

Midtown Crossing Concepts Ignore Community Priorities

In December 2019, the city commissioned a consultant to conduct a survey to determine what the community priorities were for funding transportation projects with a general obligation bond. The consultant reported the community would support a bond if it would improve traffic flow on east-west connections and if there were improvements to neighborhood safety. These community priorities are listed prominently in the bond resolution and the city website.

- See [January 8, 2020 City Council work session](#) for the consultants report, Powerpoint presentation and listened to the video.
- <https://www.bendoregon.gov/city-projects/safe-travel> for how the website highlights the community priorities.
- <https://www.bendoregon.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/47346/637341390118530000> for the bond resolution.

In July 2022, the public was invited to an open house to give feedback on the GO Bond concepts for Greenwood, Hawthorne, and Franklin crossings. The concepts that relied on widening the Parkway and Railroad bridges to accommodate wider crossings for pedestrians and bicyclists, were dead on arrival. The cost and impact to the community were far beyond reasonable.

- Look at the findings of each crossing on the midtown website; <https://www.bendoregon.gov/city-projects/what-s-being-built/midtown-ped-bike-crossings>
 - The reader must look at different document links for each crossing on this webpage.
 - Look at the bottom of this webpage and you will see several 2016 studies the city had in their file. In these 2016 studies, the consultant raised a red flag to the widening of the parkway and railroad bridges. Two years later when the staff began their two year plus CTAC work on the TSP, they never referred to these 2016 studies on the crossing, but maintained the lengthening of the bridges as a viable concept.

- Buried in the links is another link to a “initial alternative analysis” by Parametrix dated June 15, 2022. Look at the <https://www.bendoregon.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/53314/637915094369100000>
 - On slides 7, 8 and 9, there is a three-page spreadsheet comparing all the concepts (including some concepts not shown in the open house.)

For the Greenwood crossing, the consultants recommend a “road diet.” The existing four through lanes would be reduced to two through lanes, plus a turn lane. They stated “[congestion] *performance would be acceptable.*” What they don’t mention is the average daily traffic volume for Greenwood ranges from 20,120 to 23,008 AADT. The industry standard HCM 6th edition threshold for a street with two through lanes and a turn lane is only 18,300 AADT. A “road diet” significantly increases congestion on this major east-west connection. Vehicle queuing will stretch from 3rd street to west of the river.

- The quote about performance comes from slide 7 / row G2 / column “community impacts”
- The trip counts are found here; <https://ordot.public.ms2soft.com/tcds/tsearch.asp?loc=Ordot&mod=TCDS> I believe the state has permanent trip counters in place. If you go to this site, you need to enlarge the map to have the data populate on the screen.
- At the open house, I asked the consultants if they knew the traffic volume. No answer. I asked Councilor Broadman if he was worried about the increase of congestion with a road diet. His reply was people could change the time they drive or use a different street.
- In a TSP CTAC meeting late in the first year, staff included a powerpoint slide that should all east-west streets crossing the river were technically failing the industry standard.
- If you want to see the reality of what happens on our street system near the parkway (including downtown), you won’t find it in the city’s TSP. Take

a look at the MPO Parkway Plan which was prepared at the same time period as the city's TSP. The difference is ODOT was a participant and required the consultant to use the industry standards for mobility performance measures.

<https://www.bendoregon.gov/government/departments/bend-metro-planning-organization/plans-and-programs/parkway-plan> I am providing a brief summary below. The documents I have listed below add up to nearly 1,200 pages. Only the brave should venture into this forest of technical analysis.

- Technical memo #7 has three documents in an appendix.
- <https://www.bendoregon.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/43715/637092521315670000> This document shows what happens with ODOT starts dropping right in and right outs.
- <https://www.bendoregon.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/43727/637092551320170000> This is a huge document (1013 pages). The interesting part is the queuing exhibits. The city's TSP didn't look at queuing. Probably because it is very concerning. Take a look at the "vissim queuing plots pages 976 to 984.

