

## Circle March 14 TAT comments responses

General information about project scope and timing: Throughout the comments and questions received from some community members with a particular interest in active transportation improvements was an opinion that the current project's scope and budget were not "enough". These opinions were also typically accompanied with questions about why the timing for construction couldn't be delayed so that additional study and design to include more features could occur. There are many reasons as to why delaying and further studying the proposed project would not be advisable. Some key reasons include funding limitations and the purpose and intent of the original project as proposed. Additional information related to these points follows.

- The City has three primary funding streams for transportation expenditures and these each have their own unique constraints. They are:
  - Fuel tax - Oregon communities receive a portion of State fuel tax revenue to assist with maintenance and operations. Due to an erosion over time of other funding sources such as property tax dollars due to constitutional measures passed by Oregon voters in the 1990s, Corvallis uses the majority of its share of fuel tax revenue from the State to fund annual ongoing street operations such as sweeping, winter response, pothole patching, sidewalk repairs, electricity for street lighting, vegetation trimming, and traffic signal upkeep. Costs are increasing at a higher rate than revenues and the reliability of future fuel tax revenue is questionable given the growth in electric vehicle use and the impact that higher fuel prices have on consumption.
  - Transportation Maintenance Fee (TMF) - This is the one source of funding Corvallis has the greatest degree of control over. First collected beginning in 2006, it is a monthly charge on city services bills. While the Corvallis Municipal Code (CMC) allows for a small portion of the collected fees to be spent on pedestrian and bicycle safety projects, it restricts their use largely to pavement preservation activities. The important context to know is that the fee amount was largely flat for its first 10 years of existence and after, slowly drifting up for a few years. It's only in the last three years that major increases were made to it by City Council to "catch up" on years of deferred street pavement conditions.
  - System Development Charges (SDCs) - Oregon communities may charge new development and certain redevelopment projects to help fund capacity increasing street projects. The Street SDC methodology and associated project list that facilitates expenditures on specific improvements has not been updated to reflect the 2018 TSP. Staff recently reinitiated this project. Once complete, this will create additional opportunities to spend SDC money on eligible projects identified in the TSP.
- While the TMF has been substantially increased in recent years, leading to greater revenues for street projects than ever before, this does not translate directly to open-ended scopes for these projects. They remain largely pavement preservation in nature as intended in the municipal code. The TMF revenues are not intended to be used to conduct studies or implement many of

the unfunded projects listed in the City's TSP just because they are along or intersect with a street in need of pavement preservation. The same is true of many of the requests and suggestions from the community about features to include in the projects' scopes. However, when projects are developed, staff reviews the TSP to see if there are improvements critical to incorporate in conjunction with the base project. Where this critical relationship exists, such as where implementing a TSP high priority improvement would involve removing and replacing something significant within the base project, staff focuses on finding options for coordinating the improvements.

- Despite adopting a comprehensive update to its Transportation System Plan (TSP) in 2018, the Corvallis community has not actually created any associated funding source for many of the projects contained within it. This means that while there is a long list of worthy and exciting projects, much of them cannot advance in the foreseeable future with the very limited funding sources the City does have available and the restrictions placed upon them by either State law or local municipal code. Desired categories and levels of funding for capital projects and resulting fee impacts will be a topic of Council discussion later this year.
- This project was not proposed or budgeted as a street reconstruction or redevelopment project, only as a pavement preservation project. Slowing down the needed pavement preservation to study or discuss these other TSP projects or community ideas would be counterproductive because in the meantime the street conditions would continue to deteriorate while costs increase considerably with delay. And given funding limitations, expanding scope or increased costs resulting from delay would require canceling or deferring other planned capital improvements.
- Those interested in participating in project development or funding priority and levels of investment discussions can engage at the appropriate times as identified in *A Guide to Engaging in Street Investments*, a document put together by staff to advise the community on this topic.

Question/Comment: Can the speed limit be changed on this section of Circle with the project?

Answer: A speed limit evaluation is not dependent on coordination with this project. The project is not constructing elements that are designed specifically for any particular speed so they will not constrain the ability to change the street's speed in the future, if appropriate. However, the City is not currently in the position to initiate a speed study on this street. While the speed limit changed on 9th Street recently, it was after a study by the State and during a time that the City had more staff and resources available than it currently does. Posted speed limits in Oregon are determined by a combination of state law that sets "statutory" speeds for certain streets and areas and "speed zone orders" that the State issues to change speed limits after an extensive and time consuming review process that is tightly controlled by state regulations. The state sets speeds based on a number of factors, including what people are actually driving, not what people may want the speed to be. As a result, a potential outcome of a speed study is for an increase in the speed limit, not a decrease that some desire. Staff shortages and high workloads mean that the City is not currently initiating any new speed studies except under extenuating circumstances. It should be noted that it is within the City's purview to post reduced speeds in construction zones for safety purposes and that will likely take place, but the posted speed will be returned to its current status upon completion of the project.

