

Introductory Open House Summary Report

Introduction

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) is looking at ways to enhance safety and increase mobility in the East Wenatchee Valley. The purpose of the Eastside Corridor project, also known as the SR-28 Environmental Impact Statement Study, is to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), a detailed study that examines the environmental impacts of the alternatives under consideration for enhancing safety and improving north-south traffic flow east of the Columbia River. The end result of the EIS process is the identification of a preferred alternative that complies with all Federal and State environmental laws.

An Introductory Open House was held to introduce the Eastside Corridor project to the public and to solicit their comments. The event occurred on Wednesday, March 21, 2001 from 5:00pm - 8:00pm at the Douglas County PUD Auditorium at 1151 Valley Mall Parkway in East Wenatchee, WA. The open house was free and open to the general public.

This document provides an overview of the Open House process, a summary of public comment and a verbatim record of public comments.

The Open House Format

The Introductory Open House was the first of five public involvement events to be held over the two-year course of the Eastside Corridor project. The goal of the open house was two-fold: to provide information to the public on project's goals, objectives and outcomes and to gather public comment on the information presented.

A press release was distributed to local media outlets on February 22, 2001 that provided background information on the project and announced the March 21st open house. In addition, a postcard announcing the open house was mailed to approximately 9,600 residents and businesses in East Wenatchee. Postcards were mailed to all postal customers residing in the 98802 zip code, and arrived in mailboxes during the week of March 12, 2001.

Approximately 85 people attended the Open House. Participants were asked to sign in upon their arrival. As participants entered the auditorium, they were given a handout summarizing the Eastside Corridor project, the goals of the evening, and instructions on how to provide comments (please see Attachment A). Other handouts included a comment form (Attachment B) and a copy of the first project newsletter (Attachment C).

After signing in and receiving handouts, participants visited six stations, each displaying information on a key component of the project:

- Station A: Project Overview
- Station B: EIS Process
- Station C: Traffic
- Station D: Engineering
- Station E: Public Involvement
- Station F: Comments/Map

Participants had an opportunity to speak to members of the project team, to learn about the different components of the project, and also to express their thoughts, concerns, and opinions about the project. Participants' comments were recorded on the flip charts located at each station. Participants were also asked to respond to four questions via a written comment form. Comment forms were collected at the open house, and could also be sent via mail, fax or e-mail.

All comments received from the public will be included in the project history and will be distributed to all project team members. All comments will be taken into consideration by project team members and will guide the project's development as it progress through each phase. A summary of public comment gathered from flip charts and written comment forms follows in the next section. Verbatim public comment can be found in the subsequent section.

Summary of Public Comment

Open house participants generally agreed that congestion along SR-28 is an issue negatively impacting life in their community. However, finding the solution to the problem was less clear, and participants were divided in their opinions on what the solution should be. Many feel a new highway must be constructed in order to meet the community's year-round traffic demands. Alignment possibilities suggested by participants include a riverfront route and a bench route. Another prevalent opinion is that making improvements to the existing SR-28, such as widening the roadway, is the best solution. For the purpose of this report, public comments are divided into the following four categories:

- New alignments
- Suggested improvements to the existing roadway
- Causes of Congestion
- Miscellaneous Comments

A summary of the major themes for each category follows below.

New Alignments

The two alignment possibilities most frequently suggested were the riverfront route and the bench route. Opinion was equally divided for and against both of these alternatives. Those in support of the riverfront route feel it is most logical because WSDOT already owns the right-of-way. Critics of the riverfront route feel that a road along the riverfront will destroy what is widely seen to be the community's greatest asset. However, others feel the road and the trail can exist together, and that the riverfront route will actually enhance public access to the river and trail, while creating a scenic drive.

The bench route was the other most frequently suggested route, with an equal number of participants stating this as their preferred alignment option. Many feel that a highway along the riverfront would create a barrier separating the river from the community. Others feel that a riverfront route would just move the problem of congestion down to the riverfront, without actually solving the problem. Many stated that the bench route was the best long-term solution to alleviate the problems of north-south congestion. Those opposing the bench route cited concern over the impacts of steep grades on trucks, which are seen as vital to the region's economic well-being.

