



City of Corvallis Guide to Engaging on Street Investments

The latest statistically valid survey of Corvallis community members indicate that over 80% of community members rate the City's transportation system as good or excellent. While satisfaction regarding vehicle traffic flow ranks at about 60%, the City's active transportation system garners higher ratings from community members (77% for bike travel and 83% for walking). The community can be proud about these ratings. Yet, input, feedback and questions regarding the City's transportation system ranks near the top of all interactions the Public Works Department has with community members. Input ranges across the full spectrum from requests to repave a street, expand urban-level improvements, or enhance active transportation facilities.



Discussion surrounding those requests frequently transitions to how to engage in discussions about funding priorities and specific improvements. These are fair questions, and frankly it's complicated and not always intuitive given the various limitations and restrictions on funding sources and the technical nuances that can drive priorities. Understanding the appropriate timing and scope of community input may help to reduce confusion regarding transportation projects. In alignment with the City's commitment



to the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) engagement process, this document aims to explain the City's engagement efforts and how/when community members can appropriately engage. In this way, expectations regarding community input on transportation projects can be clarified. The discussion herein is oversimplified and not comprehensive but does provide a description of an overall engagement framework in response to the most frequently asked questions from community members.

Investment Category Priority (Rate Discussions)

One of the most common requests is for changes in priority of investment categories. For example, the City routinely receives requests for investing more in improving the condition of our local streets. *(In this context, “local street” is referring to a category of streets which can be envisioned as the lower volume roads in town, like the ones in residential neighborhoods.)* The City also routinely receives requests for constructing more active transportation improvements. Interestingly, these requests are frequently accompanied by suggestions to fund less of other types of improvements in order to provide funding for the specific interest of the individual making the request.



With limited resources, the City must try to balance competing priorities and community requests, such as those described above, and consider rate adjustments to generate additional revenue when an increase in investments is deemed necessary. This balancing act and the consideration of adjustments is done annually with the City Council. These discussions are generally referred to as “rate discussions” as the end result is consideration of any potential rate adjustments.

Generally speaking, rate adjustment discussions are driven by anticipated revenues, general operating expenses, and the desired level of investment in infrastructure *(which staff refers to as capital targets)*. Capital targets are set based on funding priorities and the desired level of service. The capital targets



identified through this process will guide Strategic Operating Plan (SOP) objectives and the types of projects proposed for inclusion in the City’s Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and budget. If you are a community member who wants more funds directed to a specific category of improvement, and/or you want to change the priority for which category limited funds are spent on, you will want to participate in rate adjustment discussions. Community input received is one of many factors (the Community Survey is another) that is considered when making these policy decisions.

Note: Please keep in mind this is a generalized description to aid in discussion. Other funding sources for categories of improvements, such as System Development Charges (SDCs), have their own set of procedures and limitations but can provide meaningful revenue to support construction of certain capital projects.

Large Investment in a Specific Location (CIP & Budget)

Public Works staff uses direction received through the rate discussions described above to help guide which type of rate-funded projects are proposed for construction in the 5-year CIP document. The CIP, not the SOP, is where specific improvement projects are identified. Development and prioritization of improvement projects is complex and staff relies on a number of technical and non-technical factors in developing a proposed list of improvement projects. Examples of technical factors are the Pavement



Condition Index (PCI) and investment strategies recommended by our pavement management system. An example of a non-technical factor is coordination with a required utility or development project.

It's important to note that the use of the word "guide" in the opening sentence is intentional. The rate discussions help to identify general funding targets for rate setting purposes but there are many factors that can influence when a specific project is proposed for funding and there must be a degree of fluidity in the ability to direct funds as needs dictate at a specific point in time. As an example, if Council has prioritized pavement preservation and developed funding targets around that, staff is most likely to propose pavement preservation projects in the CIP. However, a specific pavement preservation project may also present opportunities and efficiencies for incorporating other types of improvements in that location. Staff considers needed improvements identified in master plans and area plans, history of community member input, etc. and may propose incorporation of additional improvements beyond those limited to just pavement preservation. An example of such an improvement might be the inclusion of a mid-block crossing to facilitate improved connectivity of active transportation systems in a project that is developed as a pavement preservation project. (Also see section "**Typical**" or "**Standard**" Sections and the **Transportation System Plan (TSP)** below.)

