



Frequently Asked Questions

OR 22 Corridor Safety Improvement Project and Expressway Management Plan (EMP)

The responses to the FAQs are an attempt to document the origin of the expressway designation for OR 22 and the OR 22 Expressway Management Plan (EMP). The FAQs also explain why the options studied for the OR 22 Corridor Safety Improvement Project will someday all need to be completed as part of implementing the EMP.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

What is an Expressway?

The definition from the Oregon Highway Plan states: *expressways are complete routes or segments of existing two-lane and multi-lane highways and planned multi-lane highways that provide for safe and efficient high speed and high volume traffic movements. Their primary function is to provide for interurban travel and connections to ports and major recreation areas with minimal interruptions. A secondary function is to provide for long distance intra-urban travel in metropolitan areas. In urban areas, speeds are moderate to high. In rural areas, speeds are high. Usually there are no pedestrian facilities, and bikeways may be separated from the roadway.*

In this classification, “expressway” refers to the kind and number of accesses allowed on a highway segment. It does not refer to the ownership of access rights.

Other characteristics include the following:

- Private access is discouraged.
- A long-range plan to eliminate existing approach roads as opportunities occur or alternate access becomes available.
- Access rights will be purchased and a local road network may be developed consistent with the function of the roadway.
 - Public road connections are highly controlled
 - Traffic signals are discouraged in rural areas;
 - Nontraversable medians may be considered for safety and operations purposes;
 - Parking is prohibited.

How/when was OR 22 designated an expressway?

The 1999 Oregon Highway Plan, Appendix D – Highway Classification by Milepoint (MP) designated OR 22 (Hwy. 30), the Willamina-Salem Highway as an expressway from MP 0.00 (intersection with OR18, Salmon River Hwy.) to 26.14 (Salem Willamette River Bridges -- Marion and Center St.). The expressway designation was reviewed and affirmed in 2012; see Attachment B, Expressway Function Review.

What is the OR22 Expressway Management Plan (EMP)?

The purpose of the OR 22 Expressway Management Plan (Derry Overcrossing to Doaks Ferry Road) was to assess traffic and safety problems within the study area and identify potential solutions to these problems. This was a technical exercise to evaluate and screen alternatives prior to conducting project development.

The EMP has provided direction to the project development process by defining the key features of the alternatives identified for construction at problem locations along the OR 22 study area, including the intersection with OR 51 and other local interest road intersections. The EMP also provides a basis for ODOT to work with Polk County to amend its Comprehensive Plan, Transportation Systems Plan (TSP) and Zoning Ordinance as well as the Regional Transportation System Plan (RTSP) and SKATS (Salem Keizer Area Transportation Study). These amendments will acknowledge the project development decisions that have been made and the short-, medium-, and long-term (including Polk County land use decisions) that will be implemented to help protect the functionality of the proposed project improvements through the 20-year planning horizon.

The construction projects recommended by the EMP are expected to be included in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) after adoption by the Oregon Transportation Commission and when funding for full development and construction of the projects has been secured.

The provisions of the EMP and the projects it identifies have been adopted by Polk County.

What part of OR 22 does the OR 22 Expressway Management Plan cover?

Doaks Ferry Rd. (MP 22.04) west to Derry Overcrossing (MP 16.04).

What projects does the EMP contain?

The EMP contains projects for:

- An interchange at the intersection of OR 51 and OR 22
- Eventual removal of most private and public road accesses to OR 22 within the plan limits
- A system of frontage and backage roads that connect properties with frontage on OR 22 and other properties immediately north and south of OR 22 with the interchange.

All of these projects need to be completed for the future interchange to function safely and efficiently.

Did the Expressway Management Plan (EMP) have stakeholder input and review prior to adoption?

Yes. ODOT conducted a series of meetings with key stakeholders during the 2000-2002 planning process. Stakeholders included community residents and local business owners and emergency response personnel. The purpose of the meetings was to review preliminary evaluation results and improvement concepts and receive stakeholder feedback. The initial stakeholder outreach process culminated with an open house at the Eola RV Park in September 2004. The acceptability of many of the project concepts recommended in the EMP were affirmed by the public at that meeting.

In August 2007 the Polk County Board of Commissioners held a public meeting where the public reaffirmed the continuing validity of the project. Feedback at a November 2007 public meeting at the Polk County Fairgrounds reaffirmed earlier evaluation results and public preferences. Additional public input was provided through the Polk County Commission and Oregon Transportation Commission adoption processes.

