



## SPECIAL TRANSPORTATION AREA – WHITE PAPER

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### **DIRECTION TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**

Five sets of white papers are being produced to present information on tools, opportunities, and potential strategies that could help Ashland become a nationwide leader as a green transportation community. Each white paper will present general information regarding a topic and then provide ideas on where and how that tool, strategy, and/or policy could be used within Ashland.

You will have the opportunity to review the content of each white paper and share your thoughts, concerns, questions, and ideas in a joint Planning Commission/Transportation Commission meeting. Based on discussions at the meeting, the material in the white paper will be: 1) Revised and incorporated into the alternatives analysis for the draft TSP; or 2) Eliminated from consideration and excluded from the alternatives analysis. The overall intent of the white paper series is to explore opportunities for Ashland and increase the opportunities to discuss the many possibilities for Ashland.

### **SPECIAL TRANSPORTATION AREA WHITE PAPER INTRODUCTION**

This white paper presents general information on Special Transportation Areas (STAs) as well as ideas for how Ashland can use STAs to achieve its goals of continuing to develop a transportation system that is inviting to pedestrian, bicyclists, and transit. Currently, the City of Ashland has an STA designation on OR 99 (Lithia Way and Main Street), between Oak Street and E. Main Street. Other state highway segments within the City Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) for consideration of an STA include the following:

- OR 99 (Siskiyou Boulevard) from Walker Avenue south to the UGB
- OR 99 (Siskiyou Boulevard) from Oak Street to Maple Avenue (currently designated as an Urban Business Area)
- OR 99 (Siskiyou Boulevard) from Maple Avenue north to the UGB
- OR 66 (Ashland Street) from Railroad Crossing east to the UGB

Figure 1 illustrates the potential STA locations within the City. This memorandum provides background information on STAs and addresses whether these four locations should be considered further for an STA designation.

## BACKGROUND

The 1999 Oregon Highway Plan (OHP) establishes long-range policies and investment strategies for the State Highway System. The plan emphasizes:

- Efficient management of the system to increase safety, preserve the system and extend its capacity;
- Increased partnerships, particularly with regional and local governments;
- Links between land use and transportation;
- Access management;
- Links with other transportation modes; and
- Environmental and scenic resources.

Within the OHP, highway mobility standards are included as a policy. The highway mobility standards are established to maintain acceptable and reliable levels of mobility on the state highway system. Per the OHP, these standards shall be used for:

- Identifying state highway mobility performance expectations for planning and plan implementation;
- Evaluating the impacts on state highways of amendments to transportation plans, acknowledged comprehensive plans and land use regulations pursuant to the Transportation Planning Rule (OAR 660-12-060); and
- Guiding operations decisions such as managing access and traffic control systems to maintain acceptable highway performance.

In establishing the mobility standards, the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) and the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) identified that these mobility standards could have the unintended effect of discouraging development in downtowns and encouraging development in urban fringe areas. This could occur where highways in downtowns and central business districts are near capacity. With this in mind, alternate mobility standards can be developed and adopted for metropolitan areas, Special Transportation Areas (STAs) and constrained areas. The remainder of this white paper addresses the STAs (*References 1 and 2*).



## **SPECIAL TRANSPORTATION AREAS**

STAs are highway locations where alternate mobility and access management standards can be considered. An STA is a designated district of compact development located on a state highway within an urban growth boundary in which the need for appropriate local access outweighs the considerations of highway mobility. The exception is on designated Oregon Highway Plan Freight Routes, where through highway mobility has greater importance. (Although OR 99 and OR 66 (Ashland Street) are designated as freight routes by the City of Ashland for local freight movements, they are not designated Freight Routes by ODOT.)

STAs look like traditional “Main Streets” with development generally located near the back of sidewalk on both sides of the state highway. The primary objective of an STA is to provide access to and circulation amongst community activities, businesses and residences and to accommodate pedestrian, bicycle and transit movement along and across the highway. Direct street connections and shared on-street parking are encouraged. Local auto, pedestrian, bicycle and transit movements to the area are generally as important as the through movement of traffic. Traffic speeds are slow, generally 25 miles per hour or lower. As of May 2009, there were approximately 130 designated STAs throughout Oregon (References 1 and 2).