Such considerations, and whether or not they should be included with the project, are a judgement call. Smaller, lower cost improvements are easier to accommodate but larger cost additions can begin to transform a project away from its primary purpose and lead to deferral of other planned priority projects that are more consistent with the targeted investment category.

If you are a community member who is interested in the City considering prioritizing a specific rate-funded improvement within the established funding categories, or you are interested in an additional improvement being considered for incorporation with a specific project, the CIP process is the appropriate place to engage.

It is important to remember that the CIP document is a planning level document with its primary purpose being a communication tool. While it is not a budget document, projects shown in the first year of the CIP are being communicated as what is intended for inclusion in the upcoming budget cycle. Projects shown in the last four years of the CIP represent a forecast of what could be anticipated based on a snapshot in time. Variation in those last four years should be anticipated from year to year. See the City's CIP webpage and the discussion within the CIP document itself for additional information.

Small Investment in a Specific Location (Community Requests or Programmatic Investment)



The City routinely receives requests for smaller improvement projects (*as compared to major capital projects in the CIP*) throughout town for everything from new pedestrian crossings, to parking modifications, to signage and striping. There is not adequate staffing or management systems in place to adequately manage and respond to these requests in an effective manner.

Staff is currently evaluating alternatives for receiving and addressing these smaller requests and concerns. Changes aimed at improving the experience for community members and staff are being considered and may include the development of annual programs directed at the most common identified concerns/ needs. Decisions regarding programs and approaches that require additional funding will need to be addressed through the budget process and potentially the rate setting process described above.

For now, the best way for community members with this type of request or concern to engage with Public Works is by contacting the Transportation Division Manager at 541-766-6916, or by email at Rory.Rowan@corvallisoregon.gov. Please be aware that programs, funding, and staffing may not currently be in place to address your concern at this time.

Engaging During the Design Phase of a Major Road Project (Budgeted Projects Moving to Construction)

Once a street project has been budgeted, it gets assigned to a project manager that will complete the project design and develop construction documents. Public engagement is a standard part of all road projects and routinely includes making contact with adjacent property owners. While the scope of the project is defined at the CIP stage, there are smaller design-phase level aspects of a project that typically need to be worked through. Some of those are related to impacts from construction activity, such as retaining access during construction, while others are related to physical improvements like driveway transitions, drainage, or landscaping.

Similar to discussing these design-phase level impacts with neighboring property owners, general users of the road system may also have information that is important to consider during the design phase. For example, if bicyclists struggle with an existing transition from an on-street system to an off-street system, that would be good for the design engineer to know. To facilitate collection of this type of input, as well as receive feedback on planned project elements, staff is developing additional ways for community members to engage, consistent with appropriate IAP2 processes. However, it is important to realize that engagement is not intended to facilitate proposals to amend the scope already established through the CIP and budget process, nor is it intended to facilitate a public review and comment period on an engineered set of technical construction drawings; neither would be appropriate.

Staff is pursuing two primary means of facilitating the engagement described above. The first approach is targeted at engaging the active transportation community which tends to be where staff receives the most requests for input during the design phase. In an effort to engage with this portion of the community during the design phase, staff has partnered with the Corvallis Sustainability Coalition's Transportation Action Team (TAT). Staff and the TAT will work together to meaningfully engage the public through open public meetings. City staff recognizes the additional work this places on the TAT and appreciates their willingness to help promote community engagement. It is important to note that the TAT is not serving

in the role of a formal policy board, they are simply helping city staff engage the public on active transportation aspects of major street projects.

The second approach will rely on the same material shared through the TAT being placed on the Public Works webpage with contact information for the project manager. This is not as much a “request” for input as it is an “opportunity” for input for those that didn’t attend the TAT or have other general design-phase level concerns they wish to make staff aware of. Meaning, we are attempting to raise awareness and provide opportunities to contact staff but we aren’t suspending delivery of the project by providing a formal comment period like is sometimes utilized in other city business, such as the CIP.