Question: Why was a road diet/lane reallocation not considered or is not being done with this project?

Answer: The purpose of the project is to replace failing pavement. When doing so, current practice on a road with this classification, is to look for additional improvements identified in the TSP that may make sense to incorporate with the project (if funding allows) such as the incorporation of buffered bike lanes with the final product. Unlike the previous Circle Boulevard pavement preservation project, which required the elimination of travel lanes to implement buffered bike lanes, we are able to accommodate buffered bike lanes by adjusting existing lane widths with this project. When a near term, larger scale, road diet type evaluation is desired, it really needs to be done before a project is moved forward for funding, or incorporated in the original scope/budget/schedule for that project. A desire for such an evaluation was not identified during scoping and would not be appropriate to add at this stage. The proposed improvements with this project will not preclude future consideration of road diet/lane reallocation improvements and delaying to accommodate such an evaluation would have unfavorable cost implications.

Question: How can there be better biking and walking connections made at the Circle and OR Hwy 99W intersection (e.g., to and from the shared use path, at or across the railroad tracks, around turn lanes, etc.)?

Answer: This location is not within the project limits of the pavement preservation project. Adding project scope of this degree would not be appropriate at this phase. Please see *A Guide for Engaging in Street Investments* for a description of when to engage at a scoping level for capital projects. Although not appropriate to consider at this time, there are nuances about this location that are worth mentioning. This is a complicated location with a number of projects identified in the TSP intended to improve all modes of travel, but that will be competing for right-of-way space. As a result, any improvements to the intersection will need to be considered comprehensively. To further complicate things, these projects are not fully within the City's ability to completely address. OR Hwy 99W is a state highway and its intersection with Circle (including the traffic signal) is owned and maintained by the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT). The same is true of the shared use path along the highway's east side to the south (eventually transitioning to City ownership/maintenance near where it crosses under the highway itself). Any changes to this intersection with Circle and the shared use path along the highway require the cooperation of and approval of ODOT. Similarly, any changes to the railroad crossing, even sidewalk or shared use path connections across it require going through a lengthy and often very difficult process known as a "rail order" that is overseen and regulated by ODOT and must also have participation from the railroad itself.

Question: Why can't some sort of physical protection be installed in the bike lane buffer or why can't one lane be repurposed as two-way bicycle facility?

Answer: Consistent with the TSP, current approaches are to attempt to facilitate buffered bike lanes on roads with this classification. Protected bike lanes are a tool that could be used but aren't currently a standard consideration on all road projects. We understand that soon after the TSP was adopted, some

community members felt that the identified buffered bike lane approach should be replaced with a protected bike lane approach; however, that has not occurred. If that is considered in the future, there are some challenges that will need to be worked through, such as street sweeping and cleaning to keep the protected area clear for road users. Repurposing lanes for a two-way bicycle facility would also have additional considerations and falls in line with what would be required for a larger road diet analysis as touched on above. Nothing about the proposed Circle project would prevent further improvements of this nature from being implemented in the future if determined appropriate.

Question: A new enhanced crossing of Circle with a median island is part of the project at Jack London. Why are median islands and curb extensions (sometimes called bulb outs) not included at other locations on the corridor?

Answer: The scope of the project and budget limitations are largely maintenance in nature with the primary focus being the rehabilitation/reconstruction of failing pavement along the corridor and upgrading adjacent sidewalk curb ramps as required to meet current federal regulations. The addition of the median island at Jack London was a late addition to the project during design, not included in the original scope or budget, in response to community requests and recognition that this is the intersection of two elements of the City's "low stress" network for walking and bicycling as designated in the TSP. Due to its configuration as a T-intersection, the center lane on the east side does not serve as a turn lane and therefore can be used for a median island without trading off benefits for one travel mode versus another (e.g., driving versus walking and bicycling). It also provides an additional enhanced crossing opportunity roughly midway between the two signalized crossings. At other intersections along the corridor, either a space like this does not similarly exist, such as at the four leg intersections at Four Acre Place and at Walnut, or they are in closer proximity to these two signalized intersections, and pedestrians are encouraged to cross at the signal. Consequently, staff would not recommend any additional median islands with Circle's current configuration. If the space were reconfigured in the future, then that would be the time to do another evaluation of potential median island locations. Nothing about the current project's construction would prevent this in the future.

