

## **Cornelius Pass Road Safety Improvements Project**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

July 15, 2013

#### **General**

***The Jobs and Transportation Act (JTA) Report prioritizes several safety improvements for funding. Is Multnomah County obligated to complete those improvements?***

No. The county has confirmed with the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) that the report does not obligate funding to the projects recommended in the report.

***At a public meeting in April 2013, county staff suggested that improvements recommended in the JTA report would be constructed. Has this changed?***

Yes. Public concerns about the crash data analysis led the project team to do further analysis and to widen the pool of potential project components. In addition, as part of the Alternatives Analysis phase we are reviewing more recent crash data to determine how crash patterns may have changed as a result of the recently-constructed safety improvement measures.

#### **Crash Locations**

***How will the project confirm the location of crashes in the corridor?***

New crash data received from ODOT includes geographic coordinates (latitude and longitude) for crash locations. We are also investigating incident records from other sources (such as emergency responders, maintenance forces, and community members). Information about these additional crashes is being analyzed to get more precise crash locations wherever possible.

***Is it possible to confirm the cause and location of all crashes in the corridor?***

No. Some crashes are not reported and some reported crashes lack precise information about the cause and location.

***The JTA report used crash locations that are less precise than data now available. Does this mean the report needs to be re-done using better crash location data now available?***

The county and its consultants are doing additional work to identify more detailed location information for crashes. The JTA report includes valuable information on the types of crashes in the corridor, the need for improvements in the corridor, improvements to consider, pros and cons of those improvements, and the estimated construction costs for various improvements.

## **Public Process/Next Steps**

### ***What are the next steps in the project?***

We are still in the alternatives analysis phase of the project, which includes looking at the trends shown in more recent crash data, looking into potential environmental impacts to wetlands and waterways, and obtaining survey information to develop better construction cost estimates. With input from the community, and an understanding of the changing trends shown in the more current crash data, the potential project areas have expanded. The project team is analyzing different alternatives for safety improvements and updating the benefit/cost ratios for each alternative when applicable.

### ***What criteria are used to compare alternatives?***

The \$9.5 million in state and federal funding designated for the project is being committed to safety improvements. The criteria is based on improving safety, which is focused on reducing fatal and injury crashes, rather than other traffic issues such as increasing capacity or travel speed.

### ***What is the status of the project's funding?***

The 2012 Oregon Legislature approved legislation designating \$9.5 million for improvements for Multnomah County's section of NW Cornelius Pass Road. Construction of the improvements was originally scheduled to begin in 2013. The county requested and received an extension to allow for additional planning, design, and right of way acquisition. Due to the schedule change, the 2013 Legislature temporarily reduced the project's funding by \$8.5 million to make funds available for other shovel ready projects in Oregon. The legislation requires the \$8.5 million to be restored to the Cornelius Pass Road project before construction begins. The project's current \$1 million budget allows design work to proceed in 2013 – 2014.

### ***When is the next public meeting?***

The next meeting is targeted for Fall of 2013. Staff are currently researching crash data and gathering additional information that will be presented at the meeting.

## **Skyline Boulevard Area**

### ***A roundabout at this intersection is one of the costliest options being considered. Many citizens have questioned the safety benefits of a roundabout. Why is a roundabout being considered?***

While through traffic on Cornelius Pass Road passes through this intersection fairly well at present, traffic on Skyline Boulevard has a harder time crossing or turning at the intersection. Some safety improvement is needed at the intersection. Roundabouts have demonstrated safety benefits, including reduced frequency of fatality and injury crashes, compared to other forms of intersection control.

***Roundabouts seem to work best when there is a similar amount of traffic entering from each direction. Why is one being considered here, where Cornelius Pass Road carries much more traffic than Skyline?***

Although roundabouts do operate most efficiently when the traffic flows are balanced between each of the approaches, this is not a requirement for roundabouts to work well. In the case of the Cornelius Pass Road/Skyline Road intersection, the traffic volumes on Skyline Road are significant enough to justify the need for a change to the intersection control. Our analysis indicates a roundabout will operate efficiently under today's traffic volumes as well as the projected 20-year future traffic volumes.

Roundabouts also improve safety by reducing the severity of crashes. Vehicles in roundabouts typically travel at lower speeds and the angle of impact reduces the number of more serious head on or T-bone (90 degree) crashes. Roundabouts usually have fewer crashes than both signalized and stop-controlled intersections.

***How would a roundabout be safely designed for trucks, buses, cars, bicyclists and pedestrians, which travel at different speeds?***

Modern roundabouts are generally quite safe for all users. Modern roundabouts accommodate larger vehicles with an area between the circulatory roadway and the central island. Known as a truck apron, this area is designed to safely accommodate the rear wheels of these vehicles. Pedestrians are accommodated at marked crosswalks that are set back from the circulatory roadway so that pedestrians cross only one direction of traffic at a time. Crossing distances are relatively short and traffic speeds are low -- 15-25 mph. Because vehicles are traveling at low speeds -- comparable to those of a bicycle -- bicyclists can choose to negotiate a modern roundabout like cars or they may navigate onto the multi-use sidewalk and cross at the marked crosswalks. The design firm hired for the project has experience designing roundabouts that accommodate all modes of transportation

***Are there roundabouts in our region that are similar in size to the one recommended at Skyline Boulevard in the JTA report?***

Yes. Roundabouts ranging in size and lane configuration have been identified in the Portland area. The size and lane configuration of a roundabout at Skyline is being evaluated. The JTA report recommended that it be about 160 feet in diameter. Features of the roundabouts in this list vary and likely represent that design improvements have been made over the years. Roundabouts are located at:

- SW Boeckman Road / SW Tooze Road, Wilsonville (150 feet)
- SW Barber Street / SW Costa Circle / SW 110<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Wilsonville (150 feet)
- SW Stafford Road / SW Rosemont Road, Lake Oswego (155 feet)
- SE Brookwood Avenue / SE Alexander Street, Hillsboro (160 feet)
- SE 172<sup>nd</sup> Avenue / SE Big Timber Court / Creekwood Road, Happy Valley (175 feet)
- SW River Road / SW Scholls Ferry Road, Washington County (180 feet)
- SW Stafford Road / SW Borland Road, Clackamas County (200 feet)

***Will a traffic signal be considered also?***

Yes, a signal is being evaluated also as part of the alternatives analysis. Intersections need to meet specific “warrants” for a signal, based on traffic counts and other factors. Based on a preliminary analysis, this intersection does meet the standard warrants for a signal.

