Additionally, there is a recognized need to provide a route for the Fanno Creek Regional Trail where it crosses Highway 217 (between Denney Road and Allen Blvd.). Phase I considered a trail underneath Highway 217, however, this is not desirable due to seasonal flooding and safety issues. Therefore, improvements should be made to the Denney over-crossing or a separate overpass should be provided. A connection of the Washington Square Greenbelt is also needed. Both of these projects will be included in future studies and are included in all alternatives considered in the Phase II evaluation.

Recommendation

The PAC recommends that priority be given to the following projects that complete a north-south route:

In the Financially Constrained RTP:

- Cedar Hills Blvd. Improvement (RTP 3075) – Butner Road to Walker Road;
- Hall Blvd. Bikeway (RTP 3046) - Beaverton-Hillsdale Hwy. to Cedar Hills Blvd.;
- Watson Ave. Bikeway (RTP 3047) - Beaverton-Hillsdale Hwy. to Hall Blvd.;
- Hall Blvd. Bikeway (RTP 3074) - gap at Allen Blvd.

In the Priority RTP System:

- Nimbus Ave. Extension (RTP 6053) - replacement for Cascade Blvd.

New projects (not currently in the 2000 RTP):

- Hunziker Street - Hall Blvd. to 72nd Avenue;
- Multi-use path - connecting I-5 to SW 72nd Avenue;
- Pedestrian path/walk improvements on all improved viaducts crossing Highway 217 and a bicycle/pedestrian connection over Highway 217, or associated with the overcrossing improvements on Denney Road, to the Fanno Creek Region Trail; and a connection to the Washington Square Regional Center trail.

Next steps

The bicycle and pedestrian improvements to overcrossings and viaducts identified above should be included in the Highway 217 project. ODOT, Metro and the local jurisdictions should seek funding to construct the financially constrained projects identified in the PAC recommendation above. ODOT, Metro and local jurisdictions should also seek to include the new projects in the next RTP Financially Constrained Plan and fund them, as funds become available.

Transit service

Summary conclusion

Peak hour commuter rail service between Wilsonville and Beaverton was assumed in all options. This and other transit improvements in the financially constrained system are needed to provide travel options and reduce congestion. Express bus service studied assumed to be provided on Highway 217 in the tolled alternatives attracted good ridership and achieved significant time savings over existing planned service.

Recommendation

The PAC recommends continued increases in transit service in the corridor study area over the next twenty years per the RTP. Express bus service on Highway 217, expanded commuter rail service and other appropriate transit service increases should be examined as part of future RTP updates and TriMet's 2005 Transit Investment Plan.

Next steps

TriMet, Metro and local jurisdictions should seek to move up the timeline for implementing planned corridor transit improvements in the next RTP. Express bus service on Highway 217 and other appropriate transit service increases should be examined as part of the EIS and future Regional Transportation Plan updates.

More information is available at www.metro.dst.or.us, send e-mail to trans@metro.dst.or.us or call Metro Transportation Planning at (503) 797-1757.



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Highway 217 Corridor Study
Public Involvement Summary
November 2005

I. Introduction

The Highway 217 Corridor Study, which began in 2003, is studying transportation improvements in the corridor of Washington County stretching from Highway 26 to I-5. Traffic volumes on Highway 217 have doubled in the past 20 years and peak corridor travel is expected to increase an additional 30 percent during the next 20 years.

Phase I of the study narrowed the set of highway improvement options from six to three in the fall of 2004. Phase I offered numerous opportunities for public involvement including stakeholder interviews, focus groups, two questionnaires, open houses and meetings with community and neighborhood groups. It also included innovative outreach efforts such as use of billboard advertising and an on-line open house.

Phase II has provided additional study of the options selected for further consideration:

- Option A – additional general purpose lane in each direction
- Option B – additional lane in each direction to be an express tolled lane
- Option C – additional general purpose lane in each direction plus tolled ramp meter bypasses

Phase II public involvement had two main components – an initial education outreach to share the results of Phase I and Phase II options under consideration and, following the preliminary Policy Advisory Committee recommendation, a public comment outreach period from September 22 to October 28, 2005.

