

Oregon Expressway Improvement Project Community Outreach Report #3 (February – April 2009)

Introduction

The Santa Clara County Roads and Airports Department is conducting the planning phase for a project to make operational improvements along Oregon Expressway. The goal of this project is to improve conditions for all modes of travel both along the expressway and crossing the expressway. Extensive community outreach is a key component of the planning phase.

On April 3, 2008, the first community workshop was held to receive input about the public's experiences in using and crossing Oregon Expressway and the types of improvements they would like to see. This was followed by a month-long open comment period where additional comments were received by e-mail, telephone, and fax. A full report on the results of the April 2008 community outreach process is provided on the project website: www.oregonexpressway.info.

On June 9, 2008, a second community workshop was held to receive comments on a range of alternatives for nine intersections. These improvement alternatives were developed in direct response to the comments/concerns receiving during the April community outreach process. The Midtown Residents Association (MRA) hosted a similar community meeting on August 28, 2008. An open comment period where additional comments were received by e-mail, telephone, and fax extended through mid-October 2008. A full report on the results of the June-October 2008 community outreach process is also provided on the project website.

March 4, 2009, Community Workshop Overview

On March 4, 2009, the third community workshop for the project was held at Jordan Middle School. At this workshop, staff presented a set of refined conceptual plans for the nine intersections included in the project. The purpose of the workshop was to receive input about the conceptual plans which staff could use in developing final recommendations.

Advertising for the workshop was the same as for the previous workshops. Over 3,200 postcards were mailed to residents living near the expressway. Notices were posted in both local newspapers (*Palo Alto Daily* and *Palo Alto Weekly*). E-mails were sent to various community/neighborhood groups asking them to notify their memberships about the workshop. In addition, an e-mail notice was sent to the project e-mail list, which included all participants in the public outreach process who have provided an e-mail address.

A week prior to the workshop, the proposed conceptual plans and draft traffic analysis report were posted on the project website.

The workshop began with a poster session where all conceptual plans (included alternatives for some intersections) were displayed around the room. Displays also included renderings for some of the intersections. The poster session was followed by a staff presentation on the proposed conceptual plans for each intersection. The presentation included videos illustrating current problems at the Louis

intersection and traffic simulations for the Middlefield intersection. After a question-and-answer period involving all workshop participants, project staff remained available to respond to individual questions and comments. All participants were encouraged to provide comments using a questionnaire form. One hundred thirteen (113) residents and 14 city/county staff attended the workshop.

Comments provided before and after the workshop were submitted by e-mail, telephone, fax, and mail. Comments were received from the time the conceptual plans and draft traffic analysis report were posted on the website in late February and for a month after the workshop through early April 2009.

Public Input Report

Approximately 117 questionnaires, e-mails, and phone calls were received between late February and early April 2009. In addition, the Ohlone Elementary School traffic safety committee, along with the PTA Executive Board, Site Council, and School Principal, submitted an e-mail related to intersections serving their school community.

This report summarizes the main comment themes regarding the conceptual plan alternatives for each intersection. It does not attempt to list every single comment. **Some respondents provided their comments through multiple forums; therefore, although the report can provide an order of magnitude for the number of similar comments submitted, precise numbers counting each individual's comments only once cannot be provided.** None of the input mechanisms used a scientifically representative sample process. All comments summarized in this report represent the opinions of those who chose to participate and are not considered statistically valid for projecting the data out to the general population.

The report is organized by intersection, describing the conceptual plan alternatives presented and summarizing the comments for that intersection. The last section summarizes comments received that were not intersection specific.

Next Steps

Since the March 2009 workshop, County staff has been working to further refine the alternatives and develop recommendations. The County's recommended alternatives will be provided to the City of Palo Alto in July 2009. Next opportunity for public input will be provided at the City Planning and Transportation Commission. The current project schedule is as follows:

August 26, 09	City of Palo Alto Planning and Transportation Commission Review of Project Scope
Fall 2009	City of Palo Alto City Council Approval of Project Scope
2010-2011	Environmental Clearance, Design and Construction
2011	County Board of Supervisors Approval of Project to Advertise

West Bayshore Drive Intersection

Current Configuration

Signalized T-intersection with West Bayshore terminating at Oregon Expressway. There is a crosswalk on the west side of the intersection to provide access to the frontage road north of the expressway.