### ***Locations***

STAs can be located within urban growth boundaries on District, Regional, and Statewide Highways, but not on Interstates or Expressways (OR 99 and OR 66 are District Highways). An existing central business or commercial district in an unincorporated community as defined by OAR 660-022-0010(10) that meets the definition of an STA may also be classified as an STA. Larger communities may have more than one STA. While STAs may include some properties that are currently developed for auto dependent uses (e.g. drive through restaurants, gas stations, car washes), areas where the predominant land use pattern is auto-dependent uses are generally not appropriate for STA designation. STAs that include properties developed for auto-dependent uses should include planning and zoning that provide for redevelopment of the properties over time to uses consistent with STA implementation (References 1 and 2).

### Mobility and Access Management Standards

OR 99 and Highway 66 are classified as District Highways in the Oregon Highway Plan. The standard for mobility is lowest (congestion is highest) for District Highways in STAs. In STAs, in particular, higher levels of congestion are permitted to accommodate compact, pedestrian-oriented development. Figure 2 shows the mobility standards for different highway classifications and land use characteristics.

As shown in Figure 2, the mobility standard can range from 0.70 to 0.95 for a STA. In addition to the mobility standards, an STA has access management standards for District, Regional, and Statewide Highways.

The minimum access management spacing for public roadway approaches is the existing city block spacing or the city block spacing as identified in the local comprehensive plan. Public road connections are preferred over private driveways and in STAs, driveways are discouraged. However, where driveways are allowed and where land use patterns permit, the minimum access management spacing for driveways is 175 feet or mid-block if the current city block is less than 350 feet.

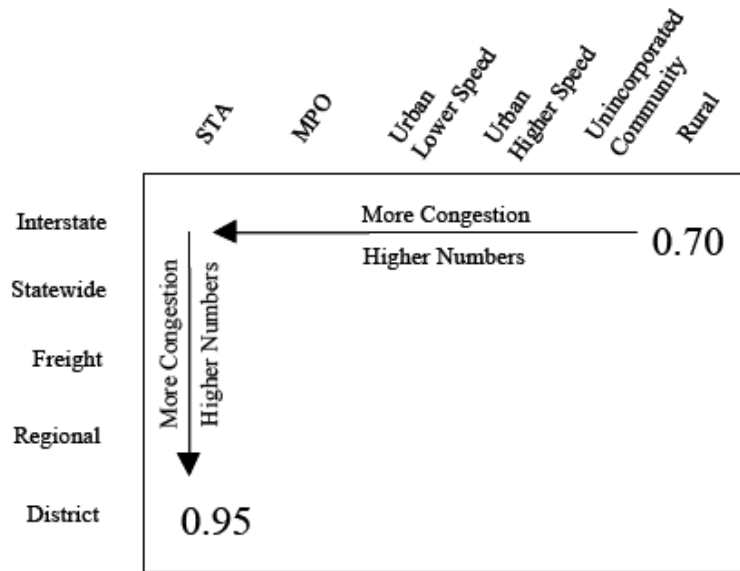


Figure 2 Mobility Standards Flow Chart

Currently the mobility standards on OR 66 and OR 99 vary by location from 0.85 (near the OR 66 interchange) to 0.95 in the existing UBA and STA designated areas. The STA designation could increase the mobility standard on some segments from 0.85 or 0.90 to 0.95. There is already a special access spacing standard applied on ODOT facilities throughout the City of Ashland of 300 feet. The STA designation would allow for one shared driveway per block where the public streets are closely spaced.

