



MEMORANDUM

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Date: December 6, 2011

To: MPO Citizen Advisory Committee

From: Kurt Yeiter, Senior Planner

Subject: South Willamette Street Transformation: A TGM Grant

The Citizen Advisory Committee asked for a status report on the City of Eugene’s “South Willamette Street Transformation” project. Since the Committee toured the project area on August 18, 2011, a draft concept plan for the district to provide a framework of future uses and urban design intentions that the Willamette Street Transformation project will help implement. What follows is a project description and update on land use planning efforts in the study area.

Overview. Willamette Street is Eugene’s signature north-south street running through the center of the city. A segment of South Willamette Street, between 24th and 32nd Avenues, has become the focus of a pilot project to implement long-range plans to accommodate Eugene’s projected growth along established commercial corridors.

The City recently secured a Transportation Growth Management (TGM) grant from the Oregon Departments of Transportation (ODOT) and Land Conservation and Development (DLCD) to fund the transportation component of this study.

South Willamette Street is heavily used to reach popular destinations, yet it is uninviting to pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and motorists alike. Conditions are poor for walking and bicycling, and inefficient for transit and driving. As the neighborhood population grows and demand for access to shopping and services along the corridor increases, the deficiencies of the current street configuration will limit the area’s success. The “Willamette Street Transformation” study will provide an opportunity for full community discussion leading to designs that can transform Willamette Street into a vibrant urban corridor



Willamette Street today: 4 lanes, no bike facilities, narrow sidewalks, and no bus pull-outs.

accessible by all users.

Background. The City's Envision Eugene process identified the South Willamette district, roughly from 24th to 32nd Avenues and from the base of College Hill to Amazon Park, as an area where market conditions seem ripe for more residential and commercial development in a manner that preserves or enhances overall neighborhood character. Eugene's Transportation System Plan relies on the creation of these dense neighborhood centers with a vibrant mix of activities and housing that are attractive for walking, biking, and transit use.

Previous studies of Willamette Street have suggested adding bike lanes, pedestrian crossings, and improved transit stops with a reduction in the number of travel lanes. However, these studies have not addressed the specific details of how these changes could be made or impacts to individual businesses, nor have they included sufficient public involvement to reach community agreement to move forward. A new street design plan created with substantial public input funded by this grant will enable the community to realize a "20-minute neighborhood" where neighborhood services are found within easy and safe walking distance by most area residents.

The TGM Grant Process and Status. ODOT and DLCDC awarded the City of Eugene this Transportation Growth Management (TGM) grant to develop a revitalized street design plan for Eugene's Willamette Street between 24th Avenue and 32nd Avenue that:

- Supports existing businesses and revitalization of the commercial district centered on this portion of Willamette Street.
- Helps to create the balanced multi-modal transportation system called for in the City's Transportation System Plan, where the street accommodates all modes to offer attractive options to driving for those who live, shop and travel through the corridor.
- Creates a place where everyone has opportunity to meet their mobility needs without discrimination due to age, income, or ability, and where people can safely meet their daily needs within a short distance on foot, by bicycle, or by bus.
- Supports City planning efforts to identify opportunities for infill growth and redevelopment as part of the ongoing Envision Eugene comprehensive land use plan project.
- Develop community understanding and support for the Plan.

This project will develop a complete street design plan (providing for walking, biking, transit access, motoring, and business access) that can be adopted and advanced as a capital improvement project for construction. The process will actively engage community residents and businesses in development and adoption of the street design plan.

A Request for Proposals was issued by ODOT on December 1, 2011. Proposals, including work plans and cost estimates, from five pre-qualified firms are expected back within a couple weeks. A selection process will be completed shortly after the New Year. After a single consultant team is selected, their scope of work will be fine-tuned and a schedule and project budget will be

approved. We expect the bulk of public outreach, analysis of different options for street designs, and preparation of a plan for approval will occur over the following six months (i.e., throughout the summer and into the fall of 2012).

Before



After



This four-lane street, similar to Willamette Street, was changed to provide better pedestrian and bicycle access by reducing the number of automobile travel lanes. Less clear and the focus of more local discussion: What would be the effect to transit services, driveways, and traffic congestion?

In the Meantime, the South Willamette Pilot Study. As Eugene’s long-range land use planning process, Envision Eugene, engages the community in how we will grow in the next 20 years, the South Willamette area has become the subject of a pilot study to accommodate more urban development and amenities. The study is creating a concept plan for how compact urban development can be integrated into existing transportation corridors like the South Willamette Street area.

The Friendly Area Neighborhood, the Southtowne Business Association, other businesses and residents, and city staff have been working together to envision a better future for the South Willamette area and find tools to promote mixed use living and commercial success. There have been a number of public workshops, neighborhood meetings, and studies by University of Oregon architecture students to identify the amenities that make this neighborhood a good place to live, and how to take advantage of these amenities when considering specific sites where new development would be desired. So far, the Friendly Area neighborhood leaders and Southtowne businesses are enthusiastic about gradual but important changes that can occur in their area.

The South Willamette Pilot Study will provide the land use context for the street ‘Transformation’ project. Eventually the two (land use and transportation) plans will merge into a single coherent vision for this neighborhood.

A concept plan was developed for a public open house on December 7, 2011. An example is attached to this memorandum. The project websites are listed below.

For More Information there is much information available through the city's website.

South Willamette Draft Concept Plan and Survey:

<http://www.eugene-or.gov/swillamette>

Eugene's Opportunity Siting Program:

<http://www.eugene-or.gov/infill>

South Willamette Pilot Project:

<http://www.eugene-or.gov/portal/server.pt?open=512&objID=735&PageID=4336&cached=true&mode=2&userID=2>

The Eugene Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan:

www.EugenePedBikePlan.org

Eugene Transportation System Plan:

www.EugeneTSP.org

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South Willamette Concept Plan