List of Alternatives

- Alternative 1 from the June 2008 workshop was enhanced and called Alternative 1 Modified (1M). Alternative 1 improves pedestrian/wheelchair curb ramps and the landing area at the frontage road, including trimming back some of the shrubbery for improved visibility. It also improves bicycle detection and timing, including adding a bicycle slot on the West Bayshore approach to Oregon Expressway. Alternative 1M includes minor changes to the bicycle slot striping and adding the removal of the median island nose at existing crosswalk.

Presented at March 2009 workshop: Alternative 1M.

Summary of Comments

This intersection received 18 comments, with 90% of the respondents indicating support for the improvements in Alternative 1M. The Ohlone Elementary School traffic safety committee also expressed support for Alternative 1M. The only write-in comment expressed by more than one person was continued concern for making the landing and entrance onto Oregon Avenue safer for bicyclists.

Indian Drive Intersection

Current Configuration

Unsignalized T-intersection with Indian terminating at Oregon Expressway. There is a stop sign on Indian. A median opening on Oregon allows left turns from Oregon and Indian. No pedestrian crossing or access to frontage road north of the expressway exists at this location.

List of Alternatives Presented

- Alternative 1 from the June 2008 workshop was enhanced and called Alternative 1 Modified (1M). Alternative 1 closes the median with landscaping to eliminate left turns from Oregon and Indian and limits Indian to right-in and right-out access. Alternative 1M includes minor changes to the “pork chop” islands on Indian Drive.
- Alternative 2 was developed based on comments from the June-October 2008 community outreach process. It leaves the median open to allow left turns from westbound Oregon onto Indian and limits Indian to right-in and right-out access.

Presented at March 2009 workshop: Alternatives 1M and 2.

Summary of Comments

This intersection received 26 comments. The respondents were equally divided among supporting Alternative 1M, supporting Alternative 2, and opposing both alternatives. The Ohlone Elementary School traffic safety committee expressed support for Alternative 1M. Some of those opposing both alternatives suggested using signage to restrict movements at certain times instead of changing the intersection and/or providing “Keep Clear” striping on eastbound Oregon Expressway in the intersection.

Greer Road Intersection

Current Configuration

Signalized intersection with permissive left turn (5-phase) signal operation (on Greer, left turn vehicles do not have their own signal phase and must yield to oncoming vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles, waiting until there is a sufficient gap in traffic to make the turn safely). Crosswalks jog at an angle on the north side of the median. Access to the frontage road from Greer north of the expressway is open.

List of Alternatives Presented

- Alternative 1 from the June 2008 workshop was enhanced and called Alternative 1 Modified (1M). Alternative 1 provides separate left turn and through lanes at intersection approaches in both directions of Greer, allowing for protected left turn (8-phase) signal operation (left turns from both directions of Greer have their own signal phase, or green arrow indication, separate from the through movements). It also straightens crosswalks. Implementation would require parking to be prohibited for about 75 feet on both sides of Greer south of Oregon Expressway. Alternative 1M includes minor striping changes on both sides of Greer Road and installation of a bulb-out on the northwest corner.
- Alternative 2 (split or 6-phase signal operation) from the June 2008 workshop was dropped from consideration based on community feedback.

Presented at March 2009 workshop: Alternative 1M.

Summary of Comments

The Greer intersection received 25 comments, with 85% of the respondents indicating support for the improvements in Alternative 1M. The Ohlone Elementary School traffic safety committee also expressed support for Alternative 1M. Write-in comments made by more than one person included: a few comments that it looks good/is essential for safety; a couple of comments asking for bike lanes on Greer; a couple of respondents expressing concerns that the improvements would negatively affect Oregon Expressway traffic; and, a couple of requests to slow right-turning traffic or post “no right turn on red” signs.

Louis Road Intersection

Current Configuration

Signalized intersection with permissive left turn (5-phase) signal operation (on Louis, left turn vehicles do not have their own signal phase and must yield to oncoming motor vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles, waiting until there is a sufficient gap in traffic to make the turn safely). Crosswalks jog at an angle on the north side of the median. Bicycle lanes are provided on Louis. Access to the frontage road from Louis north of the expressway is closed.