How will the Expressway Management Plan (EMP) be implemented; i.e., what will be built?

The EMP is implemented by constructing projects that are identified in the plan. The primary project is the interchange at the intersection of OR 51 and OR 22. (Attachment C, Frontage/Backage Road Alternatives.) The interchange is only abstractly represented by a dashed circle in Attachment C. All of the quadrants of the interchange will need either a backage or frontage road system for the interchange to be designed to function properly and safely. Attachment C shows a number of alternatives that will remain in the EMP until a project design team evaluates them. The actual projects built will be determined by ODOT project design teams, as funding becomes available.

What will be built next?

The first project is being developed and constructed by Polk County, aka the Doaks Ferry Road Realignment project. (<http://www.co.polk.or.us/pw/doaks-ferry-road-realignment-project>). This project will create a right-in only from OR 22 onto Doaks Ferry Road. To accommodate the other turning movements, Doaks Ferry Road traffic will be channeled onto 2nd Street, which is being extended by the project to Riggs Street NW. Riggs Street NW will be the primary access for full movement turns until ODOT's OR22: Corridor Safety Improvements project is completed (see below for details). Construction of the Doaks Ferry Road Realignment project is expected in 2017. See FAQs on this project at http://www.co.polk.or.us/sites/default/files/fileattachments/public_works/page/3155/dfr-faq-140708.pdf

The second project will be the ODOT Preferred Alternative presented at the open house, entitled, OR22: Corridor Safety Improvements. The preferred alternative is being recommended after ODOT analyzed four backage road options in the NE and SE quadrants of the future interchange. (See Attachment D, Project Options). The project team concluded that Option 1 is the Preferred Alternative. This alternative is described in other sections of the project website.

How is the public involved in the OR 22 Corridor Safety Improvement Project?

The project is part of a larger road network included in the OR 22 Expressway Management Plan (EMP) adopted in 2010 by Polk County and the Oregon Transportation Commission. The project has had prior public input as part of the plan adoption process.

ODOT recently hosted an Open House on December 9, 2015. The public was informed of the Open House via direct mail to property owners in the general area and by media advertising. The purpose of the meeting was to perform due diligence to determine if the public would raise any reasons to not build the project, other than objecting to the EMP. The open house was also an opportunity for the project team to make contact with property owners directly affected by the project alignment and access modifications.

At the Open House, there were some objections to the EMP and the current ODOT project. However, based on ODOT's judgment, there were no reasons presented to not build the project. The objections to the EMP, Expressway designation, and the project raised at the meeting are presented and responded to below.

Now that the Open House comment period has expired, and no valid objections have been received, the Preferred Alternative will be designed by the project team as part of the engineering phase of the project. Comments can still be submitted via the project website. (<http://www.or22safety.org/>)

Interested stakeholders can continue to be involved in the engineering phase of the project by participating in a project focus group. (<http://www.or22safety.org/page/focus-group>) ODOT will select 3-6 people from among the applicants to participate. This group will meet with the project team 3-4 times

through the engineering and permitting phases over the next two years. At the meetings, project plans will be presented and discussed with members of the project development team.

If I don't like the Expressway Management Plan (EMP), what can I do about it?

As described above, the EMP is the foundation of the current and future projects including the interchange and supporting backage and/or frontage road network needed for the interchange to function safely and efficiently. The planning process was completed in 2010 with adoption by the Polk County Commission and the Oregon Transportation Commission. Polk County or ODOT are engaged in implementing the plan. This process is not subject to change unless a plan amendment is initiated by either adopting agency. The adopted plan is not anticipated to be changed by either adopting party and projects contained therein will be constructed as funding permits. The ODOT OR 22: Corridor Safety Improvements project is the second stage of plan implementation following the Doaks Ferry Road project being designed and constructed by Polk County.

If parties wish to pursue a plan amendment, they should contact elected officials in the Oregon legislature and the Polk County Commissioners. Be aware that:

- The interchange is critically necessary to improve safety of the OR51/OR22 intersection.
- The interchange cannot be designed to properly and safely function, per ODOT and federal design standards and the Oregon Highway Plan without the network of supporting frontage/backage roads of which the OR 22: Corridor Safety Improvements project is a part.

