



**STAFF REPORT ON ODOT RECOMMENDATIONS
ON THE DOWNTOWN/OR 211 STREETSCAPE PLAN
FROM LETTER DATED OCTOBER 12, 2007**

This staff report covers comments received by ODOT (Oregon Department of Transportation). Staff comments and suggestions are made in ***Bold Italic*** print.

STAFF REPORT

OR 211 Corridor Streetscape Design

The Plan recommends a specific cross section for OR 211 corridor west and east of the Downtown District. The cross section is generally consistent with Oregon Highway Design Manual (HDM) standards for Urban Business Area and Suburban Fringe for the areas with posted speeds of 35 mph, 40 mph and 55 mph (design speeds are 40 mph, 45 mph and 65 mph respectively.)

The OR 211 Corridor Streetscape Design (Figure 8.2) cross section is:

10' sidewalk & buffer	6' bike lane	12' travel lane	16' median/turn lane
12' travel lane	6' bike lane	10' sidewalk & buffer	

ODOT supports adoption of this cross section although several elements, as discussed below, may need additional clarifying language. Please note that full implementation of all recommended Corridor design features may not be feasible until adjacent lands have urbanized and/or speeds are reduced (which is likely to occur in response to urbanization.)

These have been slightly altered due to a meeting with Sonya Kazen in March 2009 where it was discussed what state highway requirements were along with what amount of highway was possible for us to achieve. This section is detailed at the beginning of this staff report where we describe in detail the cross-sections.

Trees

Trees shown in the raised median are consistent Highway Design Manual (HDM) standards only in areas with posted speeds of 35 mph or less. A detailed analysis for tree placement will be required for ODOT evaluation and the ODOT design exception would need to be approved in order to install trees in higher speed sections.

Trees shown the sidewalk buffer areas (clear zone) are consistent with (HDM) standards for areas up to 40 mph posted speed. In order to install trees in higher speed sections, a detailed analysis for tree placement will be required for ODOT evaluation and an ODOT design exception would need to be approved in

order to install trees in higher speed sections. Also the landscape strip behind the curb potentially may need to be wider to provide adequate clearance between the travel lanes and the trees.

Because much of the land along OR 211 in the 40 to 55 mph posted speed sections is sparsely developed all this time, the adjacent land uses do not provide visual cues to drivers to reduce speeds. Trees, as fixed objects, could present potential safety problems in these high speed areas. When OR 211 improvement projects are in design, ODOT will evaluate existing land use and other factors and consider whether to support a design exception to allow trees in the medians or in the clear zone in the high speed areas. Where trees are not approved, vegetation below 3 feet in height would still be acceptable and would provide aesthetic and driver-awareness benefits.

All landscaping placement will need to address HDM sight distance standards and clear zone requirements.

After much discussion through emails and in meetings with ODOT new cross-sections meeting these requirements were addressed. While they differ slightly from the language listed here they meet the requirements of ODOT as well as the needs of the community. To review this in more detail see the March 2009 staff response to this section at the beginning of this report.

Median

The Plan Recommended OR 211 Corridor indicates a 16 foot raised median. However, for sections with posted speeds of 45 mph and above, ODOT HDM standards require that a raised median to be 19 feet wide. We recommend the City address this issue by adding language to the OR 211 Corridor Streetscape to the effect that:

- A 19' median is the standard for areas with 45 mph posted/55mph design speeds and above. (Currently, this would apply only to the westerly sections of the OR 211 Corridor which has 55 mph posted speed.) Including this language would ensure that City requires sufficient right-of-way from adjacent development through the land use review process.
- At the time improvements are proposed, ODOT and the City could consider whether a 16' continuous left turn land (which meets ODOT HDM standards) would be desirable until such time as speeds were reduced and a raised median could be constructed. There are potential safety issues with turning conflicts and approaches (public street and driveway) connections to the highway which may not make this feasible.

Staff and ODOT concurred that the median could be reduced to 16'. Due to the amount of right-of-way and the amount of land that would be required to be taken from each property owner could become too costly for the City and would possibly become a takings issue if the City tried to obtain this amount of median during land use review. For this reason 16' meets the requirements of ODOT and will provide for a safe and convenient transportation system.

Traffic Signals with Marked Crosswalks, Roundabouts

The Plan identifies the future need for a traffic signal at OR 211 at Leroy, and includes other signalization projects and two roundabouts at Molalla Forest Road and Mathias road previously listed in the *Transportation System Plan*. ODOT would not allow installation of traffic signals until signal warrants were met. ODOT design standards will need to be addressed for all proposed highway improvements, and ODOT approval (and permits) will be required.

