

## Summary of September 2008 Stakeholder Interviews

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Project Management Team

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DATE: September 29, 2008

PROJECT NUMBER: 371149.09.02

Jamie Damon and Theresa Carr met with 12 community leaders in Seaside on Tuesday, September 23 and Wednesday, September 24, 2008. The purpose of these meetings, which were held individually at the location of the interviewee's choosing, was to supplement feedback received from the community to date on the Seaside Transportation System Plan (TSP) through the community survey, the website, and the June 18, 2008 Transportation Summit. This feedback was deemed important before the plan moves from the needs identification into the alternatives development stage this October. The interviews were organized in part because of a relatively low turnout at the June 2008 Transportation Summit. Names of community leaders interviewed were provided by the City of Seaside, and are listed at the end of this memo.

Jamie and Theresa gave each stakeholder a three page packet, containing a one-page overview of the project, the project timeline, and the public outreach plan. The project overview contained the project website address.

This memorandum summarizes what was heard at these meetings, and are organized by discussion topic.

### Tell us a bit about yourself

The 12 community leaders represented local developers, delivery professionals, local business owners, the hotel industry, news media, the school district, religious institutions, and a former City Engineer. Many of the leaders interviewed have lived in Seaside for 25 years or more, though a couple brought a newcomer's perspective to the discussion. Most leaders are currently active in other community or business organizations, including the North Coast Land Conservancy, Seaside Downtown Development Association (SDDA), the Chamber of Commerce, the Seaside Rotary Club, and the Vision 20/20 planning effort.

Several of the leaders interviewed were familiar with the TSP though had not been actively involved until this time. Most had participated in or had kept abreast of the details of the Pac-Dooley project around the time of the public vote (May 2005). Many interviewed lived outside the Seaside city limits in 2005 and did not vote on the Pac-Dooley project.

## What makes Seaside special? What transportation elements are working?

Many pointed to the Pacific Ocean and the long stretches of sandy beach as Seaside's best asset. One stakeholder provided some statistics that 82 percent of the nation's public coastline is located in Oregon, and that 62 percent of Oregon's coastline is in the public domain. "We live in a park," this stakeholder said, and with that in mind we can not expect that people will stop coming to the coast, but rather learn to accept some traffic during the summertime, and to do what we can to improve their experience entering town, during their visit, and leaving town.

Seaside's location 1 ½ hours from Portland and 2 ½ hours from Seattle make it an easy and accessible destination. Even with downturns in the economy stakeholders felt that Seaside remains a desirable and affordable location for family vacations.

Seaside offers a great quality of life, and community members know and care about each other. The city is great for walking and bicycling, especially along the Promenade. Its protected cove provides a safe place for swimming. Visitors can feasibly park once and walk or bicycle around Seaside for the duration of their visit.

Drives along the rivers are pleasant, with one stakeholder pointing out Necanicum Drive in particular. Many stakeholders had difficulty pointing to specific transportation elements they thought worked well, though several thought that Broadway through the downtown core was a successful beautification project and the landscaping in particular was considered a positive element for visitors, business owners, and residents alike.

Seaside's financial health is good. The bonds for the convention center are paid off and the convention center committee is now looking to build a multi-purpose facility in the downtown core with parking on the lower levels and area on the top levels serving as an emergency gathering location in case of tsunami. The committee is beginning efforts to conduct a feasibility study for this facility, with a major use being a set of indoor courts for high school tournaments in winter and perhaps concerts in summer.

## What elements of Seaside's transportation system are not working?

### Growth and Land Use

One stakeholder talked about how Seaside would grow, and that city leaders needed to consider the environment in design standards. The desire, they stated, would be to avoid turning into a west coast Atlantic City. More green with each development, combined with green as part of transportation projects, would help.

One stakeholder pointed out that several properties on the west side of the highway south of Avenue U had no sewer system. A sewer upgrade project was proposed in the 1980's, but was deferred because of the impending Pac-Dooley project would require those parcels. The Pac-Dooley project did not happen and the houses remain. The lack of sewer has delayed any redevelopment that otherwise likely would have occurred.

## US 101 Traffic

Several said that Seaside's traffic problems were limited to a handful of weekends throughout the year, and/or were not significant when compared to larger urban areas (Seattle, Los Angeles, etc.)

Most stakeholders pointed to the area of US 101 at the Safeway as a problem. Cars taking left turns are a problem, but pedestrians always are trying to cross and several leaders felt doing so at this location was very unsafe but pedestrians were unwilling to walk out of their way to cross at the signal. It was noted that a pedestrian fatality occurred at this location early in 2008.

