

**ASHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION  
MINUTES  
March 23, 2017**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Graf called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm

**Commissioners Present:** Joe Graf, Danielle Amarotico, Dominic Barth, Sue Newberry, Corinne Viéville, and David Young (via Skype)

**Council Liaison Present:** Stef Seffinger

**SOU Liaison Absent:** Janelle Wilson

**Staff Present:** Scott Fleury, Mike Faught, and Tami De Mille-Campos

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

None.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Approval of February 9, 2017 minutes

**The minutes were approved as presented.**

Approval of February 23, 2017 minutes

**The minutes were put aside to the next meeting, pending corrections.**

**PUBLIC FORUM**

Susan Hall, 210 East Nevada

She thanked the commission for the hard work that she has observed them doing for months now. She submitted documents from the 1998 and 2012 Transportation System Plans (TSP) and a copy of some comments that she spoke and gave to the Council on Monday night. She also included in the packet, a request asking that the 2012 TSP be amended to make Hersey Street a main alternate route for downtown.

Spike Breon, 295 East Nevada

He wanted to speak about remonstration. He expected more people but even though there are few, he knows applause disrupts the meeting so if they hear something they like they would like to raise or waive their hands, instead of applauding and if they hear something to which they disagree then they would keep completely silent. For example, should someone choose to read Craig Anderson's letter in the packet, you might expect him to wave his hands. \*Chair Graf asked that they try to eliminate any actions that might be disruptive to people. He said they will try to watch the audience and if they see something, they agree with maybe a big smile would signify that.

Huelz Gutcheon, 2253 Hwy 99

He explained that the purpose of life is to have a car so we can have a life and he would really like to see everyone have a car because it is so much better in every way. The electricity is going to be solar panels because we need to have a car that's going to stay around for a while, which is why he has been announcing that he is going to run for Community Development Director. He would like to see solar panels on all the roofs, which is a big change that has to happen. Climate change is a priority.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**Nevada St Bridge**

Faught discussed the staff report, which includes options for how the commission may wish to proceed and the actions they would need to take going forward. He thanked Commissioner Newberry for the in depth questions that she submitted earlier.

Newberry said many of her questions were submitted in writing (see attached) and she thought it would be good to start with some of those questions and the responses that Faught provided to those questions.

Newberry stated there was one question that she did have that was not a part of her original questions. Her understanding is we have exchanged the Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds for local funds and she asked if that was correct. Faught explained that those funds are federal funds but they are allocated through the Rogue Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (RVMPO). She asked for clarification on whether we would have to return to the policy committee to deviate in any way from the original grant as submitted. Faught said rather than answer the question himself he sent that question to them. Newberry said she spoke with Dan Moore and she thought he said that once you exchange the funds, a different set of rules apply. Faught said he wasn't sure about the conversation but he had sent her email to Dan and asked him to respond. Faught also explained that he led him to believe that the Independent Way project could possibly be a highly competitive project but he was also very clear that we would have to go back and submit the request to change projects. That project could be one that they approve or it could be that they decide to put the money back in the queue.

