

EUGENE CITY COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY



Work Session: South Willamette Street Improvement Plan

Meeting Date: April 16, 2014
Department: Public Works
www.eugene-or.gov

Agenda Item Number: A
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ISSUE STATEMENT

The Eugene City Council will receive a presentation from staff and consultants about the Draft South Willamette Street Improvement Plan, an economic study, and details of a test reconfiguration. The South Willamette Street Improvement Plan will develop a complete street design for an active transportation corridor (providing for walking, biking, transit, driving, and business access) that can be adopted and advanced as a capital improvement project for construction.

The project team will share details of community involvement, the range of street design alternatives resulting from that engagement, and the consultant team recommendation. Consultants will also share the results of a separate economic study. The council will have an opportunity to ask questions about the street design alternatives, the consultant team recommendation, discuss community issues, provide feedback, and discuss their role in the process leading to a public hearing and decision.

BACKGROUND

Purpose:

The South Willamette Street Improvement Plan is exploring options for people to safely walk, bike, take the bus, or drive in an eight-block study area of Willamette Street from 24th Avenue to 32nd Avenue. The City and Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) have contracted with a consultant team of transportation engineers and urban design planners led by DKS Associates (with assistance from OTAK), which includes Cogito, locally-based public involvement specialists.

The goal of this study is to help South Willamette Street become a vibrant urban corridor accessible by bicycle, foot, car, and bus. Today, Willamette Street is heavily used to reach many popular destinations, yet it is uninviting to people walking, biking, riding transit, and driving. For years, many residents and business owners have shared complaints about the poor conditions on Willamette Street for walking and biking and the need to do something about it.

The plan aims to support existing businesses and the commercial district's vitality; create a

balanced multi-modal transportation system; further City planning efforts to identify compact growth and redevelopment opportunities; and foster a well-informed and involved community supportive of the plan.

The results of this project will serve as the street design portion of the South Willamette Concept Plan. The South Willamette Concept Plan is a pilot of the area planning process, an important strategy to accommodate growth through Envision Eugene. The Concept Plan creates a long-term vision and identifies tools for realizing that vision in the South Willamette area. One important goal of the Concept Plan is to create a neighborhood where services for residents are available within a “20-minute” walk, and that the street functions for a variety of users. The timing of the South Willamette Street Improvement Plan is good because it melds with the South Willamette Concept Plan, and needed pavement preservation work recently identified in the 2012 Bond Measure to Fix Streets and Fund Bicycle and Pedestrian Projects.

Public Process:

In August of 2012, the project team began by talking with stakeholders in small groups, including property and business owners, bicycle, pedestrian and transit advocates, and neighborhood leaders from Friendly, Crest, South Eugene, and Amazon neighborhood associations. Based on knowledge gained in September, two robust focus groups were organized (one based on business; and another based on users of cars, walking, bus, and bike) to hear more about people’s concerns, preferences and flexibilities towards identified corridor issues. In October, traffic count data was collected (when University of Oregon (UO) and Lane Community College (LCC) campuses were active) and an Existing Conditions Report was prepared. In November, over 150 participants attended the first community forum where they heard the results of recent traffic studies, explored alternatives, and the project team listened to community priorities for future improvements.

A second community forum was held in February 2013 to evaluate the alternatives that were prepared in response to earlier community conversations. Following the February community forum, the project team narrowed the number of alternatives down to three and performed more detailed transportation analysis.

The third, and final, community forum was held in June 2013. Participants were asked to help rank and refine the street design alternatives following a presentation of transportation analysis and group discussion. An online survey was also available to hear the preferences of those who were not able to attend the community forum.

Staff has provided updates on the process to the Eugene City Council on January 28, 2013, and again on June 19, 2013. Staff has also met with the Eugene Planning Commission twice, on November 4, 2013, and again on April 7, 2014, to discuss the South Willamette Street Improvement Plan and Economic Study respectively.

Consultant Project Team Recommendation:

On October 2, 2013, an executive summary of the Draft South Willamette Street Improvement Plan and consultant project team recommendation was shared in two meetings with stakeholder groups. The consultant team will provide details of the street design alternatives in their

presentation.

