

# EUGENE CITY COUNCIL

## AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY



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### Work Session: Beltline Highway – Oregon Department of Transportation Facility Plan and Eugene Transportation System Plan

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Meeting Date: September 30, 2015  
Department: Public Works, Engineering  
[www.eugene-or.gov](http://www.eugene-or.gov)

Agenda Item Number: A  
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#### **ISSUE STATEMENT**

On July 9, 2014, the Eugene City Council received a progress update from the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) about the Randy Papé Beltline Highway: Coburg Road to River Road Facility Plan, which was recently completed at that time.

This work session allows the council to revisit the Facility Plan before it is adopted as a component of the Eugene Transportation System Plan. Staff will describe proposed amendments that will allow future Beltline analysis to omit the “Collector –Distributor” option, which would be the most expensive and most difficult option to implement.

#### **BACKGROUND**

Randy Papé Beltline Highway Facility Plan. The Randy Papé Beltline Facility Plan developed recommendations for long-range functionality improvements to the Randy Papé Beltline Highway between Coburg Road and River Road. The Facility Plan’s problem statement identifies concerns regarding safety, operation, and capacity of Beltline Highway.

There was substantial public involvement while the Facility Plan was prepared by ODOT between 2008 and 2014. The City Council received the draft plan on July 9, 2014, and discussed the three options for improvement that survived the review and preliminary analysis. A summary of the three options and diagrams are attached.

Additional project information (including the full Facility Plan) is available through the ODOT project website at: [www.beltlineplan.com](http://www.beltlineplan.com)

As discussed in 2014, the council will be asked to adopt the Beltline Facility Plan as part of the Eugene Transportation System Plan (TSP) when the TSP is presented for adoption next year. The Lane County Board of Commissioners will also be asked to adopt the Facility Plan as part of its TSP and the Central Lane Metropolitan Planning Organization (through its Metropolitan Policy Committee) will be asked to endorse the Beltline Facility Plan before it is presented for adoption to the Oregon Transportation Commission. These steps are necessary before future

environmental analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is conducted. The NEPA analysis will include more detailed and rigorous analysis of project impacts and will result in a recommendation of a preferred project alternative eligible for federal funding. The NEPA analysis is already funded and ODOT has begun the process that will allow the NEPA analysis to proceed as soon as the Eugene TSP is adopted.

Since completion of the draft Beltline Facility Plan in March 2014, ODOT's staff has begun solicitation for NEPA services for the identified corridor and engineering design for initial bridge and ramp improvements at the Delta-Beltline interchange. The goal is to have a consultant team on board as soon as possible so that the environmental analysis (along the entire corridor) and engineering design services needed to support the near-term funded projects at the Delta/Beltline interchange that do not require council action and the longer-term recommendations between the Delta Highway and River Road can proceed in a timely manner. The project description calls for early and close coordination with the public, stakeholders, interested parties, and agencies as well as incremental milestones and checkpoints for verifying close integration and consistency with previous studies and plans.

Eugene's 2035 Transportation System Plan (TSP). The Eugene 2035 TSP is being developed to replace *TransPlan* as Eugene's local comprehensive transportation strategy. As the transportation component of the Envision Eugene Comprehensive Plan, the TSP will provide the goals, policies, projects, and programs needed to implement the Comprehensive Plan's vision for future growth. The TSP is on track to be adopted no later than the Envision Eugene Comprehensive Plan in mid-2016 and possibly sooner. The Randy Papé Beltline Facility Plan must be adopted as a part of the TSP before ODOT can fully commence the NEPA process.

During the TSP's development, improvements to Beltline's safety and function were seen as important components of Eugene's overall transportation system. In addition to being one of the few river crossings for motorized vehicles and a key freight route, opportunities to improve this crossing to better accommodate bicycles, pedestrians, and transit were encouraged. The draft TSP policies support completion of the Beltline NEPA evaluation and incorporation of the preferred alternative to emerge from the NEPA process in the TSP. The draft TSP includes the following placeholder in its list of projects to be funded within the 20-year planning horizon; this description aligns with the Improve Existing and Auxiliary Lane options described below:

*Construct local arterial bridge over the Willamette River to the north of the Beltline Highway, connecting Division Avenue to Green Acres Road. Construct operational improvements to existing Randy Papé Beltline Highway/Delta Highway ramps consistent with the Beltline Highway Facility Plan.*

Expectations are that the improvements identified in this project description, above (i.e., a local arterial bridge and targeted improvements to the Beltline), can be funded and constructed during the 20-year TSP planning horizon as part of a phased project implementation approach. All of the elements of this recommendation are components of the Improve Existing or Auxiliary Lane options and would ultimately support full implementation of either of these options.