Many supporters of either the bench route or the riverfront route feel these are better alternatives than just increasing capacity on the existing SR-28. A major benefit cited is that both options divert traffic away from residential neighborhoods. As one participant commented, "Residential areas shouldn't have a freeway going down the middle." Many participants who commented in this way supported either the bench route or the riverfront route, but did not prefer one over the other. Pedestrian safety, particularly that of children near schools, was a major consideration.

Suggested Improvements to the Existing Roadway

Improving the existing SR-28 was another frequently mentioned solution. Some felt this to be the best solution overall, while others felt that improving SR-28 is a good solution in the short term, with construction of a new highway offering the best solution for meeting long term needs and projected growth. Widening the existing SR-28 to four or five lanes was the most common suggestion given by those favoring improvements to SR-28. Another suggested solution is to add a dedicated turn lane. Other suggested improvements included the construction of pedestrian overpasses near schools, designation of SR-28 as a controlled access highway, and also limiting signalization.

Causes of Congestion

Participants were asked to share their experiences with transportation problems along SR-28. The most common causes of congestion stated by participants were: frequent stops made by school buses, the high volume of truck traffic, and congestion at the approaches to both the George Sellars Bridge and the Odabashian Bridge. The SR-28/Grant Road intersection at the George Sellars Bridge was frequently cited as the worst bottleneck on SR-28. Another common complaint was the difficulty of making left turns to enter and exit SR-28. Finally, concern was raised about the conflict between pedestrians and vehicular traffic, as SR-28 is routed through a residential area.

Miscellaneous Comments

A variety of solutions were given by participants aimed at improving traffic flow in the corridor, some relating to SR-28, and others focusing on other areas. Several participants proposed creating one-way couplets, using Cascade Avenue and SR-28 or possibly Baker Avenue to keep traffic moving at a steady pace. Not all agreed this is a viable option. One participant opposed to this idea stating, "One-way would be detrimental to getting fruit to warehouses." The addition of a third bridge was offered by many as a solution to the problem of congestion around the George Sellars and Odabashian bridges. While not directly related the Eastside Corridor project, but relating to traffic flow in the corridor vicinity, several participants expressed their desire to build a new route down from Fancher Heights in order to accommodate expected growth in area. Two suggested alignments were from Fancher Heights to the Odabashian Bridge and alternatively, Fancher Heights down to 27th Street.

Verbatim Public Comments

Station A: Project Overview

- Plan for the future capacity needs — get out of town. The bench route makes the most sense. See requirements for 4-lane highway to I-90.
- River should be preserved for tourism and local recreational use — no concrete jungle there.
- Lots of folks think river route is a done deal.
- Make pullouts for school buses — they create the most back-ups.
- One-way couplet and widen southern extent thru 9th bottleneck between 9th and 5th. Bring Fancher Heights down to Odabashin Bridge — bottleneck created if it comes down on 27th to Sunset. Alternative 5 is the perfect route Badger (?) up onto bench.
- Highway road along river above trail — provide one-way access road with parking for river access.
- Bottleneck at Odabashin Bridge and George Sellars Bridge future extension on up to Baker Flats.
- Add a lane to George Sellars Bridge-remove sidewalks to outside or overhead. Widening Sunset won't help. Still have bottlenecks at bridges and as people come off the hill.
- School buses create bottleneck on Sunset and NW Cascade.
- One-way couplets won't work.
- One-way couplets will work.
- DOT already owns land by river—find a way to cohabitate with residents and trail users.
- River is the best community asset—highway would create a barrier, cutting town off from the River.
- *Response to previous comment:* This is not true; the highway would add more public access instead of private luxury homes.
- Despite right of way ownership, shorelines restrictions require purchase of more land, which makes it more expensive than other alternatives.
- Traffic will still get clogged at bottlenecks unless a facility is built that disperses traffic.
- Construct a pedestrian overpass over Sunset Hwy for kids to get to school (Cascade and Kenroy Elementary Schools).
- Growers' perspective: For orchards along Cascade, a one-way would be detrimental to getting fruit to warehouses. Need to go north.
- Lots of solutions searching for a problem. Real estate values going down...No traffic problems here.