II. Summary of outreach activities

1. Initial Phase II outreach summary

- a. Metro staff produced a video slide show presentation for use at Speaker's Bureau events. Utilizing the video presentation at public speaking engagements allowed a consistent message to be communicated to the public and provided illustration of the concepts under consideration for better understanding.
- b. A newsletter was produced in spring 2005 that summarized the study goals, process, Phase I findings, Phase II options, timeline and public involvement opportunities.
- c. Metro staff and PAC members made over 30 presentations to community groups, neighborhood associations, business organizations and local governments, speaking to a total of over 500 people.
- d. Focus groups were gathered to discuss two specific topics – the Allen/Denney interchanges (two open houses were held) and freight issues (40 members of the freight community were invited to a focus group discussion).
- e. The September Metro Councilor newsletters for Districts 3 and 4, sent to constituents and Community Planning Organizations in the southwest part of the region, contained articles about the Highway 217 study, including upcoming public comment opportunities and the public forum scheduled for October 19.

2. Public comment period following PAC preliminary recommendation –

- a. A Phase II overview report was produced for use in the public comment period following the preliminary PAC recommendation. This report provided a brief history, discussion of Phase II findings, financing and cost information, the continued study timeline and public involvement opportunities, as well as the PAC preliminary recommendation. This report was available on the Metro website as well as in print.
- b. Media outreach – A news release was distributed on September 22 to all local media. The release included information about public comment opportunities, including the on-line questionnaire and public forum scheduled for October 19. News articles following the preliminary recommendation were published in the following print media:
 - The Oregonian, September 22
 - The Oregonian, September 26, Metro front page
 - The Hillsboro Argus, September 27
 - Beaverton Valley Times, September 29
 - Tigard, Tualatin, Sherwood Times, October 6
 - The Oregonian, October 6

The following papers printed editorials, all favorable to including the tolling option for further study:

- Tigard, Tualatin, Sherwood Times, September 29 – “Tolls might be needed to fund region’s new roads”
- The Oregonian, October 3 – “Letting drivers vote with their dollars: Toll lanes should seriously be considered for financing highway construction in Oregon”
- Lake Oswego Review and West Linn Tidings, October 6 – “Tolls may be needed to pay for new roads: We’ve never like the notion of toll roads, but there may not be any other choices”

The following papers printed information about the October 19 forum:

- The Oregonian, October 16, Metro section
- The Oregonian, October 18, Washington County section

The following TV news stations aired a segment on the public forum, some including the visual simulations from the slide presentation and interviews with PAC members Metro Councilor Carl Hosticka and Washington County Commissioner Dick Schouten:

- ABC affiliate Channel 2 (5 and 11 p.m. news)
- CBS affiliate Channel 6
- NBC affiliate Channel 8

- c. Newspaper advertisements citing the public forum and online questionnaire were placed in the October 13 Oregonian (South and West Metro editions), and the October 13 Lake Oswego Review, Beaverton Valley Times, and Tigard, Tualatin, Sherwood Times.
- d. An online questionnaire was developed which could be accessed from the Metro website or www.hwy217.org. Both online access and printed versions were available at the public forum.
- e. Email communication about the preliminary PAC recommendation and public comment opportunities was sent to all people who had requested notification about the Highway 217 study, all CPO and neighborhood organization contacts within the corridor area, all freight contacts, and to both PAC and TAC members for forwarding to constituents or posting on websites.
- f. Written flyers and/or letters were sent to any of the above who did not have email contact information.
- g. All employers with over 100 employees within ½ mile of Highway 217 were sent a letter and flyer. In addition, all employers with over 500 employees and most of the other employers were contacted by phone and sent information for their employee newsletters. The following are those that are known to have sent information to their employees:
 - a. Intel
 - b. Farmer’s Insurance

- c. Pacific Care
 - d. Providence St. Vincent's
 - e. Northwest Evaluation
 - f. Catlin Gable
 - g. Spherion
 - h. Kaiser Permanente, Beaverton medical office
 - i. Employment Trends
 - j. Tigard Tualatin School District
 - k. Safeco
 - l. W&H Pacific
- h. The Speaker's Bureau continued during the public comment period with the following presentations:
- a. Westside Economic Alliance, September 22 – Discussion featuring PAC members Metro Councilor Carl Hosticka, PAC Chair Brian Moore and Steve Clark, facilitated by Frank Angelo.
 - b. Washington County Public Affairs Forum, September 26 – Presentations by Washington County Commissioner Dick Schouten and Metro staff to 40-50 members, televised on cable channel four times the following week.
 - c. Beaverton Bicycle Advisory Committee, October 4 – Presentation by Metro staff, 10 members present. Alternative discussion about preferred bike commuter alignment parallel to Hwy 217.
 - d. Beaverton Rotary, October 5 – Presentation by Metro Councilor Carl Hosticka and Metro staff, 60-70 members present.
 - e. Fans of Fanno Creek, October 13 – Presentation by Metro staff and PAC member Nathalie Darcy. Discussion centered on wetland impact and public comment opportunities.
- i. Public forum – A public forum and open house was held on October 19 at the Beaverton Library. The event was attended by 45 citizens, three TV news crews, and two print reporters. The forum was open for two hours and featured:
- a. Illustrated stations explaining the project history and timeline, options considered, findings of the study, and the PAC recommendation. Each station was staffed by members of the Highway 217 Technical Advisory Committee who were available to answer questions and explain details.
 - b. Video simulation of the concepts
 - c. A PAC listening post at which citizens could speak directly to PAC members about their concerns or issues
 - d. Questionnaire – participants could take the online questionnaire at one of two computer stations or complete a written version of the same questionnaire.