The Eugene City Manager has endorsed a triple-bottom-line approach to sustainability and analysis for City projects and programs providing for consideration of people, the planet, and prosperity (or equity, environment, and economy). In development of the Draft Eugene Transportation System Plan (Draft TSP), the Transportation Community Resource Group (TCRG) extensively vetted a sustainability rating system based on a triple-bottom-line analysis. The South Willamette Street Improvement Plan adapted the TCRG sustainability work to develop screening criteria for qualitative assessment of the roadway alternatives. The results of the sustainability screening are included in the Draft South Willamette Street Improvement Plan and helped to inform the consultant project team recommendation.

In weighing all the considerations identified in the Draft South Willamette Street Improvement Plan, the community feedback and technical analysis, **the consultant project team finds that Alternative #3 (three lanes with bike lanes) represents the best solution for South Willamette Street.**

Economic Study:

Following the October 2013 stakeholder meetings, concerns were raised by some business and property owners about the economic effects of a potential street reconfiguration. In response to those economic concerns, staff collaborated with business and property owner representatives to develop an Economic Study of the potential economic effects of changes to the street configuration on area businesses and properties. A local economic consulting firm, ECONorthwest, conducted a review of literature and case studies of street reconfigurations to assess their economic effects. Staff believes that the public process surrounding the South Willamette Street Improvement Plan development is strengthened by including an economic analysis in collaboration with those that are potentially affected by changes to the street. ECONorthwest staff will present the findings of their research.

Test Street Reconfiguration:

Scope:

At the June 2013 work session, the City Council asked that staff return with information about the scope of a test street reconfiguration. The information provided here is detailed in order to describe the elements of a test and the potential options for monitoring and reporting back with information about the performance of the street. In preparing the scope of a test reconfiguration, staff considered the importance of the test replicating, as best as reasonably possible, the final conditions that would be experienced with a reconfigured street. Therefore, the scope of the test includes right-of-way acquisition and widening in the vicinity of the Woodfield Station driveway on Willamette to construct a permanent traffic signal and additional widening near 24th Avenue to allow for connecting the exiting bikeway systems and a center turn-lane for automobiles. In addition to the transportation improvements, it would be valuable to monitor the street to gather information and report back about the transportation system, economics, and public opinion.

The scope considers implementing a test of Alternative 3 (three lanes with bike lanes) from 24th Avenue through 29th Avenue. As previously mentioned, a test would include right-of-way acquisition, widening, and construction of a traffic signal and turn lane at the Woodfield Station

driveway on Willamette Street. Driveways on the east side of the street within the newly signalized intersection would need to be closed. Additional widening of the roadway north of 24th Avenue would also be necessary. What is not included in the scope of a test is a new roadway pavement surface, drainage repairs, or widened and improved sidewalks.

It is important to note that the purpose of a test would be primarily to provide the community with the experience of three (instead of the current four) travel lanes on Willamette Street. There will be opportunity to measure the effects on the transportation system, economy, and public opinion. However, there are limitations of the test (not improving the road surface, drainage, or sidewalks) that may not necessarily lead to increased biking and walking during the test period. Therefore, the opportunities with a test are to confirm the transportation analysis of the South Willamette Street Improvement Plan, determine if there are any unintended consequences, and provide a real experience of a street reconfiguration for people driving cars.

Schedule:

The duration of a test street reconfiguration will likely require two years from initiation to completion and reporting. Time will be needed in advance of a test to establish baseline economic data and to complete the construction of improvements. Following construction, an additional three months is needed as a period to allow the community to develop familiarity with the new street configuration and a normalization and adjustment of transportation patterns to occur. Following the adjustment period, a test reconfiguration would be in effect for one year (12 months) during which time data would be gathered about the transportation system, economics, and public opinion. Following the test period, there will be time needed to analyze and report on the findings of the test.