Newberry read question number four and the response, which was provided by Anne Sylvester of SCJ Alliance. Newberry asked Anne if it is correct that it was going to reduce traffic on Eagle Mill Road and if so, where would that traffic be going? Sylvester answered some of that traffic would go to the new East Nevada Street crossing. Newberry stated the traffic that was going on Eagle Mill Road usually would be going to those homes, so she was confused and it did not appear to her when looking at the numbers that the traffic was actually reduced on Eagle Mill Road. Sylvester said the two graphics that they had, definitely shows a reduction. Newberry said she may have misunderstood but she thought that originally the whole idea was to get more people to use Eagle Mill Road so we would be siphoning traffic off the downtown. Barth shared that at the last meeting, Graf pointed out the Eagle Mill section (across I5, before making the right turn) had significantly different numbers and Barth asked for clarification on that. Sylvester said this is a different section than Newberry is talking about. Graf said there was no explanation, he had noted there was over 100 cars that crossed the freeway without the bridge and only 20 going across the freeway with a bridge, and it seems there would be more than 20 cars just going between the wineries and the homes off Pompadour. Newberry said when she looked at the information it looked to her like the traffic that used to be going out on the east side, coming off of North Mountain, simply crossed the bridge and went out onto Eagle Mill Road on Oak Street. With that, it did not really seem to change the numbers, it just shifted the traffic. Sylvester said that is correct, the model looked at the two scenarios and what they saw was a very slight increase in traffic on that section of Eagle Mill (where Oak turns into Eagle Mill). Newberry referred back to her original question. She said she has a copy of the Ashland Street design handbook and the handbook says there are standards for developing a traditional neighborhood. She went on to explain that a traditional neighborhood is like what you would see closer to the downtown area. Particularly in the railroad district where you have short blocks, and more of a grid design and generally in a larger area when you build those you have things designated as a neighborhood street, a neighborhood collector, and then an avenue. She stated one of the problems we have here is that the older neighborhood on the west side of Nevada Street is not a traditional grid; it has very long blocks and was built suburban style (wide, long streets). Although normally in a traditional neighborhood if you have short blocks you would have fewer miles traveled, she thinks it is a stretch to show a reduction in vehicle miles traveled or in pollution in a neighborhood like that because we are not really increasing anything but one street. She also pointed out that when it comes to those standards in the handbook those standards are for new and reconstructed developments and when she measured the block lengths of the North Mountain neighborhood on Google maps many of those blocks exceed the 300-400 foot recommendation found in the traditional neighborhood guidelines. When she looks at a map, she doesn't see the North Mountain neighborhood as a traditional neighborhood, it may have some elements of it but it doesn't have a total adherence to those design standards. Sylvester responded that the information she provided relates to a whole community context. The way that she looked at this is that we are adding connectivity for all travel modes and every step that you take as you move towards increasing connectivity. She stated that traditionally they do not study Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) when they do this kind of traffic analysis because it is a broad picture and it's generally done at the regional level. She went on to say all she can really speak to is the value of connectivity and helping you incrementally achieve that broader goal. Newberry said the only reason she brought up VMT is that it was on the grant application.

Newberry went onto question number six, regarding objectives in the TSP under goal four. She said she thinks we have a little bit of a disagreement about how to interpret what sorts of functions are well achieved. Goal 4a reads, "identify ways to improve street connectivity to provide additional travel routes to the state highways for bicyclists,

pedestrians, and autos". Her comment to Sylvester was that this does not provide any additional travel routes to the state highways because both sides of the creek can currently access the same routes to I5 that they would be able to if the bridge was in place. Objective 4b reads, "identify ways to provide sufficient levels of mobility and accessibility for autos, while making minimal investment in new automobile focused infrastructure". Her comment on that was this is not a minimal investment in new automobile infrastructure; this is a huge investment to serve around 3,600 cars in 2038. She added that in the grant application the bridge was only given a 20-year lifespan. 3,600 cars is not too many to put on a neighborhood collector, it doesn't have to be categorized as an avenue to be accessible; we can put up to 5,000 cars on a neighborhood collector. Objective 4c reads, "upgrade pedestrian facilities to ADA compliance standards". The reason she brought this one up is the TSP includes about 6.7 million dollars worth of gaps in the sidewalk system, which haven't been addressed yet. Although this project would be ADA compliant because it has to be, it doesn't mean that's the best way to achieve a mobility goal. Objective 4d reads "develop alternative mobility standards that allow for planned congestion to help achieve multimodal and land use objectives". She stated the idea there is that, in the United States for many years, we have known that you cannot build faster than streets become congested. She doesn't feel it is unreasonable for a community plan like the TSP to suggest that we allow and in some cases encourage congestion because the idea is to discourage people from single occupancy use of their cars, consolidate their trips, to use trip chain, to use transit/bicycle/foot etc. Newberry pointed out that in Sylvester's response to this question she did say she felt that objective 4g created comprehensive transportation system by better integrating active transportation modes with transit and travel by auto was a compliant and Newberry doesn't disagree with that but she does think the others override it. Sylvester said she could only respond that she provided her opinion where she thought things were applicable. She said if you step back and ask what exactly is the language saying and what are the terms and conditions, sometimes it's a matter of degrees but in her opinion they are met and all she can say is the words speak for themselves.