Is there funding for the interchange and the project?

Currently there is no funding for the interchange. With long-range funding at the federal level unresolved, it is uncertain when there will be sufficient funding for the interchange. Certainly there will not be sufficient funding in the foreseeable future unless/until congress funds a national transportation bill.

The current funding status of the project is 80 to 90% funded. It is enough to proceed with engineering and right of way acquisition. The actual cost will become more certain as the project design progresses. The shortfall is expected to be funded from other available sources.

What is likely to be the project following the County's Doak's Ferry project and the current ODOT OR 22: Corridor Safety Improvements project?

Option 2 in Attachment C is likely to be the next project, as it is a continuation of the backage road (2nd Street) being built as part of the current project.

How do we get options that are not selected removed from the Expressway Management Plan (EMP)?

The EMP has been adopted by Polk County and the Oregon Transportation Commission. An option can only be removed by amending the plan. A plan amendment must be adopted by both adopting parties to be enacted. To initiate a plan amendment, contact the Polk County Public Works Director's office.

The options studied for this project, but not selected as the Preferred Alternative, are not likely to be removed by amendment because they are part of a network required to support the safe and efficient operation of the future interchange.

OPEN HOUSE COMMENTS & RESPONSES

If there is not funding for the interchange, and it may never get built – why is ODOT moving forward with the OR 22: Corridor Safety Improvements project?

The current project Preferred Alternative is part of an on-going program to improve safety on OR 22 detailed in the OR 22 Expressway Management Plan (EMP) that was adopted by the Oregon Transportation Commission and the Polk County commissioners in 2010. The centerpiece of the EMP is an interchange at the intersection of OR 22 and OR 51 along with a supporting road network to safely direct traffic to the interchange. Currently, the funding required to fully implement the EMP (i.e., build the interchange and full supporting road network) is not available. It is not known when that funding will be available, as it will likely be part of a much larger federal or state road and bridge package.

The federal or state funding of an interchange project can take many years and the political process to achieve the required level of funding is unpredictable. Meanwhile, ODOT is designing and constructing parts of the adopted local road network as funding is authorized. The current project is part of that local road network.

As well as being a step in the interchange development, the current project has immediate safety benefits because it reduces private accesses to OR 22 thereby reducing the possibility of traffic conflicts on the highway.

The long range utility of this project is realized when it is linked to the network of roads necessary to feed traffic into the planned interchange.

Until the planned interchange is funded, ODOT will continue to build pieces of this adopted network as funding is available. This process of incrementally designing and constructing the required road network can take many years.

What, if anything, will happen to direct access to OR 22 for those businesses on the south side of the highway, i.e., will the businesses along OR 22 lose their direct access? If so when is that expected to occur?

Nothing will happen to alter the direct access of businesses on the south side of OR 22 as a result of the current OR 22: Corridor Safety Improvements project. Nor is it likely to happen in the near future, as explained below.

It is highly unlikely that the accesses to OR 22 from the south side will be altered until the OR51/OR22 interchange is funded and constructed. When the interchange project is constructed, many of the businesses on the south side of OR 22 east of OR 51 could lose their direct access to OR 22 as part of that project.

It is uncertain at this time when the funding for the interchange project will be available. We understand that the businesses on the south side of OR 22 would like to have more certainty about this issue, but we regretfully are unable to provide that at this time, as explained below.

The amount of federal funding required for the interchange project is large and will not be available under the current level of federal transportation funding.

If and when the required funding for an interchange is authorized, it will take +/- 3 years for the project to be designed. The development process includes engineering, environmental permits, and right of way acquisition. Construction can take another 2-3 years.

Why doesn't ODOT just post the speed limit at 40 miles per hour on this section of OR 22?

As stated above, OR 22 is designated as an "expressway" in the Oregon Highway Plan. Given the definition and function of an expressway as a high speed, inter-urban highway, lowering the speed to 40 mph defeats its purpose.

By law, ODOT cannot arbitrarily lower a speed zone; it must be done through a prescribed process. Attachment E is a brochure explaining this process. Though the brochure describes a process for changing the speed limit, it will not be applicable in this case, due to the expressway designation of the highway and the discussion below. Simply posting a lower speed does not guarantee the desired change or increase in safety. ODOT's experience has shown that reducing the speed limit, even with increased enforcement, will not actually significantly slow traffic speeds. Just posting a sign does not change driver behavior. There needs to be enforcement or visual clues. We know that there isn't enough money to step up enforcement, so the next thing is visual clues. The slower flows occur when reasonable drivers perceive a need to slow down. That is why the 85th percentile speed is used to point to a "reasonable driver".