List of Alternatives Presented

- Alternative 1 from the June 2008 workshop was enhanced and called Alternative 1 Modified (1M). Alternative 1 provides separate left turn and through lanes at intersection approaches in both directions of Louis, allowing for protected left turn (8-phase) signal operation (left turns from both directions of Louis have their own signal phase, or green arrow indication, separate from the through movements). It also tightens the radius at intersection corners to reduce speed of right-turning vehicles and straightens crosswalks. Implementation would require parking to be prohibited for about 105 feet on both sides of Louis north and south of Oregon Expressway. Alternative 1M includes maintaining the existing bicycle lane on Louis.
- Alternative 2 (split or 6-phase signal operation) from the June 2008 workshop was dropped from consideration based on community feedback.

Presented at March 2009 workshop: Alternative 1M.

Summary of Comments

The Louis intersection received 33 comments, with 90% of the respondents indicated support for the improvements in Alternative 1M. The Ohlone Elementary School traffic safety committee also expressed support for Alternative 1M. Write-in comments were generally supportive, with most stating the proposal was great and improves bicycle/pedestrian safety.

Ross Road Intersection

Current Configuration

Unsignalized intersection with stop signs on Ross. A median opening on Oregon allows left turns from Oregon and Ross. There is a crosswalk on the west side of the intersection. Access to frontage road from Ross north of the expressway is open.

List of Alternatives Presented

- Alternative 1 (closing median) from the June 2008 workshop was dropped from consideration based on community feedback.
- Alternative 2 from the June 2008 workshop was enhanced and called Alternative 2 Modified (2M). Alternative 2 reconfigures northbound and southbound Ross to allow right-turn exits only (no left turns or crossing Oregon). It includes eliminating the crosswalk. Alternative 2M allows left turns from Oregon Expressway onto Ross Road at all times.
- Alternative 3 was developed based on comments from the June-October 2008 community outreach process. It demonstrates potential future implementation of a bicycle/pedestrian signal consistent with the City of Palo Alto Ross Road bicycle boulevard concept. Building on the Alternative 2M configuration, it involves adding a bicycle/pedestrian crossing signal, bicycle slots with signal detection for bicycles to cross Oregon Expressway, and a pedestrian crossing on the west side of the intersection.

Presented at March 2009 workshop: Alternatives 2M and 3.

Summary of Comments

The Ross intersection received 60 comments, second only to Middlefield in the number of comments. Thirteen percent (13%) of the respondents supported Alternative 2M, 60% supported Alternative 3, and 18% wanted no changes to the intersection. There were many write-in comments. The common themes in the write-in comments were as follows:

- Some Alternative 3 supporters indicated that Alternative 3 would give bicycle riders an alternative to using Middlefield. A few respondents stated that this alternative would support the future re-opening of Garland Elementary and several indicated it was better for bicycles and pedestrians.
- Several respondents expressed concerns that adding a bicycle/pedestrian signal in Alternative 3 would slow down Oregon Expressway unnecessarily and could lead to more back-ups on Oregon and neighborhood streets. A few respondents suggested just putting up signs to restrict through and left turns during peak hours rather than changing the intersection.

Middlefield Road Intersection

Current Configuration

Signalized intersection with split phase (6-phase) signal operation (all vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian movements from one direction of Middlefield are served first followed by movements from the other direction). Middlefield has four lanes (two lanes each direction) on both sides of the intersection. Access to the frontage road from Middlefield north of the expressway is closed.

List of Alternatives Presented

- Alternative 1 from the June 2008 workshop was dropped from consideration based on community feedback due to the impact on the landscape strips and existing trees.
- Alternative 2 from the June 2008 workshop was enhanced and called Alternative 2 Modified (2M). Alternative 2 adds left-turn pockets on both directions of Middlefield allowing for 8-phase signal operation (left turns from both directions of Middlefield have their own signal phase, or green arrow indication, separate from the through movements). The right-hand lane at the southbound approach to the intersection is for through and right turns while the right-hand lane at the northbound approach is designated for right turns only. Northbound across the expressway would be a single seventeen-foot lane providing a wide shoulder for bicycle use at the northeast corner. Room for the nine-foot left-turn pockets is provided by reducing other lanes to ten feet wide at the northwest, southwest, and southeast corners and reducing the landscape strip on two sides of the intersection: five-foot reduction on the northwest side and three-foot reduction on the southeast side. The reduction of the two landscape strips would require removing a total of eight trees. Alternative 2M provides dual curb ramps at each corner and modified lane widths to provide additional pedestrian buffer on the northwest side of the intersection.
- Alternative 3 remains unchanged from the June 2008 workshop. It adds left-turn pockets on both directions of Middlefield allowing for 8-phase signal operation (left turns from both directions of Middlefield have their own signal phase, or green arrow indication, separate from the through movements). The right-hand lane at the northbound and southbound approaches to the intersection is for through and right turns. Room for the nine-foot left-turn pockets is provided by reducing four existing lanes to nine feet wide and a five-foot reduction in the landscape strip on the northwest side. The reduction of one landscape strip would require removing a total of four trees.
- Alternative 4 was developed based on comments from the June-October 2008 community outreach process. It is similar to Alternative 2M in lane configuration but would not widen the roadway on either side of Middlefield Road resulting in no impacts to existing trees. It provides narrower lanes and offsets for traffic traveling through the intersection.