- Bench route makes sense to help north-south traffic flow — avoids bottleneck at George Sellars Bridge and environmental problems along river.
- Bottleneck at 15th and south steep — especially at commuting times.
- Highway should be along river where WDOT has right of way already avoid using 27th as a major thoroughfare. Connect directly to Odabashin.
- Bottleneck is at approaches to George Sellars Bridge overpass at Grant and 28. Separate traffic to eliminate left turn conflict onto Grant.
- Build it along the river first then fix other problems. Bottlenecks at bridges on both sides—fix with approach.
- Columbia Street underpass to get Alcoa trucks and workers off Mission Street.
- Keep road up on bench—ruin the riverfront and create bigger traffic jams if along river.
- Put it on the land along the river that the state already owns.
- If not on the riverfront, then along Cascade—cheapest, displaces fewest people.
- 27th Street proposal not good.
- River route is best, as right-of-way is in ownership and 90% of freight comes out by truck.
- Grades up to bench to steep.
- Grades not too steep! See North Bend chamber—they did it and it worked successfully.
- Great business development opportunity near airport.
- Fancher Heights to airport is the best route.
- Turn Sunset into 4 or 5-lane highway.
- Bypass up on bench is good solution.
- 27th down from Fancher Heights will help distribute traffic—relieves traffic on Valley View Blvd.
- New highway along the river makes most sense.
- School buses and fruit trucks cause most backups on Sunset due to stoplights at bottom of hills.
- Don't further degrade residential areas on Sunset, Baker, and Cascade. Use riverfront corridor or bench route.
- Road along river will enhance public access and create scenic route.

- Don't spend any more taxpayer money trying to build a riverfront highway. The courts have ruled it illegal.
- Strongly oppose increasing signalization on Hwy 28/Sunset Hwy—impedes traffic flow creates unsafe, hazardous congestion from mix of commercial and residential vehicles.
- Support building bench route connecting Odabashian Bridge (SR 2/28/4)-Douglas County Port before (build OB route) compromising north-south corridor with new construction.
- Design east and west approaches/George Sellar Bridge before determining north-south corridor route. Otherwise what to connect to?
- Odabashian bench route is only long-term solution. Don't waste money on short-term fixes. Third bridge between 19th East and 5th West.
- Build it along the river where it was supposed to go in the first place. There will still be room for the trail.
- Road from Fancher needs to go to Odabashian Bridge not 27th.
- Highways along waterfronts are a thing of the past. 4-lane Sunset in long term, designate an upper bench corridor and protect it for future use. The wenatcheeworld.com pulse poll shows upper bench as a preferred alternative.
- The best choice (in my view) would be to expand the existing Sunset Hwy (4-5 lanes) and develop a phased approach from Odabashian to Pangborn (Rock Island) by 1) Odabashian to Fancher, and 2) Fancher to Pangborn. Riverfront route may be too expensive and litigious (unless analysis shows otherwise).

Station B: EIS Process

- Buy right-of-way and build water grade.
- Analyze the “bench” route connector to Batterman Road. *Another participant added to this comment:* with an on/off ramps North Bridge area-NE Grant Rd area and south Hwy 28 to keep traffic flowing.
- No commercial vehicle will use the bench route. One-way Sunset and one-way Cascade and connect at dam.
- Maybe Baker one-way?
- No more traffic through established residential areas. Build riverfront or bench route.
- Don't need more traffic through residential neighborhoods.
- There is wildlife (endangered) by our house daily. We live on Sunset. I think the people are beginning to be the endangered species. Put it over the wheat fields.

- Use the bench route connecting Batterman and Blue Grade to Odabashian Bridge so as to allow for business investment and development in the only available (other than Malaja) business development are in the Central Wenatchee Basin! The truckers scream all the way to the bank.
- The river route is the most logical. Lets get on with it!!!
- River route—already have right of way and room for expansion. Cloverleaf at Odabashian.
 - One-way road between road and trail—slow.
 - Extend end of river trail up to Baker Flats to include industrial development catch past 3rd street as far as you can without too much of a jog.
 - Ridge route will open it up for development
 - Couplet does not allow for expansion
- Connect port to port (Chelan County Port District to Douglas County Port District). Economic development is headed that way.

