

SH 97 Stakeholder Advisory Committee Meeting
4/16/08
Camp Easton

Stakeholders Present:

Don Davis
Jim Kackman
Bev Twillman
Dave Wardsworth
Steve Walker
Jo Prophet
Gary Young

Study Staff Present:

Glenn Miles
Carole Richardson
Staci Lehman
Christine Fueston
John Karpenko
Bill White

Christine Fueston started the meeting by having all participants introduce themselves. She explained that she and her staff would be presenting draft options and alternatives for improving State Highway 97. She emphasized that once these options have been agreed upon by the SAC and taken out to the public for approval, they will be posted on the KMPO website.

Ms. Fueston said that since the last SAC meeting last fall, the Ruen-Yeager team had been looking at potential improvements, possible alternate routes, and possible ferry routes.

The alternate routes discussed were Burma/Gozzer Road, Gotham Bay Road, Carlin Bay Road, and Asbury/East Thompson Lake Roads. The total preliminary estimated cost of construction for alternate routes improvements (widening the roads to current Associated Highway District Standards is approximately \$16 million. Proposed improvements on alternate routes will not offset the need for improvements to SH 97. The cost estimates are for construction only and do not include right of way acquisition, preliminary engineering, plans and specifications, construction engineering, surveying, environmental permitting, private property impacts, utility relocation, and contingencies.

Potential ferry routes discussed were from Harrison to 16:1 Bay or Sun Up Bay. A ferry system is not intended to take all traffic off SH 97; rather it will provide transportation system alternatives for the public. The ferries would provide service for both vehicular (auto and truck) and pedestrian/bicycle traffic. The addition of a ferry would provide a link to the west side of the lake and ultimately to US 95 and Citilink transit service.

John Karpenko went through each mile segment of SH 97 and explained the improvements recommended for each mile, as well as the construction cost of the improvements. Most of the improvements included removing brush within the right of way to improve site distance, widening the roadway enough to install guardrails, improving intersections, adding pullouts, passing lanes, improved signage, and widening corners. For all 36+ miles of SH 97, the total estimated

preliminary costs for improvements came to approximately \$30 million, not including possible ferry service. The cost estimates are for construction only and do not include right of way acquisition, preliminary engineering, plans and specifications, construction engineering, surveying, environmental permitting, private property impacts, utility relocation, and contingencies.

Ms. Fueston reminded the stakeholders that results from a public opinion survey sent out last summer and from the Focus Group indicated that the majority of property owners only wanted safety improvements within the corridor, they didn't want capacity improvements, which meant very little widening. A pedestrian walkway discussed along Turner Bay would not stretch the entire length of SH 97.

At Camp Easton, several options were considered to safely get pedestrians across the highway, including a pedestrian undercrossing, flashing lights, and zebra striping a crosswalk. It was decided to eliminate one of the two crosswalks in the area and just have one.

The final estimates for improvements to SH 97 include approximately 84,000 feet of guardrail, or 16 miles out of the 36 mile length of SH 97. Guardrail costs about \$25-\$28 per foot to install. Ferry terminals will cost about \$2.5 million each. Locations for ferry terminals have not been decided at this point. Dots were basically put on the maps used as visuals in order to serve as a placeholder. Mayor Jo Prophet of Harrison pointed out that wherever a ferry terminal would be located in or near Harrison, it may require vehicular traffic to cross the Trail of the Coeur d'Alenes (bicycle/pedestrian trail). Ms. Fueston said that is the case on many trails and there are improvements that can be done to lessen the impact, such as putting up signs or doing a grade separation.

The ferries in this case would accommodate about 25 cars (or less cars if a truck is onboard) and walk-on passengers. Ferries would cost about \$6 million dollars each and two would be needed. Operating and Maintenance costs are estimated at approximately \$900,000 per year for two ferries. There is special funding to help start a ferry service that would not compete with funding for roadway safety improvements. An economic analysis on implementing a ferry system has not been done yet.

Environmental issues were discussed briefly. Ms. Fueston said that there are wetlands, wildlife habitat, ground water, surface waters, and cultural and historical property issues to contend with on SH 97 depending on the specific improvement.

Next, Bill White gave a summary of traffic accidents along SH 97. He said there were approximately 150 reported accidents along the corridor between 2001 and 2006, averaging about 30 per year. The accidents are happening mostly in the

areas of tight switchbacks, but there are a lot of accidents happening when animals are hit on straight stretches of the road.

Ms. Prophet asked if people will drive faster if improvements are made since they may feel safer. Mr. White said that people may drive faster but even if they do have accidents they won't be hurt as badly as guardrails will prevent them from going off cliffs or prevent some rollover accidents. Ms. Fueston clarified that the widening that could be done would not be enough to allow much more travel speed and cutting back brush will make animals and other vehicles more visible.

Mr. White showed the traffic counts for SH 97. Counts were done in 12 locations by ITD in the past with some more recent counts by developers. The counts show that there is still some roadway capacity available.

Ms. Fueston explained what will happen next in the study. The same information will be taken to a focus group, the general public, and funding options will be considered. Another SAC meeting will be scheduled in a few months. The meeting was adjourned at 4:35.