

Meeting Summary

St. Helens US 30 & Columbia Blvd./St. Helens St. Corridor Master Plan

Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting #3

March 17, 2014

3:30 – 5:30 pm

St. Helens City Hall

1. Introductions and Meeting Objectives

- Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) members attending:
 - Trent Dolyniuk, local business owner
 - Jerry Belcher
 - Kannikar Petersen, Arts Commission
 - Don Patterson, The Chronicle
 - Jim Wilson, resident at Columbia Boulevard/6th Street, business owner

- Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) members not attending:
 - Shannon Vaerewyck
 - Al Petersen (attended TAC meeting)
 - J.J. Deuhren
 - Ginny Carlson, City Councilor

- Project Management Team (PMT) consulting team members attending:
 - Matt Bell, Kittelson & Associates
 - Jacob Graichen, AICP, City of St. Helens
 - Matt Hastie, Angelo Planning Group
 - Tim Strand, GreenWorks
 - Naomi Zwerdling, Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT)

1. Project Overview and Status Report

Matt Hastie reviewed work completed to date and next steps. He noted that the project team has completed a set of draft streetscape design concepts, including three options for each corridor segment in the project area, as well as a number of intersection improvement options. The next steps will be to review these concepts with the Planning Commission (PC) and public on April 8; summarize comments from all advisory committees, the PC and the public; and then identify a preferred streetscape design for each corridor segment for further review. Matt also noted that the project team met with local business and property owners, as well as the project Technical Advisory Committee to review the draft streetscape design concepts earlier in the day.

2. Streetscape Design Concepts

US 30 Corridor

Tim Strand reviewed streetscape design concepts for this corridor, including special opportunity area sites. Committee members provided the following comments.

- The concepts really got my attention. I think they are exciting and represent a lot of great ideas. However, given the car culture here, I'm not sure how we'll get the community to move forward on them.
- If we protect access to local businesses for cars, I think we will be respecting the car culture. The medians on US 30 would give the city a much more urban feel, help slow traffic and help people see pedestrians.
- Who would own the medians? *Response: They would be in the right-of-way so they would be owned by ODOT.*
- Trees or other landscaping in the medians or on the west side of US 30 could make it harder to see businesses there.
- On the other hand, slowing traffic will improve visibility and exposure which would be a boon for businesses.
- How will we maintain these areas in the future – medians, pathways, landscaping, etc.? Maintenance is a big issue for the City.
- You should consider transforming the wetlands adjacent to US 30 into bio-swales to treat stormwater in that area.
- What is the chance of getting this plan and particularly the medians approved by ODOT? *Response: Medians are already proposed as part of the design for US 30 in the City's Transportation System Plan. ODOT was involved in that process and acknowledged adoption of the TSP so they already have vetted medians as a concept. In our earlier Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting, ODOT staff noted that the motor vehicle carrier (freight) division will need to review and approve them as well.*
- Will you be preparing cost estimates for these concepts to help us compare them? *Response: We have identified which of the concepts are relatively more or less costly than others in each corridor segment. And we will prepare planning level cost estimates for a set of preferred alternatives. However, we don't have the resources or information to prepare cost estimates for all of the design concepts we are presenting today.*

Houlton/Olde Towne Corridor – West of 13th Street

Tim Strand reviewed streetscape design concepts for this corridor segment, including special opportunity area sites. Committee members provided the following comments.

- What are you proposing within the stormwater management special opportunity area (just west of the Y-intersection)? *Response: We are assuming it would be a combination of a stormwater management area and gathering place.*
- There is a lot of foot traffic in that location and some kind of gathering place would be beneficial.
- I've seen a continuous increase in foot traffic along Columbia Blvd. in the past several years and think pedestrian improvements in this area are very important.
- The City should buy the land shown as Special Opportunity Site B and create a small park there.
- I think the "Green Spine" option is the best concept. Some people might say it is overkill for St. Helens but a lot of children could ride their bikes to school along Columbia and that option would give them the safest option to do that.
- I like the angled parking in the "Parklet" concept but I'm not sure people here are ready for the reverse angle parking.
- I think the "Parklet" concept is the best option for Columbia Blvd. However, it may not be the best fit for St. Helens Street. A different option might make more sense there, given that there are fewer businesses and less need for outdoor seating and things like that.
- I like the idea of the "Parklet" concept on Columbia and the "Green Spine" on St. Helens.
- How will the crown of the road affect implementation of these alternatives? Will you have to rebuild the whole road? *Response: Yes, that could be necessary, particularly with the "Parklet" option because it would shift the centerline of the road. There is a lot going on with the road in terms of the location of the crown, the height of the curbs and other factors. We wouldn't know for sure what would be needed until we had a more detailed design.*
- All of these options are good and would help calm traffic. It seems like they also address some of the concerns people previously raised when they suggested considering converting the streets from one-way to two-way streets in this area. *Response: We also looked at some of the pros and cons of converting from one-way to two-way streets and generally think the disadvantages outweigh the potential advantages. We have prepared a brief summary of those issues and can provide it to members of the CAC and TAC and others on request.*