Station C: Traffic

- Majority of traffic destination is East Wenatchee or South Wenatchee.
- Bring Wenatchee Avenue traffic up through government owned park-and-ride to missing and access two lanes straight across the bridge to East Wenatchee.
- Wenatchee needs to do something with south end bridge traffic.
- We need another bridge.
- Either widen Sunset Highway or put highway along riverfront.
- Bypass residential areas, either riverfront or bench route.
- Provide alternate route from Fancher heights to relieve congestion on Sunset. Will add over 300 homes there.
- Route 5 has the best alignment for all traffic.
- Fix Mission and Chelan at the same time.
- Take license plate survey at times that will not skew results of local traffic only.
- River route will not inhibit recreation use-it will enhance it! I have seen where it worked in Chicago and Niagara Falls, Canada (not US).
- True for above if not a high-speed corridor.
- Having a river route with better access to the river a plus, however, not a main thoroughfare.
- Bench route for needs of others beside truck route (residential and tourist traffic).

- Survey growers who haul their own fruit.
- Communities are totally dependent on truck traffic-home construction, store inventories, groceries, etc. Need to plan for commercial traffic as well as residential traffic a lot/days.

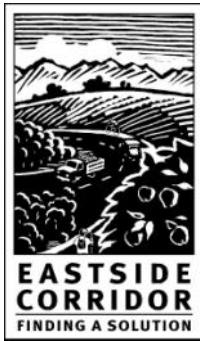
Station D: Engineering

- Finish south bridge study before making plans for N-S corridor.
- The road needs to be by the river.
- No more traffic on Sunset! Need another route (bench route)
- Stay away from the Columbia River.
- We have the land and we have the plan now lets just do it!
- Save our most valuable resource, the river, and build an alternate bench route.
- Maintain access to river resources. This is a real value for the community. Favor bench route with limited access that ties with the entire East Wenatchee/Rock Island community.
- Maybe a new bridge off 4th Avenue that ties directly to East Wenatchee/Wenatchee
- Do not think any more bridges between the existing bridges will solve any of the congestion.
- Look to the future-need to bypass East Wenatchee. No city builds roads into cities-they use exits.
- The bench route makes sense.
- We do not want to only give free access to Fancher Heights! The bench route up or lower needs to have main arteries to access all East Wenatchee like 19th, 9th, Grant and maybe 27th. In other words, create a beltway around East Wenatchee.
- Tax me-You WSDOT!
- Have a green card to solve this problem. Listen to INCA and your young engineers who know what the solutions are and what the rest of the towns like us are doing. Build the roads that work, not that appease local politically connected folks!
- Put the highway by the river where the DOT already owns the land. The viaduct is already there. The school buses are dangerous for our kids and I see cars not stopping for buses. We have endangered wildlife right by the highway. I am beginning to feel endangered!
- Sunset going north. Cascade going south.
- Third bridge from 19th on east to 5th on W.

- Bench route would be best for long-term solution.
- Along river makes most sense too much grade on bench for trucks-rest of highway is along river (down to dam)—pretty drive above the trail-provide access to the trail with parking.
- If along river, provide overpass to get to trail and parking.
- Harvest doesn't cause problems between 27th and Odabashian Bridge along Sunset.
- George Sellars Bridge is the biggest bottleneck especially from Grant Road and from Wenatchee (Columbia).
- Left turns on Sunset are the biggest concern, especially places with no middle turn lane.
- Turn Empire and Cascade into one-way streets.
- Worst congestion is between Grant and George Sellars Bridge due to the fact that the two lights at 28 and the next street east are too close together. North-south and east-west primary routes share the same road section between Grant and George Sellars Bridge.