One stakeholder pointed to the lack of coordination for the traffic signals through town as a problem. Further, this leader said, capacity at the south end of town is only two lanes which create a bottleneck on summer Sundays when traffic is heavy southbound. There was a question of whether ODOT recently timed the signals or whether there was less traffic this past summer as problems were not as bad this past summer as they'd been in the past.

Flooding on US 101 south of Seaside has required the Seaside School District to close the schools five times over the past ten years, with late starts and early releases happening approximately three times every year (staff consult the tide tables in making these decisions). School buses have difficulty crossing the flooded section of US 101, but more of a problem is staff and teachers being able to cross this section in their personal vehicles. At times, staff and students take the school buses if buses are allowed to cross but personal vehicles are not.

## Issues on Local Streets

Wahanna and Holladay serve as good alternate routes to US 101 for locals, but improvements are needed to handle traffic, bicycles, and pedestrians.

When service at the North Coast Family Fellowship lets out on Sundays (around 10:30am and again about noon), up to 400 cars are leaving the parking area at Wahanna Road near Lewis and Clark Road at once. The Wahanna/L&C intersection and the L&C/US 101 intersections are dangerous and difficult for cars to navigate (especially left turns onto US 101). Locals go south on Wahanna towards 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue or Broadway, and the pastor tries to make a point of announcing tips on exiting to parishioners, but it is a chronic problem seen every Sunday, Wednesday evenings (when evening events draw 150 children and 80 adults), and at many special events.

Visibility at US 101 intersections from side streets is not ideal. Drivers can't always see what traffic is coming before they turn onto the highway.

Several leaders pointed to a lack of parking in downtown, although others pointed to the free public parking structure at Trend West as underutilized. One stakeholder said that some business owners perpetuate the problem by parking in front of their business. Removal of loading zones has made deliveries more difficult.

Many pointed to 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue in particular as a busy street where the design doesn't match up with its function. West of the highway parking is allowed on both sides, leaving a narrow unstriped travel area where it is difficult to fit a car in each direction.

## What ideas do you have for transportation improvements?

Mark Mead, the former City Engineer, submitted a separate document with ideas for transportation improvements by districts. This is attached at the end of this memo.

### Growth and Land Use

A couple of stakeholders voiced concern that the schools and hospital in Seaside were within the tsunami inundation zone and should be moved to a higher elevation within the planning horizon. If this occurred, it would mean a not unsubstantial development and associated trips on the eastern edge of the city extending beyond the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB), with necessary connection to the existing network.

### US 101

Make the highway more beautiful, with streetscaping and better signage. It was believed that this would spur economic development and would encourage more passers-by to stop. Landscaping in downtown core is costed out by linear foot and the cost of maintenance is shared by all business owners. Cost is returned in visitor business. It was felt by at least one stakeholder that businesses along US 101 would consider paying into a fee for maintaining landscaping along US 101.

Disallow left turns out of the Safeway by putting in a median. Median could double as a pedestrian refuge because pedestrians are always trying to cross at this location.

Add a stoplight at US 101 and Avenue S.

Add a right turn lane at the eastern end of Avenue U at US 101, and a merge lane onto US 101 south of this intersection.

Support for some ideas from Pac-Dooley, specifically:

- aligning Avenue F and Avenue G and add a signal
- modifications to Wahanna Road/L&C Road and L&C Road/US 101

Coordinate the signal timing on US 101 through the City.

Widen US 101 south of the city between the Dooley Bridge and the US 26 interchange to four lanes and raise the road elevation so that it doesn't flood every year.

### Local Streets

Add sidewalks and curbs to Wahanna Road and Avenue S, and Holladay north of Broadway. Break up Wahanna Road into segments for implementation (Broadway to S, Shore Terrace to Broadway, 12<sup>th</sup> to Shore Terrace, and Lewis and Clark to 12<sup>th</sup>)

Turn Avenue A into a one-way street. Too narrow to be a two way street with parking allowed and many pedestrians using it. Would need to find another street to make into a one-way in the other direction.

## Specific Design Treatments

Look at Palm Springs and Santa Barbara for examples of innovative, inexpensive, and effective transportation design treatments that could be applied to Seaside.

Consider opportunities to introduce roundabouts in Seaside. Look at conceptual layouts provided by a local firm at Avenue U and the Lewis and Clark/Wahanna Road intersections.

Provide better signage to beach and downtown.

## Parking and Alternate Modes

Expand the transit network.

Provide wider sidewalks and/or safer conditions for pedestrians to walk on roadway in the downtown's central core.

Consider providing satellite parking with frequent, reliable shuttle service.

Pay better attention to where parking is allowed, especially on local streets where parking on both sides of the street creates a narrow travel lane where only one direction can progress at a time.