The average citizen understands safety decreases as congestion increases. Drivers become more aggressive and may seek cut-throughs on local streets. Meanwhile, Greenwood can be made safer by adding a few appropriate left turn lanes without a "road diet."

- <https://www.bendoregon.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/52409/637816744498430000> This study is one of the standalone studies listed on the bottom of the midtown crossing webpage.
 - When the CTAC began their work, I had a conversation with Robin Lewis. She tried to justify a road diet because of safety concerns. She felt the 4-lane street had issues when someone tried to make a left turn. She also claimed a two lane with turn lane would handle more traffic than the four lanes because of the backup when someone tried to turn left. But she failed to consider the following;

- The highest left turn movement occurs at Greenwood and Hill Street will be much less when ODOT closed the right-out movement at Hawthorne and the Parkway.
- I have been a member of the Downtown parking committee for about five years now. The parking is under-utilized because of the substandard lane widths and parking space width. Also, many of the business have offstreet parking.
- The road diet report didn't include a concept where key left turns are added, but the four through lanes are maintained. Some of the under-utilized on-street parking spaces would be sacrificed. (I own a mult-tenant commercial building at NW 121 NW Greenwood Avenue. My tenants don't need the on-street spaces.)
- This concept solves the rearend and sideswip accidents that Robin will point to.

Instead of focusing on “community priorities,” the open house concepts prioritized improving biking connectivity only between the downtown and the Bend Central District. The presentation failed to demonstrate how these new bike crossings would “complete” bike routes extending further to the east and west which was the worthy goal of the 2020 Transportation Plan.

- In all the reports posted on the midtown crossing webpages, every illustration is for only the segment of the route in the Bend Central District. In my submitted 12 page review, I submitted pictures and maps trying to demonstrate how Hawthorne will never be a low stress bike route.

The Core Area Advisory Board for “Bend Central District” is recommending the “priority project” should be the Hawthorne crossing. Their hope is this “bridge” will incentivize redevelopment. It has been six years since this special zoning district was created with lower standard barriers and not one project has been built that meets their vision. The one tall mixed-use project proposed came in at \$20M over budget. This advisory board should provide some basis for why this crossing would be a successful incentive.

- Most of this information comes webpages.
 - CAAR June 16 presentation
<https://www.bendoregon.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/53320/637915857523000000>
 - Midtown crossing homepage statement;
 - *Catalyze private development to support the vision for the Core Area of Bend*

After the open house, I spent time walking each crossing and read Bend's Low-stress Bicycle Facility Design Elements handbook. Then I applied my many years of planning, design and constructing major community infrastructure. Franklin Avenue is by far the best option for the initial midtown crossing. Franklin's traffic volume is nearly half the volume of Greenwood. The existing right-of-way is sufficient for two through lanes, one turn lane and physically separated bike paths, the gold standard of low-stress bike paths. Lastly, Franklin is the closest street to the most probable re-development parcels in both the central district and in downtown.

- <https://www.bendoregon.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/39229/636764144766830000> This handbook is a good document for someone who wants to get up to speed on bicycle path state-of-the art.

In June, a consultant completed another GO Bond project, the 128-page "Franklin Corridor" alternative concepts report. The good news is this report demonstrates the viability of creating a "separated bike path." The bad news is the study only looked at a very short segment of Franklin from NW Harriman Street to NE 4th Street (Bend Central District only) instead of the longer segment of Franklin necessary to achieve an improved east-west connection.

<https://www.bendoregon.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/53440/637950282314200000> The 128-page report

Will the community's priorities be supplanted by the priorities of the advocates of the Bend Central District. A new hybrid concept incorporating the best of the Greenwood, Hawthorne and the Franklin concept elements for a complete street for Franklin Avenue would be a win-win for the entire community

and Central District. Remind the City Council of their commitment to “community priorities” when seeking community support of the bond.