Station E: Public Involvement

- Keep information involving all of the community. This is a regional issue.
- People in Wenatchee need to be involved too.
- No they don't!!!
- Get a bunch of maps from the Chamber of Commerce and have available at future meetings.
- Decisions should involve those residents who are most at risk.
- Protect schools from impact so increasing traffic. Develop routes that do not compromise the safety of school children and the surrounding neighborhoods.



Welcome to the Eastside Corridor Open House

March 21, 2001
5:00 – 8:00pm

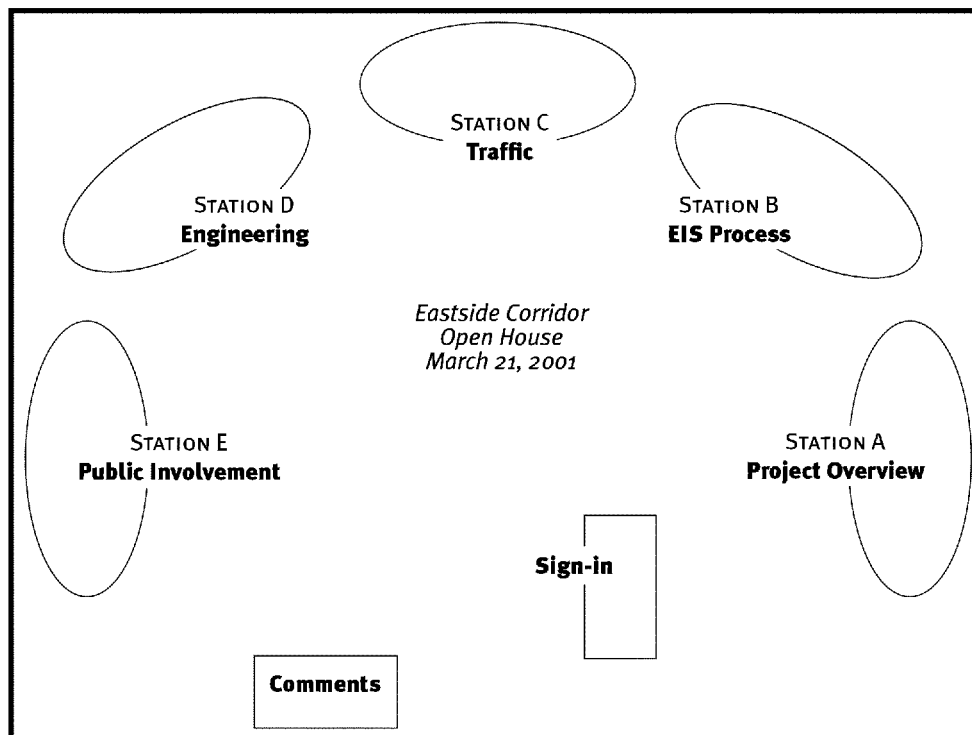
Purpose

1. To share information with you about the project's goals, objectives, and outcomes.
2. To get your thoughts on this project.

How to participate

Please look at the displays and the information they provide. You may direct your questions and comments to the staff at each of the display areas. You may also make comments by:

- Writing it on the large sheets provided near the displays;
- Filling out the attached comment sheet and leaving it in the comment box or mailing it to the address listed on it; or
- Writing or e-mailing the Eastside Corridor project representative at the addresses provided on the comment sheet.



We hope you find the Eastside Corridor Open House informative.
Thank you for your time and interest.
Your participation is key to the success of our work.



Comment Form

Please take a few minutes to fill out this comment form. Your ideas are important to us and will help guide our work in the right direction.

1. Do you have personal experience with transportation problems in East Wenatchee and with SR-28? Are any of these problems seasonal? Please explain.

2. How do you think SR -28 can be improved?

3. Are there alignment options you would like to see considered?

4. Other comments?

If you would like to be included on the project mailing list, please provide the following information:

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Organization _____

Phone # _____

Please return this form to the comment box or mail to:

Pacific Rim Resources
Attn: Kimbra Nieman
1109 First Avenue, Suite 300
Seattle, WA 98101

You may also fax this form to
(206) 623-0781
or e-mail comments to
kimbra@pr-seattle.com