### Planning and Development Guidance for STAs

STAs should be planned and developed to reflect the following kinds of characteristics:

- Buildings are spaced close together and located adjacent to the street with little or no setback
- Sidewalks with ample width are located adjacent to the highway and the buildings
- People who arrive by car or transit find it convenient to walk from place to place within the area

- On-street parking, structured parking, or shared, general purpose parking lots are located behind or to the side of buildings
- Streets are designed with a pedestrian orientation for the ease of crossing by pedestrians
- Public road connections correspond to the existing city block pattern; private driveways directly accessing the highway are discouraged
- Adjacent land uses provide for compact, mixed-use development with buildings oriented to the street
- A well-developed parallel and interconnected street network facilitates local automobile, bicycle, transit and pedestrian circulation except where topography severely constrains the potential for street connections
- Speeds typically do not exceed 25 miles per hour
- Plans and provisions are made for infill and redevelopment
- Provisions are made for well-developed transit stops including van/bus stops, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and including street amenities that support these modes

In addition to the above characteristics for developing an STA, an agency should apply the following strategies outlined in Table 1 to meet the objectives of the land use and transportation policy and support the development of an STA.

**Elements of Strategies for Development of an STA**

Land Use	Traffic Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Adjacent land uses that provide for compact, mixed-use development. "Compact" means that buildings are spaced closely together, parking is shared and sidewalks bind the street to the building. Mixed-use development includes a mixture of community places and uses.</li> <li>▪ Infill and redevelopment.</li> <li>▪ Design and orientation of buildings that accommodate pedestrian and bicycle circulation, as well as automobile use.</li> <li>▪ An adopted management plan as part of the comprehensive plan that shows the area as a compact district with development requirements that address local auto trips, street connectivity, shared parking, design and layout of buildings, parking and sidewalks that encourage a pedestrian-oriented environment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A well-developed parallel and interconnected local roadway network.</li> <li>▪ A parking strategy that favors shared general purpose parking, preferably on-street parking and shared parking lots.</li> <li>▪ Streets designed for ease of crossing by pedestrians.</li> </ul>
Alternative Modes	Access Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Well-developed transit, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, including street amenities that support these modes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Public road connections that correspond to the existing city block.</li> <li>▪ Private driveways discouraged.</li> </ul>

Reference 1

The strategies provided in Table 1 should be used as guidance for the City of Ashland when looking to designate a highway segment as an STA. The general process for adopting an STA is outlined in the next section.

### ***Process for STA Adoption***

The OHP establishes general processes and considerations for alternate mobility standards. ODOT developed the Oregon Highway Plan Mobility Standard Guidelines, which builds on the existing OHP policy language to provide better guidance for development of alternate standards in Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) areas, outside of MPO areas through TSPs, through ODOT facility plans, and provides some discussion for dealing with mobility standard issues in project development and development review activities.

The OHP establishes requirements for developing alternate mobility standards that includes a system evaluation and plan for the local transportation system and pedestrian and bicycle networks; enhancing safety and operations, including access management; encouraging transportation demand management; providing for alternate modes of transportation; and managing land uses. The plan provides flexibility in specifying the new standard for mobility, although the formal standard must continue to use a volume-to-capacity (v/c) ratio, or must be v/c-related for consistency of application throughout agency activities. However, the level (number) of the v/c measure can be changed, as well as measuring a different performance period (something other than the 30th highest hour).

When ODOT's involvement in a local planning activity (e.g. TSP development or update) provides the basis for potential implementation of an alternate mobility standard, the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) should consider the request through a detailed proposal and draft OHP amendment, much in the same way as for Regional TSPs in MPO areas. The local government, in coordination with ODOT staff, should develop a report outlining the proposal for OTC consideration.

The OTC ultimately must adopt any proposed alternate mobility standard as an amendment to the OHP before it will become effective. Therefore, it is critical to sufficiently document and present the work undertaken to develop the proposal for Commission consideration.

### **STA OPPORTUNITIES FOR ASHLAND**

As was mentioned earlier, Ashland has four state highway segments (or subsegments of these segments) that can be considered for STAs. These locations include:

- OR 99 (Siskiyou Boulevard) from Walker Avenue south to the UGB
- OR 99 (Siskiyou Boulevard) from Oak Street to Maple Avenue (currently designated as an Urban Business Area)
- OR 99 (Siskiyou Boulevard) from Maple Avenue north to the UGB
- OR 66 (Ashland Street) from Railroad Crossing east to the UGB

### **Oregon 99 (Siskiyou Boulevard)**

The OR 99 segments from Walker Avenue south to the UGB and from Maple Avenue north to the UGB are projected to meet the current mobility standards in the year 2034. These two segments do not appear to be good candidates for an STA given the acceptable traffic conditions and lower density growth patterns.