Budget:

The combined cost to construct and monitor a test reconfiguration of street design Alternative #3 (three lanes with bike lanes) is \$920K. The cost of constructing the test improvements alone is estimated at \$760K (plus costs to monitor the transportation system, economics, and public opinion).

Additional effort and expense would be required to monitor the street to gather information and report back about the transportation system, economics, and public opinion. Information gathered about the transportation system could include: crashes (number and severity), vehicle speed, travel time through the corridor, traffic volume on Willamette Street and neighboring streets, observation of use of the street by people riding bicycles and walking (noting that the roadway and sidewalk surfaces are not improved), intersection operations, and emergency response times in the corridor. An economic study could attempt to collect data about business revenue along the corridor during the test. A public opinion survey could evaluate community acceptance of a test following its completion (and possibly midway through the test). The cost to gather information about the test and report back is estimated at \$160K (\$50K transportation, \$50K economics, \$60K public opinion).

Much of the expense of a test would include elements that are common to all the alternatives and could remain as permanent improvements. What follows is a comparison of project cost estimates for the alternatives to the cost of a test reconfiguration of the street.

Cost to implement alternatives:

Alternative 1 (four lanes and signal): \$4.6M (includes \$2.1M Pavement Bond)

Alternative 3 (three lanes with bike lanes and signal): \$4.85M (includes \$2.1M Pavement Bond)

Alternative 5 (three lanes with wide sidewalks and signal): \$5.6M (includes \$2.1M Pavement Bond)

Cost to implement test of Alternative 3:

\$920K total = \$760K construction + \$160K monitoring (\$50K transportation, \$50K economy, \$60K public opinion)

Incremental cost of test of Alternative 3:

Compared to Alternative 1: \$214K total = \$54K construction + \$160K monitoring

Compared to Alternative 3: \$173K total = \$13K construction + \$160K monitoring

Compared to Alternative 5: \$173K total = \$13K construction + \$160K monitoring

The cost to revert back to four travel lanes is \$13K.

Coordination with Envision Eugene:

As previously stated, the results of the South Willamette Street Improvement Plan will serve as the street design portion of the South Willamette Concept Plan, a pilot of the area planning process for Envision Eugene. The Concept Plan includes a long-term vision for redevelopment of the streetside character of Willamette Street that is compatible with the South Willamette Street Improvement Plan alternatives. Staff will be working with the Eugene Planning Commission, as part of the Concept Plan implementation, to develop a systematic approach in the Eugene Code to address how accesses along the street are managed over time. Those discussions are anticipated to be coming soon to the Eugene Planning Commission followed by Eugene City Council adoption at a later date.

Resources:

The South Willamette Street Improvement Plan is being managed by the City of Eugene and is funded with a grant from the Transportation and Growth Management program of the Oregon Department of Transportation.

More details of the project and public involvement process are available at: <http://www.eugene-or.gov/SWillametteStreet>

RELATED CITY POLICIES

During their deliberations, the Eugene City Council will have an opportunity to consider the policy context surrounding the South Willamette Street Improvement Plan. The council may choose to affirm existing policies, balance potential conflicts between policies, approve potential changes to existing policies or enact new policies.

TransPlan (2002)

System-Wide Policy #4: Neighborhood Livability

Support transportation strategies that enhance neighborhood livability.

Roadway Policy #1: Mobility and Safety for all Modes

Address the mobility and safety needs of motorists, transit users, bicyclists, pedestrians, and the needs of emergency vehicles when planning and constructing roadway system improvements.

Roadway Policy #2: Motor Vehicle Level of Service

- 1. Use motor vehicle level of service standards to maintain acceptable and reliable performance on the roadway system.*
- 2. Acceptable and reliable performance is defined by the following levels of service under peak hour traffic conditions: Level of Service E within Eugene's Central Area Transportation Study (CATS) area, and Level of Service D elsewhere.*

Roadway Policy #4: Access Management

Manage the roadway system to preserve safety and operational efficiency by adopting regulations to manage access to roadways and applying these regulations to decisions related to approving new or modified access to the roadway system.