III. Public outreach findings – Public comment period September 22-October 28, 2005

Note: Copies of all public comments are available in the Highway 217 Phase II public comment record.

1. Public forum –

- a. Verbal feedback at the public forum was very positive about the content and setup of the information. Staff reported that most people they spoke to did not have strong opinions but were seeking more information about the options. Concerns expressed about tolling generally resulted from a perception that Highway 217 is not long enough for a toll lane, doesn't have enough end-to-end traffic to support an express lane and has bottlenecks at both ends. Some people had questions about the options and about local road improvements and some mentioned concerns about neighborhood impacts, specifically regarding noise issues.
- b. Seven people took the opportunity to speak to PAC members at the listening post. Comments at the listening post were varied and included the following: need to have the project implemented sooner rather than later, queries as to how projects are funded and prioritized for construction, project too costly and not effective long-term, look at Western Bypass, toll road not economically viable – need more general purpose lanes, toll road discriminates against low income people, concerns about sound barriers and impact to wetlands, charge transit and bike riders to pay for more road capacity.

2. Speaker's Bureau events

- a. The Westside Economic Alliance, Washington County Public Affairs Forum and Beaverton Rotary events were more formal presentations with time for questions and answers at the end. Questions generally focused on transportation funding, tolling details, and timeline for construction.
- b. The Beaverton Bicycle Advisory Committee discussed making a new recommendation calling for development of a bike/ped trail parallel to 217 within 100 to 200 feet of the roadway lanes and including those project costs in overall 217 construction funding plans.
- c. The discussion with Fans of Fanno Creek centered on concerns about impacts to wetlands and clarification that more data will be available in the next phase of the project.

3. E-mail – 42 e-mail comments were received.

- a. The largest number of the e-mail comments felt that adding an additional lane on 217 is not the best long-term solution and instead advocated for a bypass road from I-5 to Hwy 26 further west, some specifically referring to the Western Bypass discussed years ago.

- b. A large number of comments specifically opposed tolling for a variety of reasons, ranging from a perception that tolling is not a good long-term funding solution, to concerns about equity, to concerns that Oregonians would not accept or use a toll lane.
 - c. Several others supported Option A, the general purpose lane, but did not select a funding preference.
 - d. Other e-mails supported Option B (the express toll lane), additional investment in transit along 217, or bike path improvements.
4. **Phone** – 11 phone, voice mail or verbal comments were received.
- a. Most opposed tolling and the rest were fairly evenly divided between support of both Options A and B and in favor of the Western Bypass.
 - b. Additional comments included suggestions to lengthen ramp meter access lanes to highways, make new development pay for infrastructure demands such as roads, and tie license fees to the weight of the vehicle.
 - c. Several questions were asked and answered.
5. **Written** – 7 written comments were received, including letters on behalf of the Vose Neighborhood Association Committee (NAC), Beaverton Committee for Citizens Involvement (BCCI), and Five Oaks Triple Creek NAC.
- a. Several letters, including these community groups, favored Option A or opposed tolling because of concerns about cost/benefit analysis, the economic viability of tolling on 217, equity concerns, and/or a perception that tolling would be too confusing.
 - b. Other suggestions included education about tailgating as a way to reduce congestion, improvement of transit to Washington Square, and interchange improvements.
6. **Questionnaire** – 352 questionnaires were completed. Like other forms of public engagement, the questionnaire provides important indicators of concerns which should be considered in future analysis and project implementation. It should be noted that this is not a scientific survey and respondents were self-selected.
- a. Demographic information – Participants were required to give their zip code but all other demographic questions were optional. About 300 people completed most of the demographic questions.
 - Approximately one-third of participants came from the six zip codes around or directly adjacent to Highway 217; one-third came from zip codes west and north of the Highway 217 corridor area; the rest may be commuters, occasional users or just interested parties.