The last investigation showed that the current posting is appropriate given the conditions. Since visually nothing has changed to alter a driver's view of this roadway in the last 5 years (since 2011), an investigation is not a good use of resources. There would likely be no change, so the 85th percentile speeds are likely still in the 60+mph range. Per the process stated in the brochure, the limits of speed zoning on a state highway outside city limits is to be within 5 mph of the 85th percentile, so ODOT cannot do anything less than posted 55.

Why doesn't ODOT install traffic signals at Doaks Ferry Rd. and OR 51 intersections instead of all these expensive projects?

See the answer above concerning the definition and function of an expressway and how it applies to installing traffic signals. Studies show that traffic signals do not necessarily reduce crashes, especially at rural intersections such as this and there is often an increase in rear-ends crashes. Traffic signals on rural roads can be dangerous with high speed crashes since drivers are not expecting a signal in a rural setting resulting in fatalities or severe injuries.

Why not place a roundabout on OR 22 at the intersection of OR 51 and OR 22 instead of an interchange?

The answer to this question is similar to the answer about traffic signals, i.e., roundabouts are inconsistent with the function/definition of an expressway.

High speed roundabouts are very large facilities with relatively high environmental impacts.

Why isn't OR 22 west of Salem posted as a "Safety Corridor"?

There are specific criteria for designating a safety corridor, one of which is a five-year average of the local fatal and serious-injury crash rate, as determined by CARS, must be at or above 110% of the latest statewide five year average for a similar type of roadway. Recent crash rates on OR 22 may qualify it for that designation and could be considered if the other designation criteria are also met. The designation of a Safety Corridor is authorized by the ODOT Safety Division.

http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/TS/Pages/roadwaysafety.aspx#Safety_Corridors

The project team cannot designate OR 22 a Safety Corridor, but will keep informed of the Safety Division's deliberations on this issue.

Following is a link to the Safety Corridor Guidelines and update:

<http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/TS/docs/Roadway/Safety%20Corridor%20Guideline%20Adopted%2012-7-2006%20by%20TOLT%20Amendment%201.pdf>

Will the project significantly increase traffic and noise on 2nd Street between Riggs Street and 50th Avenue?

OR 22 traffic volumes were approximately 35,000 vehicles per day in 2014, the latest year for which traffic counts are available. Traffic noise generated from OR 22 is significant due to the volume and high speed. Traffic volume and speed on 2nd Street after completion of the project is not expected to appreciably increase noise above that currently generated by traffic on OR 22.

Can Eola Drive, which connects Doaks Ferry Road to 55th Avenue NW, be paved as an alternate way of connecting to 55th Avenue and the future interchange?

Eola Drive will not work as an alternate for the project Preferred Alternative since it does not fulfill the supporting function needed for an eventual interchange at OR51/22 intersection. The network of all the options studied is needed to eventually be completed for the interchange to function safely and efficiently. Eola Drive as an alternative does not enable direct connection to the future interchange from the end of Polk County's project at the intersection of 2nd Street and Riggs Street, and does not enable the direct accesses to OR 22 between Riggs Street and 50th Avenue to be closed.

Will there be any thought given to "highlighting" or "illuminating" the Riggs/OR 22 intersection and the eventual 50th/OR 22 intersection warning OR 22 motorists to an upcoming intersection. (Such as a flashing amber light?)

Illumination at the Riggs Street and 50th Avenue intersections with OR 22 will be considered as part of this project.

Overhead flashing amber beacons have not been found to be effective in warning drivers of an intersection and therefore are not likely to be included in this project.

Can a right turn lane at Doaks Ferry Rd. and at 50th Avenue be added to the project?

A right turn lane from OR 22 onto Doaks Ferry Road will not be part of this project. As explained above, the Polk County Doaks Ferry Road project does permit right turns onto Doaks Ferry Road from OR 22. Dedicated right turn lanes onto Riggs St. and 50th Avenue will be considered by the project team.

Can concrete barrier be added in the median lane between Riggs Street to a point east of Doaks Ferry Road?

This suggestion will be considered during project design.