Bicycle Policy #1: Bikeway System and Support Facilities

Construct and improve the region's bikeway system and provide bicycle system support facilities for both new development and redevelopment/expansion.

Bicycle Policy #2: Bikeways on Arterials and Collectors

Require bikeways along new and reconstructed arterial and major collector streets.

Bicycle Policy #4: Implementation of Priority Bikeway Miles

Give funding priority (ideally within the first three to five years after adoption of TransPlan subject to available funding) to stand-alone bikeway projects that are included in the definition of "Priority Bikeway Miles" and that increase the use of alternative modes.

Pedestrian Policy #1: Pedestrian Environment

Provide for a pedestrian environment that is well integrated with adjacent land uses and is designed to enhance the safety, comfort, and convenience of walking.

Goods Movement Policy #1: Freight Efficiency

Support reasonable and reliable travel times for freight/goods movement in the Eugene-Springfield region.

Finance Policy #5: Short-Term Project Priorities

Consider and include among short-term project priorities, those facilities and improvements that support mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly nodal development and increased use of alternative modes.

Priority Bikeway System Project #296 – Striped bike lanes, Willamette Street from 18th Avenue to 32nd Avenue (unprogrammed).

Eugene Pedestrian Bicycle Master Plan (2012)

Policy 1.1: *Make bicycling and walking more attractive than driving for trips of two miles or less.*

Policy 1.2: *Increase pedestrian and bicycle connectivity between existing residential neighborhoods and nearby commercial areas, parks, and schools.*

Policy 1.5: *Construct high-quality pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure to provide safer, more appealing and well-connected facilities.*

Policy 1.6: *Build pedestrian and bicycle facilities on new roadways, and retrofit older roadways to complete the pedestrian and bicycle system, using routes and facility designs identified in this plan.*

Policy 1.7: *Construct bikeways along new and reconstructed arterial and major collector streets.*

Policy 2.1: *Continually improve bicycling and walking comfort and safety through design, operations and maintenance including development of “low stress” bikeways to attract new cyclists.*

Policy 3.6: *Improve the quality of the pedestrian environment by including facilities such as planter strips and street trees in the design or reconstruction of streets and consider preservation of existing trees whenever practicable.*

20-Minute Neighborhoods Program: *Development of a 20-Minute Neighborhoods Program is considered a key implementation step of the Climate and Energy Action Plan. 20-minute neighborhoods are places where people can easily walk or bike to key destinations such as grocery stores, other retail establishments, parks and schools. Coordination between implementation of the Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan and the 20 -Minute Neighborhoods Program will be critical to the success of both. The 20-Minute Neighborhoods Program should be one factor that is considered when determining project funding priorities.*

Bike Lane Project #31 – Willamette Street from 17th Avenue to 32nd Avenue.

Bike Boulevard Project #397 – Portland Alley from West 24th Avenue to West 27th Avenue.

Bike Boulevard Project #458 – East 29th Place/Pearl Street/East 28th Avenue/High Street/East 27th Avenue from Amazon Parkway to Willamette Street.

Envision Eugene (2012)

Seven Pillars of Envision Eugene (partial list)

- *Provide ample economic opportunities for all community members*
- *Plan for climate change and energy uncertainty*
- *Promote compact urban development and efficient transportation options*
- *Protect, repair, and enhance neighborhood livability*
- *Provide for adaptable, flexible, and collaborative implementation*

COUNCIL OPTIONS

This is an informational work session. No action is required at this time; however, options will be provided at the time of City Council deliberations and action scheduled following the May 19, 2014, public hearing.

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

No recommendation at this time. This item is scheduled for a May 19, 2014, public hearing. Following the City's receipt of all testimony, the City Manager will make a recommendation to be included in the council packet scheduled for action at a future date.

SUGGESTED MOTION

None.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. South Willamette Street Improvement Plan Executive Summary October 2013
- B. DRAFT South Willamette Street Improvement Plan October 2013
- C. South Willamette Street Improvement Plan Appendix October 2013 – view at www.eugene-or.gov/SWillametteStreet
- D. ECONorthwest Economic Literature Review February 2014

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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