- About two-thirds of the respondents who completed the demographic section were male, older than 35, and/or had completed education levels of college or above.
- Approximately half were in the income level range of \$50-100,000
- The vast majority owned rather than rented their homes.
- Given the population increase in the corridor, it was interesting to note that newcomers to the area did, by and large, not take the questionnaire. Less than 40 of the respondents have lived in the metro region fewer than five years and well over one-third have lived in the corridor over 20 years.

b. Questionnaire responses –

i. Options –

1. Participants rated the addition of highway lanes as very important, interchange and arterial improvements as important, and transit, bike and pedestrian trail improvements as somewhat important.
2. Nearly everyone who took the questionnaire indicated that they would use a new general purpose lane if built, while about one-third would use the tolled express lane, transit or bike/ped paths.
3. Both Options A and B had high levels of support for further study while Option A alone had slightly more.
4. Option C was overwhelmingly rejected for further consideration.

ii. Issues –

1. Providing congestion relief for all lanes was of primary importance but the time it takes to build the project was also considered to be important.
2. Other issues were ranked in the following order: environmental impacts, choice of travel modes and availability of express trip.
3. In a separate question about the importance of a guaranteed express trip, many participants stated that it was not important. About one-third felt that an express trip was important or very important.

iii. Funding –

1. The most preferred funding options included the addition of other funding sources, underscoring the importance that participants attributed to completing construction as quickly as possible. The most accepted option did not include tolling and the second choice included tolling.
2. Interestingly, when a menu of additional funding sources to complete the project was suggested, tolling was the most preferred option, with state/local gas tax and vehicle registration fee following close behind. So while tolling registered as a concern in other areas, it was preferred over other additional funding options. Property taxes were selected as the worst option.
3. Support for tolling as a means of helping construct the project sooner was fairly split. This reinforces the divide among respondents who strongly support and those who oppose tolling as a funding option.

iv. Phasing – Interchange improvements in order of importance ranked by respondents are: Allen/Denney, Scholls Ferry/Greenburg, Canyon/Walker, and Beaverton-Hillsdale/Allen.

c. Additional comments – 160 participants provided open-ended comments in the questionnaire with a variety of issues, concerns and suggestions (listed in order of number of comments).

- The most common general comment indicated opposition to tolling, either because the respondents didn't feel it would work on this highway or be accepted in this region, because they felt it unfairly favored higher income people, or because they preferred another source of additional funding to provide revenue.
- Many people suggested finding another funding source to make the project happen, with the most popular suggestion being an additional gas tax.
- A large number of participants stressed the importance of a long-term solution and a majority of those specifically favored a bypass highway connecting I-5 with Highway 26 to the west of Highway 217.
- Many people stressed the importance of making improvements to Highway 217 as soon as possible.

- Other issues mentioned include support for tolling, support for arterial or interchange improvements, and support for transit improvements.
- Some participants felt that current transportation funding was adequate and that funds should be shifted to pay for improvements to Highway 217.
- The final two issues mentioned were support for bike trails and carpool lanes.

IV. Key Phase II public outreach findings

Several key messages were consistent throughout much of the Phase II public outreach and public comment period.

1. **Strong support for increasing road capacity** – Nearly all those that commented concurred that improvements were needed on Highway 217 and most of those people felt that at least one additional lane in each direction was needed.
2. **Strong support for finding a long-term solution to area congestion** – Many community members felt that adding an additional lane to Highway 217 was a “band-aid” for a bigger problem. Many of those suggested building a bypass instead, that would connect I-5 with Highway 26 to the west of 217.
3. **Strong support for a speedy conclusion** – Public comments made clear that the majority feel that Highway 217 is a problem that needs improvement sooner rather than later. Many people expressed concern that even by the earliest suggested date of completion, which was 2014, any of the suggested options would already be outdated at current growth rates.
4. **Strong opposition to express ramp meter bypass option (Option C)** – This is the most conclusive result from all forms of public comment and the questionnaire presented similar opposition. The unsolicited term used most often, from the focus groups to the freight discussion group to written comments, was a concern that this option would result in incidents of “road rage”. Little discussion centered on other aspects of this option, such as feasibility as a revenue source or design issues.
5. **Uneasiness with the concept of tolling** – Many of the written comments and questionnaire open-ended responses indicate a concern or negative reaction to the concept of tolling. Written comments tended to be more critical of tolling and more supportive of the need for additional general-purpose highway lanes. However, in contrast during verbal discussions most of those who were concerned about the tolling option, and many of those who opposed the tolling option, agreed that it should be included for further study because of financial considerations. The freight focus group supported a tolled lane as long as large trucks would be permitted access to the facility, and others expressed conditional support for tolling if it ended when the project was paid for and/or only operated during peak traffic times. Despite the expressed concerns about tolling, when forced to make a choice, questionnaire participants selected tolling as the preferred alternate source of funding.
6. **Interest in other funding sources to complete the project** – While some expressed the view that there was currently adequate funding to construct the project, a larger number expressed support for looking at alternate sources of revenue to pay for construction. The general reaction was that the public would support funds specifically slated for improvements to Highway 217. (This