Presented at March 2009 workshop: Alternatives 2M, 3, and 4.¹

¹ Shortly after the community workshop, the conceptual plan for Middlefield Alternative 3 was revised to provide more detail for the northwest corner of the intersection and proper labeling. The revised plan was renamed Alternative 3 Modified (3M). Alternative 3M does not have any major design changes from Alternative 3 but should help with public understanding of this alternative. Alternative 3M is available for viewing on the project website at www.oregonexpressway.info.

Summary of Comments

The Middlefield intersection received 77 comments, more than double all other intersections except Ross. Thirteen percent (13%) of respondents supported Alternative 2M, 18% supported Alternative 3, and 71% indicated support for Alternative 4. Only one respondent indicated “No” to all alternatives and a couple of write-in comments indicated some concern about making any changes. Some of the themes of the write-in comments and support for the alternatives included the following:

- Most Alternative 4 supporters indicated support only for Alternative 4 stating that it was a good balance for improving traffic and saving the landscaping – it was least disruptive. Many of the respondents also liked the dedicated northbound right turn lane. Some respondents felt that the narrower lanes will help calm or slow traffic on Middlefield.
- A few supporters of Alternative 4 indicated that Alternative 2M would be their second choice because 2M offers a dedicated northbound right-turn lane like Alternative 4.
- Supporters for Alternative 3 were generally opposed to Alternatives 2M and 4 because they felt two northbound through lanes was the best configuration for the interchange – it was the most flexible and efficient for meeting traffic demand.

Cowper Street Intersection

Current Configuration

Signalized intersection with permissive left turn (5-phase) signal operation (on Cowper, left turn vehicles do not have their own signal phase and must yield to oncoming motor vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles, waiting until there is a sufficient gap in traffic to make the turn safely). Cowper has two lanes (one lane each direction) on both sides of the intersection. Access to both frontage roads from Cowper (north and southwest of the expressway) is open.

List of Alternatives Presented

- Alternative 1 from the June 2008 workshop was enhanced and called Alternative 1 Modified (1M). Alternative 1 provides separate left turn and through lanes at intersection approaches in both directions of Cowper, allowing for protected left turn (8-phase) signal operation (left turns from both directions of Cowper have their own signal phase, or green arrow indication, separate from the through movements). It also straightens crosswalks. Implementation would require parking to be prohibited for about 60 feet on the east side of Cowper south of Oregon Expressway. Alternative 1M includes minor changes to the frontage road “stop” line striping.

Presented at March 2009 workshop: Alternative 1M.

Summary of Comments

The Cowper intersection received 20 comments, with 70% of the respondents indicating support for the improvements in Alternative 1M. Most of the write-in comments were from those opposed to the improvements with the most frequently cited concern being that adding a left-turn lane will increase cut-through traffic and/or speeding.

Waverley Street Intersection

Current Configuration

Unsignalized intersection with stop signs on Waverley. A median opening on Oregon allows left turns from Oregon and Waverley. There are crosswalks on both sides of the intersection. Access to the frontage road from Waverley north of the expressway is open.

List of Alternatives Presented

- Alternative 1 (closing median) from the June 2008 workshop was dropped from consideration based on community feedback.
- Alternative 2 from the June 2008 workshop was enhanced and called Alternative 2 Modified (2M). Alternative 2 reconfigures northbound and southbound Waverley to allow right-turn exits only (no left turns or crossing Oregon). It includes eliminating the crosswalks. Alternative 2M allows left turns from Oregon Expressway onto Waverley Street at all times.

Presented at March 2009 workshop: Alternative 2M.