***Will a roundabout or signal impact the grocery store on the northeast side of the intersection?***

Efforts are being made to reduce impacts to the store so it can remain open at this location.

**Sheltered Nook Area**

***There are different opinions about safety at this intersection, with few reported crashes, but some neighbors say some night-time crashes go unreported. What does crash data show?***

It is difficult to find information on unreported crashes. The most recent crash data we have obtained shows a decline in crashes at this intersection since warning lights and signing were installed a few years ago to alert drivers approaching the intersection of stopped vehicles.

***What safety improvements are being considered here?***

The intersection sight distance and stopping sight distance will be evaluated in this area to see how they are impacted due to the banks and the elevation rise in the road north of the intersection. A northbound left turn lane on Cornelius Pass Road is not likely to be added here because of the decline in the number of crashes at this location.

**Kaiser Road Area**

***Traffic seems to operate safely in this area. Why are improvements being studied here?***

The intersection sight distance will be evaluated. A northbound right turn lane on Cornelius Pass Road is not likely to be added here because more recent crash data shows there has been a decline in the number of crashes at this location.

**Speeding, Lighting and Other Corridor Issues**

***Will lighting be considered as a safety improvement?***

Yes, lighting will be considered, particularly at locations with high crash rates.

***What public concerns have been raised about lighting?***

Concerns have been raised that lighting:

- Makes it difficult for drivers’ eyes to adjust due to changing light conditions
- Has a negative impact on wildlife

***How will these lighting concerns be addressed?***

The benefits of lighting will be weighed against these concerns. There are various types of lighting that can be considered to minimize adverse impacts.

***Can traffic laws enforcement be increased in the corridor?***

The project team is working with the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office about what their officers need to enable them to more effectively enforce speed limits in the corridor. The lack of areas to safely pull vehicles over has made enforcement difficult. The project will evaluate locations for traffic pull outs. The Sheriff's Office is seeking more funding for traffic enforcement in the corridor and elsewhere. Another challenge is improving cell phone and radio service in this area that currently has spotty service.

***Can photo radar be used to enforce speed limits in the corridor?***

Current state law does not permit the use of photo radar on county roads. Past efforts to change the law have not succeeded. If the state law is changed, photo radar could be a useful tool to enforce the speed limit on Cornelius Pass Road. Funding would need to be identified to implement such a program.

***Can guardrails be installed where there are steep drop-offs along Cornelius Pass Road?***

The project team is evaluating locations where guard rails could be added. In some locations, adding guardrail is very costly, because additional shoulder width is required for the guardrail installation and longer posts are needed due to the steep slopes. The guardrail and guardrail ends can also be considered a hazard to vehicles when not properly located. These factors along with current crash trends are being considered by the project team.

***Limited sight distance is a problem at some curves and intersections in the corridor. Examples include the curve at Columbia Street and sight distance near 8<sup>th</sup> Street. Will improvements for sight distance be studied as part of this project?***

Yes. Vision clearance, including stopping sight distance and intersection sight distance, will be studied and improvements evaluated at several locations along the corridor.

***Can speed bumps be installed to improve safety?***

Raised speed bumps are not compatible with the travel speeds in the corridor, which are in the 45-50 MPH range.

***Will the project consider banning large trucks or bicyclists from the corridor?***

No. These modes have a legal right to use the road. The project is focused on improving safety for all users of the corridor.

***Will consideration be given to how the project improvement areas may impact existing wildlife crossings?***

Yes. The project team will evaluate how to avoid or mitigate potential impacts to wildlife that cross Cornelius Pass Road.

***Can the project consider bigger improvements, such as building a wider, straighter road or using the railroad right of way and tunnel for road traffic?***

No, those improvements are outside the scope of this project, which is focused on safety improvements that can be constructed with the \$9.5 million dedicated to the project.

***What can road users do to improve safety in the corridor?***

Road users should obey traffic laws. Drivers should travel at a speed that is safe for current conditions, be considerate of others, and stay in their travel lane.

**For More Information**

***Where can I find information about the project?***

The website for the Cornelius Pass Road Safety Improvements project is at [www.multco.us/roads/road-projects](http://www.multco.us/roads/road-projects). Send comments and requests to be added to the project email list to: [corneliuspass@multco.us](mailto:corneliuspass@multco.us).

***How can I be informed when crashes or other events cause Cornelius Pass Road to be closed?***

Road closures are usually posted to the website [www.publicalerts.org](http://www.publicalerts.org). You can sign up to receive these alerts at the website.

**Definitions/Acronyms**

- Stopping sight distance: The distance a vehicle driver needs to be able to see in order to have room to react and stop before colliding with something in the roadway.
- Intersection sight distance: The distance a vehicle driver needs to be able to see in order to safely proceed through an intersection.
- JTA Report: [The Cornelius Pass Road Safety Evaluation JTA Final Report](#) presented by ODOT to the Oregon Legislature in early 2011.