Add "free" to the public parking sign at Trend West.

Add more bicycle racks around the city.

Bring back the "Seaside Trolley" with a smaller vehicle that would be able to serve local hotels and other destinations.

Extend the boardwalk along river, build pedestrian footbridges over the rivers, and create a trail system around town.

Add a pedestrian crosswalk across US 101 at the High School.

Make the tourist experience as pleasant as it can be. Business owners do their part, but transportation can also play a real role here. How well designed is the network, and how easy or difficult is it to find your way around.

Expand the bicycle network to Warrenton/ Astoria (it was recognized this is outside the scope of this study).

## Tell us your experiences with past transportation projects and discussions

Most but not all stakeholders had past experience with ODOT and the City of Seaside on various transportation projects. Consistent themes were heard around three specific topic areas - Pac-Dooley, the bypass concept, and access permits.

### Pac-Dooley

A couple of leaders said that it took ODOT too long to build Pac-Dooley. It had been studied for more than 25 years before moving into design, with little changes to the basic concept design. If it had been built earlier, the leaders theorized, it would have been more successful. Others felt that during the design process ODOT was unwilling to compromise

on any project details which led to a perception during the time period leading to the vote that the agency did not care about the community.

Many stakeholders felt the Pac-Dooley project was better than doing nothing. Further, several pointed to a low turnout, a close vote, and that many business owners lived outside the city limits and were not able to vote on the issue.

There were different opinions about a greenbelt median. Many liked the idea, but worried about who would maintain it and how many turns would be allowed. One stakeholder voiced concern over the ability of emergency vehicles to turn or make u-turns at intersection breaks. Others saw the width of the highway as too wide, and were concerned about the walls (retaining or noise) creating what they called a “canyon of concrete.”

Several leaders pointed to the long construction schedule (three years in duration and construction through the summers) which would have been too painful for business owners. Again, ODOT was seen as inflexible in addressing business owner concerns about construction impacts. Further, one stakeholder stated that construction would have impacted businesses on and off the highway, yet construction assistance was reportedly provided only to businesses along US 101.

Overall, there was a general feeling that elements of the Pac-Dooley project should be reconsidered, and a general feeling that community members were ready to come back to the table with ODOT and the City to discuss transportation issues.

## Bypass

Most that were interviewed were not in support of a bypass, or had no opinion on it. Several stated that they didn’t expect that a bypass would be built in their lifetime, and others voiced concern that local businesses relied on passers by who hadn’t expected to stop in Seaside but saw something of interest from the highway, and that a bypass would eliminate these kind of stops. One stakeholder said they thought Seaside was a sufficient destination to be successful even without through traffic through downtown.

One leader stated that Cannon Beach was unique in its ability to remain successful after building one. Another stated that with Cannon Beach travelers were able to see the ocean from north and south of the bypass, making it easy to turn off onto the local road network if travelers wanted to visit the town or the beach.

## Access Permits

Several leaders voiced concerns over coordination with ODOT on access permits and sidewalk standards for local development. Several referenced recent issues with allowing access for a new bank development on 11<sup>th</sup> Street. Specific questions these stakeholders wanted to see out of the TSP were:

- Who reviews access permits within ODOT
- How long should reviews take
- What are the access requirements (how to design an acceptable site layout)
- Guidance for ODOT to provide consistent, reasonable access comments

- How to reduce miscommunications between ODOT Salem and Astoria staff

One stakeholder warned that ODOT was putting too much on the developer, making it too expensive to develop in the City. Another warned that some developers and consultants will not work on projects that touch the ODOT right of way or would require coordination with the agency before construction.

## How do you think the City and ODOT should best work with the community?

### Things ODOT could do

More than one stakeholder pointed to the median outside the outlet stores. This median has a central area for landscaping but has not been planted. Planting inside this area and maintaining could be a low cost action that would beautify this intersection and show ODOT commitment (the planting) and follow through (maintaining the planting).

Multiple stakeholders said that the community was ready to move beyond Pac-Dooley. ODOT would need to acknowledge the past history at the next workshop, and be open, straightforward, and honest about moving forward together.

One stakeholder pointed to the longevity of many Seaside locals and stated that many Seaside residents knew parts of the state highway system very well (history, location of utilities, etc.). The locals would welcome ODOT asking them for history and information on the highway system.

One stakeholder voiced concern with considerable staff turnover at ODOT and suggested that there be greater clarity on roles at ODOT and guidelines for reviews so that new staff would not come in to an existing process and change course.