OR 211 Downtown District Streetscape Design/*Special Transportation Area*

ODOT Region 1 supports the Plan recommendation for *Special Transportation Area* (STA) designation for OR 211 from Hart to Grange Avenues. The STA designation was also proposed in the City of Molalla Transportation System Plan (adopted 2001). The designation is consistent with existing and planned land uses and street network in the downtown area. The designation will need to be considered by the Oregon Transportation Commission; if approved by the OTC, the designation will be reflected in the *Oregon Highway Plan*. In the future, expansion of the STA segment could be considered if adjacent lands and the street network develop in a manner consistent with “downtown” character, and posted speeds drop to 25 mph.

Staff discussed an STA for Molalla extensively with ODOT and will proceed with recommending such an STA at such time the Downtown/OR 211 Streetscape Plan is adopted. This plan provides the City the right to request the STA from the state. STA’s (Special Transportation Areas) allow for more city input due to specialized requirements. One item an STA provides is the ability to reduce speeds to 25mph which will become necessary as property along the highway is developed.

ODOT R1 conferred on cross-section design and dimensions for the STA segment with staff in ODOT Motor Carrier, Mobility, and Roadway as well as with representatives from the freight industry. While OR 211, a District highway, is not an *Oregon Highway Plan* designated statewide Freight route, it is designated by Motor Carrier as an Over-Dimensional Route where vehicles up to 12’ may operate under annual ODOT permit, and vehicles up to 16’ may operate under single-use permit. Due to limited right-of-way and existing development set close to the sidewalks, the trade-offs between trucking, pedestrian, bicycle and parking needs were explored by ODOT, as well as by the plan Task Force (citizen advisory) and Technical Advisory committees.

The OR 211 Downtown District Streetscape Design, Figure 803 cross section is:

10’ sidewalk & buffer	7’ parallel parking	5’ bicycle lane	11’ travel lane
11’ travel lane	5’ bike lane	7’ parallel parking	10’ sidewalk & buffer

This design is consistent with ODOT *Highway Design Manual* standards for an STA, and has ODOT support. This cross section should be adopted into the City’s TSP to enable the City to require sufficient right-of-way dedication as properties develop.

However, the current right-of-way is only 58-60' downtown, and existing buildings are set close to the sidewalk. Therefore, it's expected to take some time before the ultimate design can be constructed. Therefore, the Implementation Strategy in the Recommended Plan includes two options for *interim* implementation:

Fig. 9.1 – Option 1

10' sidewalk & buffer	7' parallel parking (one side only)	5' bike lane	11' travel lane
11' travel lane	5' bike lane	10' sidewalk & buffer	

Fig. 9.2 – Option 2:

6-7' sidewalk & buffer	7' parallel parking	5' bike lane	11' travel lane
11' travel lane	5' bike lane	7' parallel parking	6-7' sidewalk & buffer

Option 1 meets *HDM* standards, but Option 2 will require an ODOT *design exception* for sidewalks narrower than 10'. ODOT may consider such a design exception for several reasons: existing sidewalks are only 6' wide, and implementation of this design would set the curbs in their ultimate location; sidewalks could be expanded as properties redevelop and additional right-of-way becomes available. Please note that ODOT Technical Services is the authority which will make the determinations on *design exceptions*.

If an enhancement project for OR 211 Downtown is programmed by ODOT or the City before the full right-of-way is available, the public would be provided the opportunity to weigh in on these options before an interim design were selected.

Staff worked with ODOT over the past several months and solidified the actual ROW enhancements that need to be made as part of this plan to be consistent with all plans being proposed and in existence as of this time. These final changes were made in a joint meeting with ODOT in March of 2009 and further detailed in the March 2009 letter form ODOT.

The Plan recommends ladder-marked crosswalks at existing marked crossing locations in the OR 211 Downtown District and also at Fenton Street; all of these crossing are un-signalized. Existing and new pedestrian crossings, as well as the Plan recommended curb extensions at Center and Grange streets would be evaluated during OR 211 improvement project design.

Staff concurs with this and has made a recommendation to the Public Works Director that all new crosswalks be ladder-marked crosswalks.

Access Management

The recommended Access Spacing of “half a city block” is roughly consistent with *Oregon Highway Design Manual* STA standard which strives to restrict individual driveways within an STA. Access management supports the STA goals for enhanced pedestrian and bicycle mobility within the

district. The STA access management goal is that, over time, access would primarily be via public street approaches, with no more than one mid-block approach/175' maximum driveway spacing. As properties redevelop downtown or along the corridor, ODOT and the City will look for opportunities for properties to eliminate, consolidate and/or share highway approaches.

Staff has addressed many of these issues in updates to the code and believes no further action would be required to meet this comment.