One of the bullets states the auto bridge would provide vehicle access to and from and between neighborhoods, consistent with the long term and development plans in the area. Her question was if that is the case, why weren't developers required to pay for the bridge and included when they built the road. She said she has the minutes from that meeting and it turns out when the project was being negotiated and the terms were being worked out the attorney showed up and she read from the minutes "Dick Star Attorney for the owner said the bridge is just part of the avenue. They are glad to help build the connection and they are willing to negotiate with staff responsible SDC (System Development Charge) or some type of arrangement for reimbursement for part of the cost. They do not want an LID (Local Improvement District) as part of this approval because if the bridge goes across the creek it will benefit the whole city. Newberry said we have seen in the traffic impact analysis that it really doesn't benefit the whole city because it doesn't change traffic flows and if it benefited the city it would be reducing congestion substantially somewhere. She added apparently, the attorney got his way with the LID and when she looks at the map if that development at Mountain Meadows had never gone in we wouldn't need a bridge, which is why one wasn't there in the first place. Why the developer wasn't required to contribute to the costs is a bit of a mystery to her. Faught clarified that the condition of approval was to include creation of an LID. However, Planning didn't follow through with that condition and he isn't able to speak to why that is. Newberry asked if the bridge didn't go in now and there was new development there in the future that would forecast an increase in traffic then would the developer have to contribute towards the cost? Faught said he has asked Planning that question and they feel they can't go back on that. He said he would have to talk more about that with them.

Barth asked for clarification on the response to number 7, which stated the non-remonstrance requirement did actually get implemented. Faught clarified that was supposed to say "did *not*".

Newberry spoke regarding the issue of transit. She said Faught made a compelling argument about the TAZ (Traffic Analysis Zone); however, it is not a feasibility study. She would be eager to see a feasibility study and she thinks if there is feasibility for transit it is probably logical to think that it is going to be a small bus because it isn't going to have the density. Faught said when we went through the TSP update we had a professional transit element to this, it wasn't just the engineers working on it, and we actually had RVTD's input as well. He pointed out the part that we haven't talked about yet is the funding side of it. Al Densmore is currently working on a funding package for transit statewide and it seems to have support. Al Densmore, JWA Associates, introduced himself from the audience. He said trying to predict whether this legislation will pass and/or whether or not the voters will pass it, is problematic at this point. He can say the issue of Oregon needing to support public transportation across the state, the discussion

began roughly two years ago and for the first time he heard the word transformation used in the presentation to the legislative joint committee. If this payroll tax were to be approved at one tenth of one percent, it would amount to about .39/week for someone making minimum wage. What we are talking about here is a broad based, proportionate tax that would significantly improve the prospects for supporting transit across the state. He added that what Faught is referring to is that this measure is part of what may be as much as a 500-750 million dollar overall transportation package that would improve all modes of transportation. If he were looking at one piece of transportation, whether or not it would be referred to the voters, if it were just one mode of transportation it very likely would be defeated. He believes what is trying to be formed in the legislature now is a significant response to a key need within the state and it might be that this would cause people to think there would be something in it for them no matter what their mode of transit is. He closed by saying it is difficult to know whether this will happen but it is clearly a priority of a significant portion of the legislative assembly right now.

Newberry mentioned they had talked a little bit about widths of bridges because they were a little surprised when staff came back with a 24' bridge. Previously there was discussion about this being a pedestrian bridge that could accommodate emergency vehicles. She stated that in her notes, Faught had talked about Oregon Fire Code section 503.2.1 which she looked up and it applies to access roads, not bridges. She added if you look at section 503.2.6 (bridges and elevated surfaces) that refers you to ASHTO HB17, which does not include a minimum bridge width for firetrucks. Faught said he has a memo from Margueritte Hickman, City of Ashland Fire Marshall, and he wished she was here tonight because she was very clear that this applies to this road section. Barth asked about the Normal Avenue neighborhood project because that approved an eighteen foot width, which maintains full emergency vehicle access. Faught stated there are two different standards, one is a shared road and the other is a standard street. He does not think Normal Avenue is an eighteen-foot section, although there are shared sections within the approval but he doesn't have that with him.