The Oak Street to Maple Avenue segment of OR 99 has one intersection that is not projected to meet mobility standards in the year 2034 (OR 99/Hersey Street). However, this segment is currently designated as an Urban Business Area (UBA) and has a mobility standard of a volume-to-capacity ratio of 0.95 which is the same as if it had an STA designation. ODOT also already has alternative access spacing standards throughout the City of Ashland that are 300 feet. Therefore, this segment also does not appear to be a good candidate for an STA as there would be no benefit of the STA designation from a mobility and access spacing standard perspective.

### **Oregon 66 (Ashland Street)**

The OR 66 segment from the Railroad Crossing to the UGB is projected to meet the mobility standards in the year 2034. However, the I-5 Northbound Ramp Terminal and Tolman Creek intersections with OR 66 are projected to be approaching the mobility standard (volume-to-capacity ratio of 0.85).

#### **I-5 Northbound Ramp/OR 66 (Ashland Street)/(V/C = 0.84)**

The OR 66 (Ashland Street)/Tolman Creek Road intersection is projected to be approaching the mobility standard. As identified in Technical Memorandum #5: *Future Conditions Analysis*, an Interchange Area Management Plan (IAMP) has recently been prepared for the OR 66/I-5 interchange. The IAMP includes additional access management measures near the interchange. The findings and recommendations of the IAMP will be considered when future "build" analysis scenarios are conducted within this TSP update project.

This interchange should not be considered for an STA designation given the IAMP improvements and less-dense development patterns at the interchange.

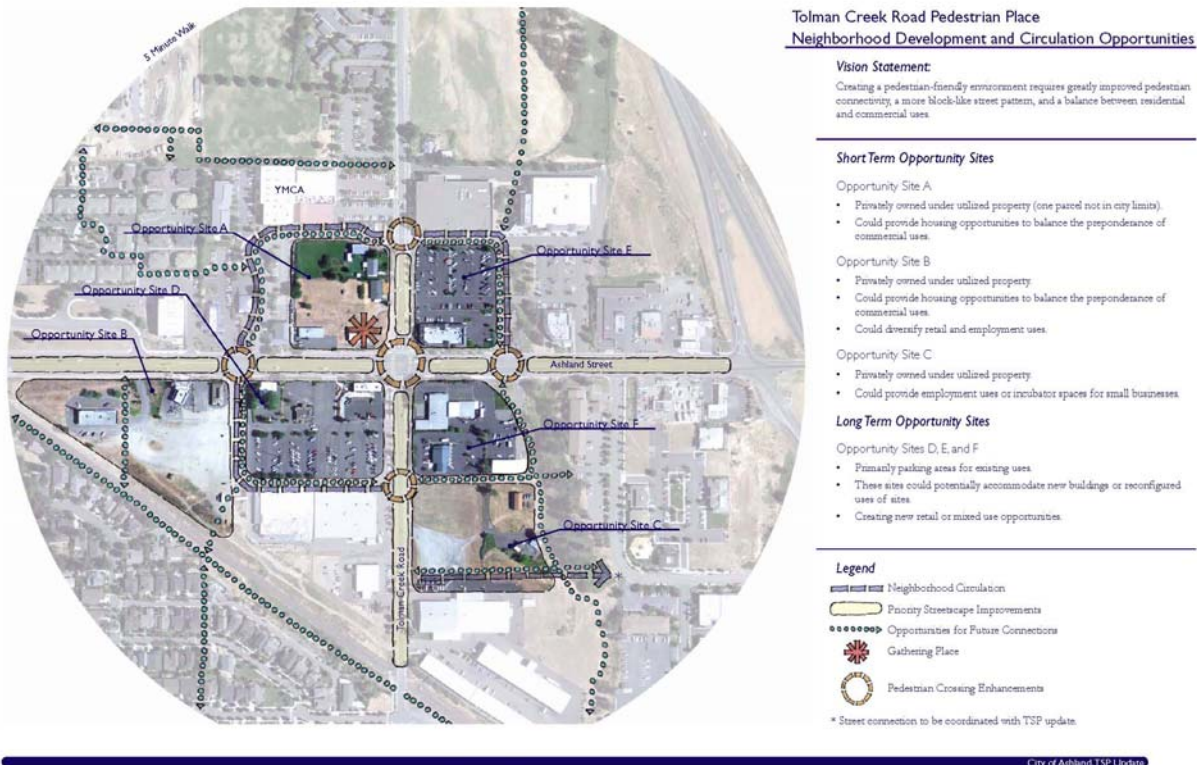
#### **Tolman Creek Road/OR 66 (Ashland Street)/(v/c = 0.82)**