The City may also engage with other organizations, such as the Chamber or Oregon State University, on a project-by-project basis when staff determines necessary.

Street design is a highly technical endeavor and requires that the designer carefully balance various design elements prior to putting their profession seal on a set of construction plans.

Changing a Standard or Specification (Design Criteria Manual and Construction Specifications)

Sometimes there are questions or concerns regarding standard installations. For example, community members with a specific mobility challenge may favor one ADA compliant installation over another, or users of a facility feel more safe using one compliant style facility over another. It is probably obvious that these situations create challenges, given the subjective nature of personal preferences. There are plenty of examples where staff has made adjustments to address community concerns only to have a new wave of concerns be received following the adjustment. All this to say, balancing personal preferences across the entire city can be challenging. In the end, we will rely on our staff’s professional judgement in determining the best solution. However, if you have a specific question about a type or style of improvement being installed across town you can let Public Works know by contacting the City Engineer at 541-766-6916, or by email at Jeff.McConnell@corvallisoregon.gov.

“Typical” or “Standard” Sections and the Transportation System Plan (TSP)

During engagement efforts, it is not uncommon to receive questions about “standard” cross sections and “typical” features identified for various road classifications in the City’s TSP. In many instances, the questions stem from these terms being taken literally and out of context with supporting text. Consequently, some clarification seems appropriate for this document.

The TSP is what is generally referred to as a master plan. Communities rely on master plans for their street, utility, and parks systems. A master plan is a document that assesses the current system, identifies existing deficiencies and appropriate corrections, and plans for growth. In that process, the plans identify necessary capital projects and provide estimates of probable cost. Those costs are then used for calculating SDC’s that are paid through development, and also for rate planning. Generalized assumptions must be made in that process as masterplans are not design level documents. For example, in a water master plan, it might show the extension of a 20” water main straight across 200 acres of farm field. That doesn’t mean that is the final route of that waterline, it just means that the system needs that size of line to serve growth to that general area and beyond. The



actual physical route might not be known until more design work is done. Similarly for transportation, design level detail isn't done for every street in the TSP.

When the words "standard" and "typical" in the TSP are taken out of context, it can lead to unachievable expectation in the community. The use of these terms is not intended to mean that they will apply to every road and every situation across town. Rather, they are intended more generically, consistent with typical master planning level descriptions.

Generally speaking, they represent what people should expect for new (greenfield) construction of major facilities, meaning major extensions across previously undeveloped properties. Here too though, there are factors like steep slopes, or protected natural features that might lead to variations. Greenfield extensions are the most common place you will see "standard" cross sections with "typical" features. The TSP notes that the use of "typical" when applied to a specific feature only means that sufficient space for the feature was included in the standard dimensions for that classification's right-of-way requirements (see page 89 of the TSP). That is much different than saying that amenity is typical to every street, existing or new, with that classification.

The TSP also acknowledges that "standard" sections aren't practical in every situation, especially in already built environments. As it relates to development proposals, there is a lot of discussion about this starting on page 94 of the TSP. While the need to respond to various constraints by varying the design is important for new development, it is equally or more important for City initiated projects in already built environments. Whether it is land use type, natural features, existing right-of-way, building locations, or other related improvements on private property, the ability to place the "standard" on any given existing street in a built environment is challenged. What ends up happening in these situations is that the "standard" becomes more of a goal. When staff is developing a street reconstruction project they look towards that goal, compare it to constraints, and do their best to achieve that goal or balance the intent for various modes. The term street reconstruction was used intentionally here as that is when the most opportunities to make changes to existing streets present themselves. Street restoration projects like overlays present much less opportunity but can be a time to reconsider utilization of existing space and potential striping related improvements. There are times when a preservation project may be needed as an interim improvement with a larger reconstruction or expansion project still possible in the future to install other "standard" or "typical" features identified in the TSP.

In most instances, the proposed improvements resulting from this process are described in the project description for each CIP project. Any comments regarding the proposed improvements for a specific project are most appropriately received during the CIP process.