Young mentioned Faught's response to Newberry's last question regarding sharrows. He doesn't feel that her question was addressed and further pointed out that a super sharrow is not a sharrow. Newberry said she didn't have time to pursue it since receiving the answer but she does think the commission should look for a study on this. Faught said he thought he had answered the question specifically and apologized if it didn't come across that way. Newberry pointed out for the audience that studies show sharrows do not invite more bicycling and they do not improve safety either.

Newberry brought up that we have \$5,040,000, in addition to the \$1,500,000 that we have a grant for, programmed for the Nevada Street Bridge. She asked if that was regular program funding. Faught said she is looking at the RVMPO information and that is a reflection of the project that is budgeted. There is \$1,000,000 in SDC's and \$1,500,000 in grants and the rest would come from bonding or other methods of payment, such as what Al Densmore is assisting with. Barth asked about the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) estimate of over \$8,000,000 and asked why there is a difference. Faught said we keep hearing \$8,000,000 but he needs to clarify that. He said that was an estimate that ODOT did with a larger bridge, the bridge was going to be much longer and because we know the local circumstances, we knew we didn't need a longer bridge.

Vieville asked if the proposed bridge includes a steep access to the bridge. Jaime Jordan, Oregon Bridge Engineering Company (OBEC) responded that they calculated the vertical grade of this project that meets ASHTO standards and roadway classification, and the main bridge part is a 2.5% grade and then it will have two vertical curves that will tie-in down to Kestrel Parkway.

Councilor Seffinger said she was curious about Kestrel and the map. She said it shows it connecting to Fair Oaks but Kestrel actually dead ends and does not connect all the way through. Faught said the full phase of the project would actually have Kestrel connecting all the way through. Seffinger said as she understands it, emergency vehicles can turn onto Kestrel but they can't go all the way through. David Shepherd, City of Ashland Interim Fire Chief, said he did check with Hickman on this and her explanation of whether or not a bridge was an access road, her quick answer to that was it is up to the fire official to determine if it is an access road or not. She also said a lot of times it is hard when you are trying to interpret the language of the fire code.

Vieville wondered why the developers aren't being required to pay for the bridge when there is development

planned? Faught explained that if you read the conditions of approval, they were going to pay a proportionate share through a LID but it doesn't look like the conditions of approval were followed but we can do that for all future development.

Newberry stated one of the reasons she is against the bridge as it is being proposed is the amount of money that is going into a bridge that is on one end of town and only serves a small group of people. She pointed out that currently in the high priority fiscally constrained section of the TSP, there are \$6,755,000 worth of projects that include filling gaps in our existing sidewalk network. Since the 2012 TSP was implemented we have completed four projects, two are in progress and one is programmed (funding has been identified). There is also \$3,100,000 worth of uncompleted bicycle projects. Between those two, that is over ten million dollars. Somehow, the development driven projects are becoming more important and she isn't sure why that is. She feels this project fails to meet the goals that it says it is going to and she thinks that a pedestrian/bicycle bridge with a maximum of fourteen feet would meet some of those goals. She also opposes it because she feels it is arbitrary for us to suddenly assign planning objectives to this area that has been there for many years and is not a traditional neighborhood.

Graf said this has been a very hard project for him because people on both sides of the issue have made good points and he finds himself agreeing with points from both sides. The other issue he has with this is that it is really easy to get into the weeds, but for him he tends to look at the larger picture. He thinks some kind of connection across Bear Creek has value but the question we are facing is what kind of connection should it be, when do we do it and where does that fit into the priority listing. He said he won't go through all of the rationale over having the connection but he did add a few things. He said he looked at that the school district map and the school district sends the students that live between Bear Creek and I5 or any students that live in Mountain Meadows to Helman school and not to Walker school. These students have to go all the way down Mountain, across Hersey and then back up again to Helman, which argues for some kind of connection to help those students get to school. He added he isn't excited about Eagle Mill as a major bypass due to the overpass being narrow. He further stated for those that were a part of the TSP process, which he was not a part of, he doesn't think it is unreasonable to have this as a high priority project due to all the development that has occurred in that area since 2004. This leads him to believe that some connection is an important step and it isn't unreasonable when you are going after a grant that you would add every possible rationale for your project. He said if we were asking ourselves today if we should build a bridge or if we should put a grant in for the bridge, knowing what we know today, he would say we are not ready. He doesn't think we have traffic counts that demonstrate who will be the users of the bridge and how it affects the city as a whole and we don't have our transit feasibility study finished. He agrees with Newberry that either the bridge would have been built when the development began or we would wait until we see the final development plan which will show whether a vehicle bridge is necessary to go over the creek. Unfortunately, we have this \$1,500,000 grant available to us and we don't quite know what to do with it. He isn't ready to conclude we either need or don't need a vehicle bridge. He can't support taking it permanently off the table because they haven't done the work yet to demonstrate the need. If we do have to use the \$1,500,000 grant right away, his recommendation would be to use it as phase one of the two bridge model and use the time to study whether or not we really do need a vehicle bridge. He feels all evidence shows that a bicycle/pedestrian bridge would serve the visitors and residents east of Bear Creek. He added if he had a \$1,500,000 grant to spend on bicycle/pedestrian, he isn't sure this is where he would spend it.