Illumination

The Plan recommends “pedestrian-scale lighting” downtown. The Corridor cross section does not show street lighting, but this is also something the City might want to consider. Typically, the expense for lighting installation and maintenance is born by the local jurisdiction. ODOT potentially could assist the City in the design of a street lighting system. It would make sense to install illumination as part of a larger roadway reconstruction project. ODOT employs AASHTO illumination standards.

Staff would like to pursue further offers from ODOT to address our street lighting. The City has already begun looking at the options for downtown lighting but would like to receive further assistance from ODOT for this need. Staff will be working with ODOT as time allows after hearings on this issue.

Signalization of OR 211-Molalla Avenue

The City TSP identified the need for future signalization at this intersection. The City might consider conducting a signal warrant analysis now, as the warrants may have already been met. This information would have value for City CIP programming and funding requests to ODOT.

Staff concurs with ODOT, however we feel that recent information provided in the Downtown/OR 211 Streetscape Plan show the need for the traffic light with the immediate need for a light. Staff has recently applied for grant requests for an improvement to this intersection after serious discussions with downtown property owners who are not necessarily in agreement with the light at any point in the future.

Due to the restricted right-of-way at OR 211-Molalla Avenue and downtown business concerns about the loss of parking, the Plan considered several design alternatives to address left turn movements. The Recommended Plan's Preferred Main/Molalla Intersection Concept: Prohibit Left Turns (pg. 78) is not supported by ODOT; ODOT typical design calls for the installation of left turn lanes on all approaches. When a signalization project is being designed, ODOT will evaluate the options and discuss these with the City and community. The City should be aware; however, that ODOT is the approval authority for intersection design and operations on OR 211.

After reviewing previous discussions with ODOT left turn lane restrictions would not be allowed. This fix was a temporary fix anyways. Staff concurs with ODOT's assessment that a temporary fix would not address the needs of Molalla for the long term. The left turn lane

restriction would already be at a near fail rate at this time due to the amount of development in and around town. For this reason staff recommends as the only option presented to staff to install the signal as outlined in the Downtown/OR 211 Streetscape Plan in order to bring this intersection back up to a satisfactory operating level. It should be noted that while this will address the immediate failure of the intersection it will not complete the long range project. The Molalla Forest Road is a high priority for a bypass route for truck traffic which will ease the tension on the intersection of Main and Molalla drastically.

Next Steps: Implementation of OR 211 Streetscape and Other Improvements

Corridor Section

Many properties along the OR 211 Corridor area are now annexing and major development is expected over the next few years. It is recommended that, through the City's land use review process, the City require adjacent development to dedicate right-of-way and construct half street improvements consistent with the OR 211 Corridor Streetscape design. The best way to address median installation in the absence of adequate right-of-way, or when only properties on one side of the highway are developing, would be for the City to collect a "fee in Lieu" toward the median work and construct the median as part of a public, rather than private, improvement project.

Staff is currently discussing how to achieve such a fee for these types of developments to ensure median work is completed in a timely manner. Staff will further address the Planning Commission at such time a decision by staff has been reached and will be presented to the City Council for adoption.

Downtown/STA Section

Due to the narrow parcel frontages on OR 211 downtown, it will be difficult to construct improvements as individual properties redevelop. Therefore, we recommend the City collect a "fee-in-lieu" from development to pool toward a future public improvement project for the STA section.

Staff is working on this matter pursuant to the previous comment made above.

Development Review

When major developments are proposed, the City should require a traffic analysis to assess impacts to OR 211 and determine the need for turn lanes and signalization. The Implementation Strategy identifies ODOT, SDC and Developer as potential funding sources for these mobility improvements.

Programming/Funding

City should consider adding projects needed in the near term, for inclusion in the City's Five Year Capital Improvement Program. This would enable the City to collect SDC's to fund a project, or to apply as a contribution toward an ODOT STIP project.

The City is at the beginning of looking into updating its Capital Improvements. This will allow the needed near term improvements to be listed in the 5 year improvement plan. It would make sense to wait until the updated Comprehensive Plan is adopted to ensure that the facilities plans include changes made as a result of the updated plans.

As the City is aware, OR 211 pavement is not in good condition. Many areas in the Corridor lack sidewalks and bicycle lanes, and storm water is handled in wide ditches which are a barrier to pedestrians. ODOT has delayed programming a preservation project on OR 211 so that the City could develop a design plan. Now that the OR 211 Streetscape Plan is completed, we encourage the City to advocate for State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) funding for a preservation-enhancement project to implement the OR 211 Corridor and Downtown Streetscapes. We also encourage the City to apply for ODOT Transportation Enhancement and Bicycle-Pedestrian grants. Information on these grant programs is available on the ODOT web site.