Summary of Comments

The Waverley intersection received 34 comments, with 55% supporting the improvements in Alternative 2M and 40% opposing Alternative 2M. Most of the write-in comments were from those opposed to Alternative 2M with the most common concerns being that it would increase traffic on other streets, they want to be able to cross Oregon Expressway at Waverley, crosswalks should remain, and signage should be used to restrict movements at certain times instead of changing the intersection. A few respondents indicated preference for the dropped Alternative 1 (closing the median), and a couple of respondents requested a traffic signal at Waverley.

Bryant Street Intersection

Current Configuration

Signalized intersection with permissive left turn (5-phase) signal operation (on Bryant, left turn vehicles do not have their own signal phase and must yield to oncoming motor vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles, waiting until there is a sufficient gap in traffic to make the turn safely). Crosswalks jog at an angle on the north side of the median. Access to the frontage road from Bryant north of the expressway is open.

List of Alternatives Presented

- Alternative 1 (8-phase signal operations/protected left turns) from the June 2008 workshop was dropped from consideration based on community feedback.
- Alternative 2 from the June 2008 workshop was enhanced and called Alternative 2 Modified (2M). Alternative 2 provides two lanes on southbound Bryant at the intersection with one for left/through traffic and one for right turns, allowing for split phase (6-phase) signal operation (all vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian movements from one direction of Bryant are served first followed by movements from the other direction). It also straightens the crosswalk on the east side, eliminates the crosswalk on the west side, and provides a bicycle slot at the southbound intersection. Alternative 2M maintains the northbound leg of Bryant as is.

Presented at March 2009 workshop: Alternative 2M.

Summary of Comments

The Bryant intersection received 23 comments with 80% of the respondents indicating support for the improvements in Alternative 2M. There were few write-in comments. Three of the write-in comments were about the bike island where one thought it was a hazard and two liked it, including one asking that an island be provided in both directions. A couple of respondents also expressed concerns that longer signal times for Bryant will cause delays for Oregon Expressway traffic.

General Comments (not specific to an intersection)

Of the nearly 30 general comments not specific to an intersection, three subject areas received multiple comments: opposition to the entire project, bicycle use of Oregon Expressway, and constructing new sidewalks/pedestrian paths.

Opposition to Entire Project

A few respondents indicated opposition to the entire project and all its potential improvements. Some comments related to these positions were as follows: the focus should be to promote commute alternatives to the single occupant automobile; the proposed improvements will increase traffic delays on Oregon Expressways and lead to more rear-end accidents; and, all that is really needed to improve conditions is more traffic speed enforcement.

General Bicycle Related Comments

A few comments were made regarding the proposed 5-foot paved shoulder for bicycle use from Bryant Street to Cowper Street on the south side of Oregon Expressway. Some respondents expressed concerns that it was too dangerous to bicycle on Oregon Expressway and another stated a preference that a sidewalk be provided rather than the bike shoulder.

Sidewalks on South Side of Oregon Expressway

At the community workshops, a map of a proposed pedestrian route plan along Oregon Expressway was shared. This map was developed as part of the 2008 Update to the 2003 Comprehensive County Expressway Planning Study, where pedestrian route maps were developed for all eight expressways. For Oregon Expressway, the map includes the Oregon Avenue frontage road for pedestrian travel along the north side of the expressway and a mix of existing sidewalks, frontage/parallel streets, and proposed new sidewalks for the south side. The improvement alternatives for the unsignalized intersections (Indian, Ross, and Waverley) included filling in four sidewalk gaps along the south side to connect pedestrians from the unsignalized intersections to the nearest signalized intersections for access to the north side of the expressway. The locations of these four segments are: 1) between Greer and Indian; 2) between Ross and Middlefield; 3) between Tasso and Cowper; and, 4) between Anton and Waverley. These sidewalks would be constructed as part of the Oregon-Page Mill pavement rehabilitation project, not as part of the Oregon Expressway Improvement Project. The map also indicated that any new sidewalk between High Street (at Alma entrance) and Waverley would be very long term and dependent on pedestrian travel demand and/or redevelopment.

There were 7 comments total related to the sidewalks/pedestrian paths as follows:

- Greet to Indian – One comment indicating support.
- Ross to Middlefield – One comment in support and one in opposition.
- Tasso to Cowper and Anton to Waverley – Two respondents indicated opposition to any sidewalks between Middlefield and Bryant. Two respondents indicated support for these sidewalks and requested that sidewalks extend through to Bryant for pedestrians traveling westbound to access the signalized crossing at Bryant.