Question: Why were dedicated right turn lanes at locations such as Four Acre Place and Walnut not considered/proposed for removal with the project?

Answer: Staff does not recommend removal of the right turn lanes as they provide a measure of vehicle efficiency that helps to reduce congestion without compromising active mode access. Pedestrian crossings are protected by the signal, and while the presence of a right turn lane does result in a bicycle/motor vehicle merging point, elimination of the lane would introduce a right-hook conflict which is equally, if not more problematic for bicyclists.

Question: Why were roundabouts not considered for replacing the traffic signals at the intersections along the corridor?

Answer: The purpose and scope of this project is to replace failing pavement. The project was not undertaken with the intent of reevaluating existing intersection infrastructure such as signals. The time to consider an alternative treatment, if desired, is when the signals are planned for replacement. Additionally, the TSP did not identify these locations as potential candidates for roundabouts, as it did for other locations throughout town. Although not related to our current project, when considering roundabouts, it is important to keep in mind that while they are quite effective, they tend to require more space and have higher costs than signals. This information is not provided to suggest dismissing them, rather, it is provided because it is important to understand that those implications can have an impact on when and where they may be feasible.

Question: Why are flashing beacons not included at the new crossing and median island at Jack London?

Answer: As noted above, the crossing was a late, but necessary, addition to the project. The crossing was designed with the ability to install pedestrian flashing beacons, but at the time of the March virtual meeting, the timing of the installation had not been decided. Subsequent to that meeting, staff identified that the minimum criteria set forth in City policy for the establishment of pedestrian flashing beacons is met at this location, and as a result, they will be installed in conjunction with the new island and marked crosswalk.

Question: Why are trees not being planted with this project and how can they be?

Answer: As previously explained, the scope of the project and budget limitations are largely maintenance in nature with the primary focus being the rehabilitation/reconstruction of failing pavement along the corridor and upgrading adjacent sidewalk curb ramps as required to meet current federal regulations. Most of the funding for the project comes from the City's Transportation Maintenance Fee (TMF) which would not be appropriate to use in this instance. The City does have an Urban Forestry Fee that is also charged on city services bills that does help to plant and maintain street trees however it is managed by the City's Parks and Recreation Department, not Public Works and has its own annual plan for spending priorities which typically do not align well with following street maintenance and capital projects. Public Works will pass the requested consideration of additional street trees on to the Park Department. If additional information regarding street trees is desired, community members should contact the Parks Department.

Question: Will the railroad crossings be replaced with this project?

Answer: Construction work over and adjacent to railroad crossings requires permission and cooperation from the Railroad. While staff has made repeated attempts to engage the Railroad in a partnership to include the crossings in this project, they have been unresponsive. Maintenance of the crossings is the responsibility of Portland and Western Railroad whose staff can be contacted via the email addresses found on their [website](#).

Question: Can vehicle lanes be further reduced to provide wider bike lanes and will the gutter panels which serve as the bike lane be replaced?

Answer: The TSP identifies typical vehicle travel lane widths on arterial roadways as 11-feet. Staff looked at balancing vehicle and bike lane widths in this corridor based on several factors: it is a major vehicle freight route, connects two state highways, carries a high volume of traffic, and has an existing wide gutter that serves as a bike lane. Because of the higher volume and percentage of large vehicles, staff is not comfortable reducing vehicle lane widths below 10.5 feet. In addition, the gutter pan is not planned for replacement, and while striping the bike lane wider than the pan would create additional width, that type of additional width is typically avoided by bicyclists because of the asphalt/concrete seam.

Question: Will there be additional public outreach on this project, and what are the expectations for outreach on similar projects in the future?

Answer: Staff will continue its public outreach efforts with a focus on communicating with residents, businesses, and property owners whose access will be directly impacted by the project. This outreach will include the McGrath's property, where there have been preliminary development discussions with the City which included frontage improvements that would eliminate a driveway and make other changes that better accommodate the flow and interaction of bicyclists, pedestrians, and motor vehicles in the immediate area. Staff cannot speculate whether or not these plans will come to fruition, but will continue to coordinate with developers as opportunities present themselves.

Concurrent with construction, and especially prior to any significant disruption of corridor traffic, staff will initiate a broader communication effort with the community.

With respect to the longer term strategy for outreach, partnering with the Corvallis Sustainability Coalition's Transportation Action Team (TAT) to provide an outreach forum was a very positive experience for this project. With the TAT's concurrence, we hope to use this forum for future projects as well. Both staff and the participants in the recent meeting agree that there is a benefit to coordinating future meetings at an earlier stage in the development of CIP projects, and staff will look to do so in the future.