Barth said during this process it was wonderful to read Paula Brown's letter and it reminded him of her project on Siskiyou Blvd. He said he wishes he felt the same about this bridge as the Siskiyou project. There has been a lot of discussion about different options for this bridge and as best as he can see it, this bridge would benefit development that is yet to exist and unfortunately he feels the Mountain Meadows community has had their hopes built up in terms of a transit connection which is very far off. For all these reasons, he would be against this project as it currently stands.

Amarotico stated she has weighed both the opinions of the advocates and the opponents and the pros and cons of having a bridge. If the bridge project were to go through, she would feel for the affected property owners. She doesn't live in this area but she spends a fair amount of time in the area and has driven through that neighborhood many, many times. With the density in that area she doesn't know how we could move away from connecting it to the rest of the city. We have to remember to take into account that this is the Ashland Transportation Commission and we have to look at what is going to serve Ashland as a whole. She said it would be easy to say she is against this project but

ultimately she feels that connectivity is a benefit to the whole community and she feels this keeps our future transportation options open. Along with Graf and Newberry she also doesn't feel that right now we have anything broken but there has been a tremendous amount of time and thought put into thinking that ultimately this has been an important project for connectivity and she isn't ready to throw that completely out. She is fine kicking it down the road to the next TSP update.

Vieville feels this is a very expensive project and the financial piece is a bit of an unknown. She doesn't feel this will be an advantage for a large part of the population and there are other things that need to be addressed. She agrees with Graf that we haven't really done the homework to justify the need currently. She also worries about how this would tie into the Climate and Energy Action Plan. She added she doesn't think kicking it down the road to the upcoming TSP process is the right step because we still don't have the need at this time, possibly the following TSP process.

Young said he appreciates every commissioner's statements and points of view. For him this is very simple, there is no need now or in the near future for this project (R17). He stated he could spend a long time talking about the process of including this project in the 2012 TSP but he feels like they were slightly misled into approving it because it wasn't presented at this scale during that process. He further added that the TSP process was sort of a flawed process. The main selling point of this project during that time was using Eagle Mill/North Mountain as the alternative route but then Faught came back to them and shared that by putting the bridge over Bear Creek this would be a way to get Jackson County to maintain Eagle Mill Road since it is a county road. In addition, pricing was about a third of what it has become and it wasn't specifically going to be an auto bridge. It wasn't demonstrated nor received to be a high priority for Ashland. The commission at that time was led to believe they were making it a high priority to get Jackson County to go along with maintaining Eagle Mill. In the future, we need to have project priorities that from the very beginning have, a very informed public process and demonstrate a need that will benefit the entire city. This project failed that at the very beginning and now it seems like they are to feel like they are violating a previous decision that was made regarding prioritizing this project during the TSP process. He added he feels the gas tax and what is currently going on in the legislature is a huge stretch. He closed by saying there are more important projects that we can use SDC's for and potential use of the RVMPO grant. We have roads that are failing, unfunded multimodal and ADA projects and we need to step back and ask if this project is the best use of our funds.

Newberry wanted to clarify everyone's thoughts before she tries to put a motion together. She thinks the people in these neighborhoods need to recognize that when you buy a home where there is undeveloped land, things change over the years and even though we don't need a bridge there now there is no guarantee that there won't be a bridge there someday. Whatever motion is made shouldn't preclude the possibility that a bridge is needed in the future. She asked the commission if this is what she heard everyone say.