Narrowing Options Prior to TSP Adoption. The Beltline Facility Plan ultimately recommended three options for further study, in addition to a "No Build" alternative (see attachments for fuller

descriptions):

**Improve Existing:**

- keeps the existing interchange form of River/Division avenues intact while adding an additional lane across the Willamette River (three lanes total in each direction);
- adds ramp improvements;
- improves existing Beltline bridge with auxiliary lanes, and adds auxiliary lanes on Beltline Highway between River Road and Delta Highway;
- adds a bridge with a multi-modal street (“Local Arterial Bridge”) connecting Green Acres Road to Division Avenue/Beaver Street

**Auxiliary Lane:**

- changes the interchange form of River/Division avenues from the existing underpass to an overpass further west while adding an additional lane across the Willamette River (three lanes total in each direction);

Similar to Improve Existing:

- adds ramp improvements;
- improves existing Beltline bridge with auxiliary lanes, and adds auxiliary lanes on Beltline Highway between River Road and Delta Highway;
- adds a bridge with a multi-modal street (“Local Arterial Bridge”) connecting Green Acres Road to Division Avenue/Beaver Street

**Collector-Distributor:**

- provides separated roadways in each direction parallel to the Beltline Highway from River Avenue/Division Avenue interchange to east of the Delta Highway;
- is the only concept that does not include the Local Arterial Bridge.

The NEPA evaluation is a meticulous and expensive process that would benefit from any streamlining possible. Before ODOT begins the process, it would be efficient and less expensive to exclude from further study any option(s) that are not likely to enjoy council support in the end. Therefore, the TSP is currently being structured to remove support for the Collector –Distributor alternative. Staff is recommending this approach for a variety of reasons:

- (1) The Collector-Distributor option cannot be phased and would have to be built as a single project. Because of its greater expense (25-30 percent higher) and inability to be phased, it is not considered as reasonably likely to be funded and constructed during the 20-year planning horizon.
- (2) While the Collector-Distributor would provide the best operational performance on the Beltline mainline when fully constructed, compared to the Improve Existing or Auxiliary Lane options, the difference in operational performance is fairly small. If fully implemented, the Auxiliary Lane option would provide about 85-90 percent of the mainline operational performance of the Collector-Distributor option, and at a lower cost.
- (3) In addition to being constructed in phases, with key elements (e.g., the Local Arterial Bridge) likely to be constructed within the 20-year planning horizon, and ultimately capable of achieving very comparable levels of operational performance compared to the Collector-Distributor option, the two options that include the Local Arterial Bridge serve alternative modes of travel much better. With the Collector-Distributor option, transit

vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians would all have to cross the Willamette River within what is essentially the same right-of-way. While facilities would be provided for bicyclists and pedestrians, these facilities would be right next to the high-speed motorized vehicle travel moving to and from the Beltline mainline.

- (4) The two options that include the Local Arterial Bridge would include facilities for bicyclists and pedestrians, but these facilities would be separated from the Beltline mainline and adjacent to a much lower speed local road, greatly increasing the comfort and attractiveness of walking or biking as travel modes across the river. Like bicycle and pedestrian travel, transit service in this corridor would also be better facilitated by the options that include the Local Arterial Bridge because transit vehicles would not have to get on and off the Beltline and could serve their customers more directly and efficiently.
- (5) The Collector-Distributor option would have the greatest right-of-way cost.
- (6) If the City were to move ahead with the Local Arterial Bridge, it would become redundant if the Collector-Distributor option was pursued and implemented and would likely have to be removed or significantly modified to accommodate the Collector-Distributor construction.
- (7) Finally, the two options that include the Local Arterial Bridge provide for better overall transportation system functionality. As noted above, with the Collector-Distributor option, all trips across the river would happen within a common right-of-way; statewide, regional, and local trips, and all travel modes, would encounter each other as they move to and from the Beltline on the collector-distributor system. The options with the Local Arterial Bridge are more functionally appropriate and, for the most part, would enable local trips and active modes (walking, biking, and transit) to stay on a local facility and remain separated from statewide and regional trips.

Conclusion. As described above and in the attached summaries, the Collector-Distributor alternative is the most expensive, by at least \$45 million (not including right-of-way costs which will also be comparatively higher), cannot be phased, and is the only concept that does not provide a local route for transit, walking, or bicycling. Therefore, the Collector-Distributor option is least consistent with direction the City has heard through the TSP update process.

For these reasons, staff will recommend that the Randy Papé Beltline Facility Plan be adopted into the TSP in a manner that does not support the Collector-Distributor option for further analysis.

## **RELATED CITY POLICIES**

The Eugene City Council engaged in a discussion of Transportation Priorities for North and West Eugene on September 25, 2006. That discussion concluded on October 9, 2006, with council action to set the Beltline Corridor from River Road to Coburg Road as the City's top priority in north and west Eugene for funding in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

A study of Beltline Highway between Coburg Road and River Road is included in the adopted Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and Transportation System Plan (TransPlan). This study resulted in the Beltline Facility Plan.

Throughout the preparation of the Draft Eugene TSP, which included a triple-bottom-line analysis, improvements to Beltline remained as a recommended project to improve safety and mobility for

walking, biking, transit, and freight (economic vitality).

**COUNCIL OPTIONS**

No action is requested at this meeting.

**CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION**

None.

**SUGGESTED MOTION**

None.

**ATTACHMENTS**

- A. Beltline Alternatives Summaries
- B. Beltline Alternatives Maps

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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