Houlton/Olde Towne Corridor – East of 13th Street

Tim Strand reviewed streetscape design concepts for this corridor segment, including special opportunity area sites. Committee members provided the following comments.

- The gateway at 1st and Columbia doesn't really seem like it is in the right place. The intersection of 1st and St. Helens Street is really more of a gateway into Olde Towne. It is more visible and that is really where the shift in land use occurs. Consider shifting that gateway there.
- I'm glad to see that Special Opportunity Area F is publicly owned. I have always felt like I was trespassing when I've walked there. It would be great if there was some type of pedestrian access from there to the river. There used to be a road there (which was closed due to safety issues).
- You should show a set of pedestrian crossing improvements at the intersection of 1st Street and St. Helens Street.

- Is there enough room near 4th Street (near the Cozy Corner) to implement Option 3? *Response: Yes, we believe so.*
- Would the bulbouts result in a loss of on-street parking at the corners? I would be concerned about that. *Response: That may be the case in some alternatives although if diagonal parking were added, we would expect no net loss of parking. In at least one location (13th Street), eliminating the right turn lane would actually add some on-street parking. Also, depending on whether on-street spaces are striped, doing that could offset any losses related to the curb extensions (bulbouts).*
- The planted median feels like overkill here. I'm not in favor of that alternative. It would be better to use that space to improve the pedestrian and bicycle facilities. *Note: There was general agreement from the group on this point.*

3. Intersection Improvement Options

US 30/Columbia Blvd. and Gateway Concept (Options 1A and 1B)

- In general I like the gateway concept but am not sure about only having one travel lane there.
- At the same time, there is only one left turn lane and one right turn lane from US 30 so you're not really losing any capacity in doing that.
- I prefer option 1B over option 1A.
- I agree.
- Consider converting Milton Way north of Columbia Blvd to a one-way street north. That would eliminate the illegal turning movement altogether. Very few people need to travel south on Milton Way given that US 30 is just one block away. If they need to access that block, they can travel south on US 30, then circle back north via Columbia.

US 30/Wyeth Road (Options 7A and 7B)

- Both options are problematic. A lot of people need to access Gable in each direction, either to the school or to the medical facility/business park. Eliminating left turns from either direction will be a problem.
- Option 7A might be preferable if the business park/medical center could convert their secondary entrance to a primary entrance through signage and other means.
- Locating the crosswalk south of Gable seems like it would make it more visible to southbound drivers and safer for pedestrians.
- Is it possible to add a crossing without the median? *Response: Probably not. ODOT's design standards for crossings like this will require something like a median and pedestrian refuge in order to add the crosswalk given the speed of traffic and crossing distance here. A median and flashing or other signal will likely be needed.*
- Would it be an option to move the crossing away from the intersection (e.g., to the south)? *Response: Possibly although if people have to walk very far from the intersection to use the crossing they may not use it.*

US 30/Gable Road (Option 8)

- This seems like a bad idea. I think it would back traffic up onto and past the railroad tracks.

- The current solution for bicyclists isn't perfect but seems to work reasonably well. Bicycles are required to use the sidewalk and pedestrian crossing and there is a ramp for them to access the sidewalk.
- Is it possible to widen the intersection to add a right-turn lane and a bike lane? *Response: It is possible but would be very expensive.*

Columbia Blvd./1st Street (Options 4A and 4B)

- Option 4A is overkill. I prefer Option 4B. *Note: There was general agreement from the group on this point.*

4. Next Steps

Matt summarized next steps again, including the following:

- Conduct meetings with local business and property owners, Planning Commission and other community members (April 8)
- Summarize the results of all meetings and public comments (late April)
- Draft a preferred set of Streetscape Design Concepts (April – May)
- Review the results of that work with the TAC, CAC, Planning Commission and other community members (June)