



June 30, 2010

To: Metropolitan Policy Committee  
From: Paul Thompson  
Subject: Item 5.c: Draft Amendment to Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)

**Action Recommended:** Hold public hearing. Review and provide feedback to staff. Delegate final approval authority to the MPO's Transportation Planning Committee.

### **Issue Statement**

The City of Eugene has requested an amendment to the Regional Transportation Plan's illustrative roadway project list to add the Franklin Boulevard Multiway Boulevard project. Staff is requesting that MPC hold a public hearing on the proposed amendment and provide feedback to staff on the proposed amendment and public involvement process.

### **Background**

The City of Eugene would like to add the Franklin Boulevard Multiway Boulevard project to Table 1b in the MPO's RTP – the illustrative list of capital investment actions for roadway projects.

This project, extending from Alder Street to Walnut Street at an estimated cost of \$16 million, is one of Eugene's priorities for reauthorization of the six-year federal transportation bill. It is a key step in implementing the Walnut Station Mixed Use Center Plan which is scheduled to go to the Eugene City Council for adoption on July 12. The public hearing for the project took place on June 21 and there was strong support for the multiway boulevard. The City will likely be jointly applying for a TIGER II grant with Springfield and Lane Transit District for the NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) and preliminary design phases of the project. The MPO's RTP already contains project descriptions that cover proposed improvements to Franklin Blvd along the Springfield/Glenwood segment, but not along the segment in Eugene.

The basic design concept for the multiway boulevard is to provide two vehicular travel lanes in each direction, two EmX lanes, and a planted median that separates the vehicular through lanes from the access lanes. There will be access lanes with parking on each side of the street; the access lanes will have shared lane markings and serve as bicycle facilities. There will be wide sidewalks for pedestrians. There will only be access lanes on the south side between Walnut Street and Villard Street whereas on the north side they will extend from Walnut Street to Onyx Street.

West of Onyx Street, the project entails widening the sidewalk on the north side of the street (in front of Louie's and the properties to the west of it) and constructing a new sidewalk on the south side of Franklin between 11th Avenue and the millrace. The multiway boulevard elements end at Onyx.

The multiway boulevard is one of the key elements of the Walnut Station Mixed Use Center Plan and is seen as key to creating an environment that will encourage development of a compact, walkable mixed use neighborhood. The City of Eugene has been working on the Walnut Station Mixed Use Center Plan for about five years and there has been extensive public involvement with various stakeholders including the general public, Fairmount neighbors, University of Oregon, and business and property owners. Although the City Council has yet to adopt the Walnut Station plan, the Council did support including the multiway boulevard project on Eugene's list of priority projects for reauthorization of the federal transportation bill.

### **Discussion**

Amending the MPO's federal RTP to place this project on the illustrative project list identifies the project as one of the regional transportation priorities over the horizon of the plan (through 2031). Placing the project on the illustrative list indicates that the MPO has not yet identified reasonably expected funding for the project. Thus, the proposed amendment does not affect the financial constraint of the RTP. Similarly, projects on the illustrative list do not affect the air quality conformity determination for the RTP. (It should also be noted that amendments to the RTP's illustrative project lists do not trigger the State of Oregon's Transportation Planning Rule consistency requirements with respect to local or regional Transportation System Plans.)

### **Public Involvement**

The MPO's Public Participation Plan (PPP) calls for the following "core public involvement tools" for an amendment to the RTP:

- Public Comment Period (generally 30-days)
- MPC Public Hearing
- Open House
- Newspaper Display Ad
- Notice to Interested Parties
- Web Notice
- Review by the MPO's Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) *varies depending on amendment(s)*

The City of Eugene initially requested that the MPO's Transportation Planning Committee (TPC) recommend MPC approval of the proposed amendment at the July 8 MPC meeting, prior to the TIGER II grant pre-application deadline. This would have required reducing the public involvement for the proposed amendment to a bare minimum.

TPC had two concerns with the request to expedite action on the proposed amendment. First and foremost was concern regarding the public involvement process. Although TPC did not necessarily feel that all of the public involvement tools listed above needed to be utilized by the MPO for this amendment, the committee felt that, at a minimum, the 30-day

public comment period should be honored. The TPC's second concern had to do with the timing of final action by the Eugene City Council. As noted above, the City Council is scheduled to take action on the Walnut Station Mixed Use Center Plan on July 12. TPC members felt that final action by the MPO on an amendment to the RTP should follow the local action, not precede it.

Further discussion by the TPC noted that two other timing issues in August could affect action on the proposed amendment – the final TIGER II grant application deadline in late August, and the planned MPC August meeting recess.

After extensive discussion, the TPC unanimously passed the following motion: "TPC recommends approval of the RTP amendment and that MPC delegate approval authority to TPC to take final action after a full public comment period." TPC crafted and approved this motion to allow for a full 30-day public comment period, a public hearing at the July 8 MPC meeting, consideration of the proposed amendment by the CAC, and, pending consideration of the public comments, final approval of the proposed amendment by the TPC at a TPC meeting after the close of the public comment period, but prior to the TIGER II grant application deadline.

Since the TPC action recommends approval of the amendment, the MPO will open a 30-day public comment period on the proposed amendment on July 2, 2010, running until 5:00 PM on August 1.

MPO staff further recommends that the public involvement for this proposed amendment follow all of the strategies listed above from the PPP *except* for the open house and newspaper display ad. The MPO recommendation is primarily in recognition of the fact that the City of Eugene has just conducted an extensive public involvement process for the Walnut Station Mixed Use Center Plan which, as noted above, culminated in strong support for that project at a recent public hearing.

### **CAC Recommendation**

The proposed amendment will be discussed at the July 15 CAC meeting. All CAC feedback will be conveyed to the TPC, should MPC delegate final action to that committee, or to the MPC.

### **Options**

The MPC may take final action on the proposed amendment to the RTP via one of several approaches (listed in chronological order):

- On July 8, as originally requested by the City of Eugene, following the public hearing MPC could choose to close the public comment period early and take action
- Delegate to the TPC the authority to take action on the proposed amendment following the close of the 30-day public comment period
- Convene an MPC meeting on August 12 and take action at that meeting
- Take action at the MPC meeting on September 9

## **Recommendation**

The MPO's Transportation Planning Committee recommends approval of the RTP amendment and that MPC delegate approval authority to TPC to take final action after a full public comment period. MPO staff further recommend that the public involvement for the proposed amendment consist of the following:

- Full Public Comment Period
- MPC Public Hearing
- Notice to Interested Parties
- Web Notice
- Review by the MPO's Citizen Advisory Committee