Upon adoption of the Downtown/OR 211 Streetscape Plan the City will make such a request to be put onto the STIP. It is a high priority for providing sidewalks and eliminating ditches for safe travel to commercial areas at the west end of town.

Street Trees

For design consistency, I recommend the City, after consultation with ODOT, select one or more tree species for the Corridor and downtown District sections of OR 211 to ensure design consistency. As mentioned, tree placement will need to address ODOT design requirements, and the ODOT permits will include specifications on tree size and planting.

Staff concurs with this comment and has worked with the Public Works Director to identify a limited number of trees to be placed in the public ROW along Highway 211 and 213 to provide consistency.

IGA

As part of OR 211 projects implementation, ODOT and the City will need to establish an intergovernmental agreement wherein the City assumes responsibility for maintenance of features such as sidewalks, landscaping and lighting. The City may, through the municipal code, pass maintenance responsibility for features behind the curb to adjacent property owners; City would be responsibility to maintain the landscaping in the raised medians.

These items are for discussion by the Public Works Department and City Council to ensure maintenance is addressed and all interested parties are able to understand what requirements are to be addressed.

Molalla Forest Road – Truck Bypass

The citizens of Molalla have a strong interest in reducing truck traffic downtown, and the Molalla TSP identifies a future truck bypass/possible OR 211 Bypass on the Molalla Forest Road.

The Molalla Forest Road is now under City ownership, but this former logging road is in poor condition. ODOT and City staff recently walked the route and discussed minimum design dimensions needed for either an ODOT District highway (OR 211 Bypass) or City arterial street. As a result, the City intends to amend the TSP to include a 70' cross section for the Molalla Forest Road. This is a good idea, both in terms of providing the means for City to require necessary right-of-way dedication, but also to ensure the road could be constructed to either ODOT or City standards. I have provided information to you on the *Oregon Highway Plan*, Major Improvements, and Bypasses policies, as well as ODOT *Approval Procedure for Local Truck Routes (7/1/06)*. These policies will be the basis for future discussions between our agencies and Clackamas County on the Potential for either establishing an OR 211 Bypass, or moving the local truck route from OR 211 to Molalla Forest Road, If the City requests to relocate OR 211 to the Molalla Forest Road, the final determination would need to be made by the Oregon Transportation Commission.

One of the highest priorities for the City is the opening of the Molalla Forest Road. Failure to provide a truck bypass in the near term (next 5-10 years) will limit the potential development of the City. City staff have and will continue to work closely with ODOT on any potential funding for opening this roadway.

Recommendations and Next Steps for the Molalla Downtown Development

ODOT's primary focus is on ensuring adequate City implementation of Oregon land use Goal 12 – Transportation, the Transportation Planning Rule (OAR 660-12-060), and that the proposed land use review process will provide adequate provisions for the consideration of planning and development transportation impacts.

Molalla Parks, Recreation and Trails Master Plan (Draft Report 7/27/07)

Trails

ODOT is concerned that providing safe pedestrian and bicycle crossings of OR 213 and OR 211 for proposed trails may be infeasible. *Table 8 – Constraints* identifies some of the challenging for establishing pedestrian/bicycle crossings at specific locations.

The City has placed a high importance to updating its Transportation Systems Plan. During this review controlled crossing locations for pedestrian and bicycles should be researched and incorporated into the updated Transportation Systems Plan. Currently the Downtown Molalla/OR 211 Streetscape Plan provides for some trails to cross the highways but does not describe how they will be controlled. This is one of many important items to be researched during the review of the Transportation Systems Plan.

Any new trail connections to the state highways would need to be permitted by ODOT (per OAR 734.51) and meet ODOT design standards at the highway connections and crossings.

Therefore, ODOT recommends that language be added to the Parks plan to the effect:

“At the time of trail design, conceptual trail alignments may be modified to address environmental and topographic constraints, and to provide safe bicycle and pedestrian connections and crossings of state highways and city streets consistent with the requirements of the road authority.

The City has had a very good working relationship with ODOT. This relationship is critical to continue in order for a small community to receive some professional assistance from ODOT. Trail crossings, since they deal with citizen safety in the community, is critical for Molalla. For this reason it only makes sense to continue our relationship with ODOT to ensure any future crossings are done using all resources available to ensure safe and lawful crossings are created.

Parks and Community Centers

ODOT will participate in the City’s land use review process when parks and community centers are proposed to ensure that traffic and access impacts to state highways within the City are addressed. New proposed approaches (driveways) to OR 213 or OR 211 would need to be permitted by ODOT.

City staff appreciates working with ODOT in an effort to provide the best development for the community and appreciates the expertise and cooperative working relationship that was had during this process.