Access Management Methodology

US 97: Madras to High Bridge Safety Study

(The Dalles-California Hwy 004 Mile Points 97.30 to 112.60)

Project Description and Background

The project is a Safety Study for the section of US 97 between the southern Madras City Limits and the northern terminus of the High Bridge located on the Jefferson/Deschutes County Line (mile points 97.30 to 112.60). The study will look at conditions on the highway today and in to the future, document public concerns, describe major needs, and solicit feedback from the community on potential projects. This stretch of US 97 has safety issues for all roadway users and has seen an increase in fatal and serious injury crashes over the last several years. ODOT and Jefferson County have made some intersection improvements to reduce crashes, but a safety study is needed to develop a comprehensive list of projects in the corridor. Elements of the Safety Study include:

- Diagnosing crashes;
- Identifying countermeasures; and
- Prioritizing projects to reduce the potential for severe and fatal crashes.

At the end of the process, the project team will select the preferred projects for US 97, pursue adoption of the study by the Oregon Transportation Commission, and work to fund improvements.

The following access management methodology applies to the project limits as defined above and follows ODOT's Access Management in Highway Facility Plan Rules (OAR 734-051-7010).

Access Management

The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) has the responsibility of providing the traveling public with a safe and efficient transportation facility, and therefore is expected to manage highways in the best interest of the public for the protection of the highway and the traveling public. Access management is balancing access to developed land while ensuring movement of traffic in a safe and efficient manner.

Access Management Decision Context and Criteria

The Access Management Methodology is comprised of the criteria used for evaluating highway approaches (private driveways and public streets) for no changes, potential modification, relocation or closure.

The specific access management methodology for the project area will be developed as follows:

Overall Corridor Access Management Context – Goals and Objectives

- Improve safety throughout the corridor for the traveling public, including motor vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists, by reducing the frequency and severity of crashes.
- Balance the economic development objectives of real properties abutting the state highway with the transportation safety, access management objectives, and mobility of the State highway, in a manner consistent with state transportation plans, the local transportation system plan and the land uses permitted in the local comprehensive plan.

Specific Access Management Criteria (Key Principles) for the Project

To fulfill the access management goals and objectives of the project, the Project Team (made up of Jefferson County and ODOT staff) has developed the following decision criteria (key principles) to determine whether changes are needed to highway approaches (private driveways and public streets) in collaboration with adjacent property owners and other stakeholders.

Safety

- Evaluate the frequency, severity, and location of all crashes, with an emphasis on pedestrian and bicycle crashes.
- Evaluate driveways and public streets for adequate sight distance, as well as safe entrance, exit, and circulation.
- Eliminate backing movements on to the highway.
- Reduce vehicle conflict points where possible, particularly around critical intersections to improve highway safety and operations.
- Define the width of undefined driveways (approaches) within open frontage using guidance from the Oregon Highway Design Manual to a width that will serve the planned use of the property.
- Evaluate the safety impacts and benefits of any proposed changes in access/connections.
- Consider the existing and long-term safety needs of all highway users.

Economic Objectives of the Property Owners

- Consider the type of existing business: e.g., destination-oriented business vs. businesses that rely on pass-by traffic.
- Consider the effects of out-of-direction travel on the ability of customers to access various types of uses, recognizing the differences between destination and pass-by uses.
- Consider the effects of changing existing connections and circulation patterns for existing developed properties.
- Consider the safety and operational implications of traffic congestion or speed which could negatively affect the ability of customers to access adjacent properties safely.
- Consider the number of trips generated by the business, including the number of vehicles turning left in to or out of the property.

- Consider the location of the access reservations and permits and design the approaches to adequately serve the volume and type of traffic reasonably anticipated to enter and exit the property, based on the uses for the property.
- Place priority on preserving access as it exists today if it serves the property use.
- Consider site circulation and parking affected by potential driveway consolidation opportunities, only in response to other access management goals, objectives, and methodology points, as associated with specific driveways, and/or based on documented agreements with affected property owners.

Approach Spacing and Reasonable Alternate Access

- Move in the direction of meeting approach spacing standards.
- Consider closing, relocating and/or consolidating highway approaches that do not meet approach spacing standards if the property can reasonably be served by alternate access.

Access Management Rights/Existing Conditions

- Determine locations where ODOT has acquired the access rights of properties abutting the highway.
- Determine status and ensure that existing driveways are consistent with the properties' access rights.
- Consider the width of driveways shown in deeded access rights as part of the decision-making for driveway approach designs.
- Consider the location and width of deeded access rights in the design of approaches and modify deeded access rights to match "as constructed" approaches if necessary.
- Modify or acquire access rights as necessary to improve safety and reduce conflict points.

Corridor Context and Mobility

- Evaluate the access management goals and objectives and the other above Methodology points against the function of US 97 as a Statewide Expressway, Freight Route, and Reduction Review Route, which emphasizes the important service it provides for freight mobility, regional tourism, regional commuting, and safety. Note: A Reduction Review Route is any designated state highway that requires review and approval from the freight industry if there is any proposed change in width or height capacity of the highway (e.g. the "hole in the air").
- Evaluate the access management goals and objectives and the other above Methodology points with respect to travel mobility in general, and to the congested conditions such as during peak hours.
- Evaluate the access management goals and objectives and the other above Methodology points with respect to local land use plans (e.g., commercial, and residential zoning) and the Oregon Transportation Plan, the Oregon Highway Plan and other transportation modal plans adopted by the Oregon Transportation Commission.

Access Management Decision Making Process

In collaboration with affected property owners (and their lessees, according to expectations of the applicable property owner), Jefferson County and ODOT staff will apply and analyze information they gather against all the above criteria points (e.g., traffic, economics, benefit-cost, identified "fatal flaws," decision matrices, etc.) to make recommendations on the locations and design of private approaches to the highway.

In this decision-making process, Jefferson County and ODOT staff will focus on balancing the economic development objectives of the affected properties owners with the safety and operational expectations for US 97 as a state highway, consistent with the County's Transportation System Plan and the land uses permitted in the County's Comprehensive Plan. Safety concerns and issues will be documented by a Professional Traffic Engineer.

Access Management decisions will be made by the ODOT Region 4 Manager with support by Jefferson County.

Jefferson County and ODOT staff will also provide a Public Involvement process for highway users, real property owners, property lessees, and business operators affected by the study, which will assist with establishing and finalizing this Methodology (by which private connections will be considered for modification, relocation, or closure) and ultimately for access management recommendations to be made.

For more on-line information about this project please go to:

Oregon Department of Transportation : Project-Details : Projects : State of Oregon