Newberry pointed out that initially the commission looked at two separate bridges, one strictly for bicycles and pedestrians and one to accommodate everyone. What she sees in the TSP and in the Comprehensive Plan is that a bicycle/pedestrian bridge would achieve a lot of the connectivity goals that have been discussed. Before giving a motion she would like to know whether there is support for attempting to move the \$1,500,000 grant to a bicycle/pedestrian only bridge, with a maximum width of 10-14 feet. Young thinks we should make a clean motion about this project and if the commission wants to recommend attempting to move the grant funds to a bicycle/pedestrian bridge then that is what he would recommend.

Discussion was had regarding potential motions. Amorotico would like the motion to include delaying the project. Newberry is very concerned about delaying or deferring the project to a later process. She feels it makes the commission look like they are unable to make a decision and the idea of a TSP is to identify where the needs are. Right now we can see there are some connectivity issues but it is difficult to identify a need for an auto bridge. Once the next TSP process begins this could be something that is revisited from the beginning. Amorotico feels that since this has been on the slate since 1998 she would hate to see the current Transportation Commission completely take the project off. She feels there are several reasons that we shouldn't be jumping on this project right away but she doesn't think it should be completely dismissed. Barth said there seemed to have been a lot of different opinions of what kind of bridge was proposed in 1998 and according to Paula Brown's letter it was a different bridge than presented in project R17. Vieville pointed out that if the motion is made it doesn't mean that the project can't come up

again on its own merits during a future TSP process. Faught pointed out that he had a conversation with the Mayor and Ted Hall and they reviewed the 1998 TSP appendixes and the bridge (road bridge, bicycle/pedestrian bridge and the sidewalk) is in all of the appendixes and ultimately when the TSP was finished the recommendation was a multimodal connection. Faught also added this isn't up to the Public Works Director to decide, if there was a need or desire to have that removed that should have gone to the City Council at that time to ask them to remove or change it to a bicycle/pedestrian bridge.

**Newberry/Barth m/s recommend the City Council reject a motorized vehicle bridge as proposed in TSP project R17 (East Nevada Street bridge). This motion does not preclude the possibility of revisiting the need for a bridge in the future, if plans or conditions change.**

Discussion: Young feels that this motion is being overqualified. He would like to be sure it is understood that this motion doesn't alter the TSP. This commission can only vote up or down on this project but the added verbiage can be seen by different people in the future as a different signal. It is basically understood that a future commission body could still decide to do the project or take it out of the TSP entirely. The TSP is a 22-25 year visioning statement and changing the priority of the project should be looked at during the next TSP update. Newberry clarified that the second part of the motion just states that the commission doesn't feel like the time to do this project is now, in the future if plans and conditions change, it could be revisited.

**All ayes.**

**Motion passes unanimously.**

Vieville asked about deciding what to do with the disposition of the grant money. Faught said staff would bring that back to the next meeting for further discussion. Newberry said she would like staff to look at some potential ADA and pedestrian improvement projects when looking at what to do with these funds. Faught said what he would like to do is attend the RVMPO meeting next Tuesday and he is going to talk to them a little bit about this and see what they think we will be most likely to get approved. He added that after previously talking to them he feels confident that they could successfully get the funds transferred over to the Independent Way project. Newberry would really like to look at other things first. Young said he would make a motion not to use these funds for the Independent Way connection and attempt to go for a bicycle/pedestrian bridge over Bear Creek, if that would be the simplest path for the RVMPO.

**Newberry/Barth m/s a member of the Transportation Commission bring this decision and support for the decision to the City Council meeting (Newberry volunteered to do this).**

**All ayes.**

**Motion passes unanimously.**

#### **TASK LIST**

Discuss current action item list

#### **OLD BUSINESS**

None.

#### **FOLLOW UP ITEMS**

None.

#### **INFORMATIONAL ITEMS**

Action Summary

Accident Report

None.

Making an Impact Newsletter (February)

None.

**COMMISSION OPEN DISCUSSION**

**FUTURE AGENDA TOPICS**

Transportation System Plan update process

CIP Budgeting

**ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting was adjourned at 8:06 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Tami De Mille-Campos*

*Public Works Administrative Supervisor*