The OR 66 (Ashland Street)/Tolman Creek Road intersection is projected to be approaching the mobility standard. The intersection is constrained for right of way, which makes it challenging to add travel lanes to improve the intersection operations. Additionally, adding travel lanes is inconsistent with the goals of the City.

The City has identified this intersection as a future Pedestrian Place. A Pedestrian Place is a small walkable node that provides a concentration of gathering places, housing, businesses and pedestrian amenities grouped in a way to encourage more walking, bicycling and transit use. The land uses and buildings in and around the Pedestrian Place are typically a mix of housing and



services to provide a variety of places within easy walking distance. Amenities may include plazas, bus shelters, shade and seating, drinking fountains, public art, landscaping, information displays, and bicycle parking. Pedestrian Places can help create vibrant, livable places where people congregate, and can function as neighborhood centers (Reference 3). The vision statement for this location is “creating a pedestrian-friendly environment requires greatly improved pedestrian connectivity, a more block-like street pattern, and a balance between residential and commercial uses (Reference 4).” Figure 3 shows that working plan for this Pedestrian Place.



**Figure 3 Pedestrian Place Project at Tolman Creek**

Given the projected operations, ongoing Pedestrian Place project, and constrained environment at this intersection, an STA designation for the OR 66 segment between the Railroad Crossing and Washington Street, including this intersection could be appropriate to meet the City’s goals and ODOT mobility standard in the future.

**ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO STAS**

As an alternative to adopting an STA, ODOT also has a process for obtaining alternative mobility standards for a specific intersection or highway segment. This approach could be beneficial for the intersections of Oak Street with OR 99 on Main Street and Lithia Way. These two intersections are not projected to meet the mobility standard of the STA area. An intersection specific

alternative mobility standard could also be applied to the OR 99/Hersey Street and Ashland Street (OR 66)/Tolman Creek Road intersections discussed above.

At locations where an appropriate intersection treatment or alternative mobility standard cannot be agreed upon with ODOT, an additional alternative is to pursue jurisdictional transfer of the roadway segments that are not projected to meet mobility standards. Roadways that have undergone a jurisdictional transfer could move away from the vehicle based level-of-service approach as described in the *Alternatives to Traditional Mobility Standards and Funding* white paper.

## NEXT STEPS

The OR 66 (Ashland Street) segment between the Railroad Crossing and Washington Street is potentially suitable for an STA designation. The intersections of OR 66/Tolman Creek Road, OR 66/Washington Street, OR 99 (Main Street)/Oak Street, OR 99 (Lithia Way)/Oak Street, and OR 99/Hersey Street are potentially suitable for alternative mobility standards. Depending on input from the Project Management Team, Technical Advisory Committee, Planning Commission and Transportation Commission, the STA designation or alternative mobility standards for these locations will be identified as: 1) locations to evaluate further and potentially apply for STA or alternative mobility standards as part of the TSP update; or 2) locations to exclude from further consideration for a STA or alternative mobility standards.

## REFERENCES

1. Oregon Department of Transportation. *Oregon Highway Plan*. 1999.
2. Oregon Department of Transportation. *Oregon Highway Plan Mobility Standard Guidelines*. 2009.
3. City of Ashland. *Pedestrian Places Project*. 2010.
4. City of Ashland. *Pedestrian Places Project Workshop Materials*. December 2010.