concur with a report that Adam Davis, partner of Davis, Hibbitts and Midghall, a public opinion research and consulting firm, gave to the Highway 217 PAC at the June meeting. In Davis' research, he found that Washington County residents are more likely to support funding of transportation projects. In general, residents feel that local government's first priority should be a reduction of traffic congestion.) Specific suggestions from public comments include a gas tax, bond measure, vehicle registration fee, and a tax or fee charged to bicyclists. Others felt that "big business" and new construction should shoulder a larger share of the cost of growth and the infrastructure required to sustain it, including road expansion projects.

7. **Perception that current funding is adequate** – Some written and verbal comments expressed a strong opinion that transportation funding is adequate but is misspent by government. Some felt that too much money is spent on transit and bike/pedestrian improvements and that these alternative transportation modes fail to pay for themselves and don't do enough to reduce congestion. Others felt that money was wasted on studies instead of putting the money into construction of roads. (These views also concur with the Davis report showing a growing lack of public understanding of public finance and a growing dissatisfaction with government.)
8. **Support for improvements to arterials and interchanges** – Both the Phase II findings and the public suggested that improvements to arterials, particularly north-south through streets, would help reduce current and future congestion on Highway 217. The public seemed to also agree that the current close spacing and design of interchanges on Highway 217 was a problem that needed to be corrected soon.
9. **Mixed reaction to transit and bike/pedestrian path improvements** – Nearly an equal number of people felt strongly either that funding for these projects is a waste of money that should be spent on providing highway capacity or that not enough emphasis is given to these alternative modes as a long-term solution to congestion. Relatively few open-ended comments brought up either of these issues.

One issue that became more prominent in the latter part of the public outreach process was a discussion of equity in regard to tolling. In the earlier parts of Phase II outreach, the general perception seemed to be that tolling was a fair way to provide additional funding for the project and was seen as a "user fee". The issue of equity and perception of tolling as discriminating among low-income people became more of a prominent concern expressed during the formal public comment period. Many of the people that opposed tolling did so because they felt that tolling discriminated against low-income people and favored the wealthy.

V. Conclusion

The public reached through this public involvement process strongly agreed that:

- improvements were needed in the Highway 217 corridor,
- additional road capacity is needed, and
- improvements need to happen quickly.
- There was a strong sense of urgency expressed in getting something done now but also a need to look at a long-term solution to the problems in this corridor.
- The Western Bypass that was studied and rejected by the region several years ago was mentioned repeatedly. Some of the public seem to be unaware that the Highway 217 corridor study was one of the outcomes of the Western Bypass study or else disagree that Highway 217 is an efficient long-term solution.

The issue of tolling remains controversial in discussions with the public and elicits strong responses.

- In the next phase of study, a scientific survey could be undertaken to get a valid sense of the general public's opinion, but it is clear that opposition to tolling on this project will be voiced by a sector of the public.
- As mentioned previously, the reasons for opposing tolling are varied and it would be helpful to further explore those concerns.
- From interaction and written or questionnaire responses, it was also apparent that there remained some confusion about the exact nature of the tolling option on Highway 217 – that it was limited to the additional lanes and that cars would not have to stop and pay a fare at toll booths.

Next steps

No matter which option(s) is/are selected to go forward for further study, from a public comment perspective several issues should be addressed.

- If the tolling option is selected to go forward for more study, additional education about electronic tolling and variable pricing is needed.
- There is a need for clarification and increased public information about the transportation funding process, since there seems to be general confusion about funding sources and availability.
- Other revenue sources, including tolling, gas tax and vehicle registration fees, should be studied further to clarify whether these are feasible ways to bring improvements to Highway 217.