Several stakeholders felt that ODOT was mad at the community after the Pac-Dooley vote. One stakeholder stated that they felt ODOT Astoria especially did not see Seaside as a destination. Others felt that residents couldn't trust ODOT to follow through with commitments made to the community. Several stakeholders said that ODOT sitting with the City and the community at the next workshop would be a great step towards dispelling this perception.

### Things the City of Seaside could do

A few stakeholders questioned the City's leadership in creating the vision for Seaside. The City could consider the desire of some business owners and residents to have a long-term vision for the City when addressing the community.

At least one stakeholder voiced a recent improvement in the access permit discussion, that the City ask ODOT to weigh in before they make any determination regarding access.

Two stakeholders said the city has been responsive to needs of local businesses and residents. Several pointed to the Broadway Improvement Project as a positive example of the city working with businesses to design improvements, communicate impacts, and craft a construction schedule that would minimize impacts on local businesses.

## Things the project could do

All stakeholders interviewed advocated for more dialog, and less one-way communication.

One stakeholder asked the team to create a steering committee for the TSP staffed with a balanced group of action-focused community leaders that would combine political, environmental, and economic sensitivities when crafting recommendations.

## What ideas do you have to increase participation in upcoming workshops?

### Advertise the workshop

These ideas are beyond the advertisements done for the first summit (advertisements in local papers, in water bill):

- Send fliers home with school kids would be an effective way to engage members of the community that live outside city limits.
- Prepare an op-ed piece for the Signal (recommended for the 10/30 edition, space has been reserved, material would need to be submitted by Monday 10/27).
- Post fliers at all local businesses. Go door-to-door, and ask to post. Don't forget the community bulletin board at the Safeway.

### Announce the workshop

Do a PSA at the radio stations – KOST 94.9 and KAST

Present at SDDA, Chamber, and Rotary the week prior to the workshop (Thursday 10/30 and Friday 10/31). Talk about the importance of the project, and why involvement is needed.

### Ask leaders to attend

Make focused telephone calls to community leaders to invite them to attend. Tell them who recommended them as a leader of the community. Make sure they understand that the City and ODOT see them as a leader and really want their update at the meeting.

Follow up with a reminder a couple of days before the meeting (email is fine).

Ask people such as the stakeholders interviewed in September to take on a leadership role at the meeting, by leading a table discussion or presenting some findings to date.

### At the meeting

Do not leave it up to the participants to craft their own process, but provide adequate leadership and direction to ensure that the discussion results in the desirable level of detail.

Make sure to tell people to leave their baggage at the door.

Break up the City into districts, and have people talk about improvements that are needed within those districts.

Have ODOT and the City sit at the same table with the community.

Have a map and overlay ideas on top of it.



Possible locations to have future community meetings are the Convention Center, the North Coast Family Fellowship auditorium (Tuesdays best), the library, the schools, and the Community Center.

The table below lists the Seaside community leaders interviewed in September.

TABLE 1

Community Leaders Interviewed September 23 and 24, 2008

<b>Tuesday September 23, 2008</b>		
<b>Time</b>	<b>Stakeholder(s)</b>	<b>Organization</b>
8:30 – 9:30am	Ken and Pam Ulbricht	Ulbricht Public Accounting, LLC
10:00 – 11:00am	Terry Lowenberg	Beach Development, LLC
11:30am – 12:30pm	Mark Mead	Mead Engineering Resources, Inc. (former City Engineer)
2:30 – 3:30pm	Terry Bichsel	Best Western Hotel / Ocean View Resort
6:00 – 7:00pm	Wayne Poole	Pig 'n Pancake Restaurants
7:30 – 8:30pm	Mark Biamont	UPS
<b>Wednesday September 24, 2008</b>		
<b>Time</b>	<b>Stakeholder(s)</b>	<b>Organization</b>
8:00 – 9:00am	Peter and Jeff Ter Har	Ter Har's
9:30 – 10:30am	Doug Dougherty	Seaside School District 10
1:00 – 2:00pm	Donald Allison	Seaside Signal
2:30 – 3:30pm	Larry Rydman	North Coast Family Fellowship

The project team attempted to schedule interviews with Sandy Winnett, Steve Hinton, Pat Ordway, Harry Henke, Mark Utti, and Dana Phillips. Many stakeholders recommended that Theresa and Jamie meet with additional members of the residential and business community. Names forwarded to the two included:

Russ Earl	Gary Hinckey	Al Wexler
Scott Dean	Keith Chandler	Les Clark
Bob Skalin	Jim Morrissey	Ken Smith
Tita Montero	Warren Kan	Terry Hartell
Dana Phillips	Doug Wiese	Garbage company
Randy Frank	Mike Davies	Bayview Transit
Heather Wadkins	Brian Pogue	Benny Olson
Jack and Janice Risterer	McCall Brothers	