



April 13, 2006

To: Metropolitan Policy Committee

From: Tom Schwetz

Subject: Item 4.h – Alternative Mobility Standards Overview

Action Recommended: None. Information Only.

Issue Summary:

The Oregon Highway Plan (OHP) contains both policy language and standards for mobility on the state highway system. This set of policies and standards are used by ODOT as part of development review and in regional transportation planning in identifying system needs and priorities.

Where the mobility standards cannot be met, the OHP provides for the development of Alternative Mobility Standards (AMS). Successful development of these alternative standards must satisfy specific requirements in the OHP, including the identification of local commitments to “specific actions to manage transportation demand and ensure efficient use of the capacity of the state highway system.”

Analysis of the current and future (2025) congestion on the state highway system indicates several parts of the state system will not meet current mobility standards. Staff is currently working to establish a proposal for Alternative Mobility Standards. This memo provides an overview of the challenges and approach being used in the development of this proposal, and the current schedule and additional work needed to take this effort forward. As background to the discussion at MPC, Attachment 1 provides an overview of the Highway Mobility Standards contained in the Oregon Highway Plan and the state’s requirements for establishing alternative mobility standards.

Approach and Status to Date

MPO staff has been working on a project to develop a set of recommendations for Alternative Mobility Standards. These standards would apply only to the ODOT portion of the region’s highway system. The anticipated result of the project is to make the Central Lane MPO RTP consistent with the OHP through adoption of amendments to the RTP and to the OHP, instituting the alternative mobility standards.

'Good' and 'Bad' Congestion

A combination of factors including increasing congestion, extremely limited resources, and an expressed desire on the part of the region to pursue a balanced and integrated land use-transportation strategy complicates the use of mobility standards in establishing mobility performance expectations on state facilities. Where the region is achieving desired land use patterns (e.g., nodal development and other forms of mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly land uses), transportation and the adjoining land uses may be 'congestion-tolerant'. Where significant concentrations of through trips and freight-related trips exist, the transportation facilities can be characterized as 'mobility-dependent'.

Development and adoption of Alternative Mobility Standards "completes" the RTP both with respect to meeting state requirements set forth in the OHP and in refining the region's mobility expectations for the state highway system to better support and inform the implementation of the RTP.

Policy Interests in Alternative Mobility Standards

This context of congestion-tolerant and mobility-dependent land uses and transportation facilities reflects several policy interests which need to be balanced in the development of alternative mobility standards, including:

1. Achieving desired land use patterns as the region grows,
2. Providing for efficient and balanced transportation access to land,
3. Providing mobility for through traffic,
4. Providing for freight mobility

Approach Being Employed in the Development of Draft AMS Proposal

One goal of the AMS project has been to develop an analytical framework for establishing alternative mobility standards on state roads in the Central Lane MPO that reflects these policy interests. While developing this framework, trade-offs between mobility and accessibility afforded by desirable land use patterns have been considered. Additionally, the consequences of traffic congestion on vehicle trips of various types has also been analyzed and feasible options for congestion relief have been assessed for their viability in helping meet the mobility standards.

Through the use of this analytical framework, MPO staff, together with review and input by ODOT and local agency staff, have been working to determine locations where balancing regional planning goals (e.g., desired land use patterns vs. protecting through movements) suggests the need for alternatives to the OHP mobility standards.

Work was completed to identify potential solutions to address current and anticipated traffic congestion along segments of the state highway system in the region, depending upon the nature of the congestion. For example, solutions to congestion in areas with desirable land use patterns might focus on lowering the mobility standard (allowing more congestion), while addressing modal conflicts and

enhancement of alternative mode systems such as bike, transit, and pedestrian. This analysis will form the basis for the development and evaluation of alternative mobility standards that meet the requirements specified in Attachment 1.

Solutions to congestion will require local commitments to land use actions and local system improvements. Generally, these commitments are already reflected in the RTP and include:

- Bus Rapid Transit
- Nodal Development
- Priority Bike Projects
- Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) Investments
- Transportation Demand Management Strategies
- Local Road System Improvements

As the draft proposal is developed, more specific local actions may be identified. These actions will be thoroughly discussed by local staff and policy makers before being included in the formal proposal for Alternative Mobility Standards.

Process From Here

The steps needed to complete the process through adoption of the standards into the Oregon Highway Plan by the OTC include:

1. Complete draft proposal for Alternative Mobility Standards
2. Public Review – including local agency review and consultation
3. Adoption of RTP amendments – MPC
4. Adoption of OHP amendments - OTC

Staff will bring more information on this topic to future MPC meetings. These presentations will provide MPC members with more background on the extent of congestion in the region, a summary of the analysis of options completed to date, and more detailed description of the local commitments that might be required as part of the proposal.

Overviews similar to the MPC overview on this topic are currently being scheduled with the Eugene, Springfield, and Coburg Councils, and the Lane County and LTD Boards. These overviews will be an opportunity for local councils and boards to provide input to the development of the alternative mobility standards proposal.

The local agency review and consultation would take place once a formal draft proposal was completed. At this point, completion of a proposal is anticipated this Fall.

MPC would then be asked to amend the new standards into the RTP, likely as part of the RTP Update. Concurrently, OTC would receive a briefing and preparations would be made to prepare for OTC action to amend the OHP sometime after the RTP Update was completed.

Attachments:

Attachment 1: OHP Mobility Standards and Requirements for the development of Alternative Mobility Standards

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Last Saved: Wednesday, April 05, 2006

Overview of ODOT Mobility Standards

The Oregon Highway Plan (OHP) Policy 1F establishes highway mobility standards to “maintain acceptable and reliable levels of mobility on the state highway system.” The mobility standards are expressed as maximum allowable volume to capacity (V/C) ratios in the peak hour. The standards vary by facility type, and different standards are applied to urban and to non-urban areas; to Portland Metro, to other Oregon MPO and to non-MPO urban areas; and to Special Transportation Areas (STAs). These Standards are referenced in Appendix B of the RTP. The OHP recognizes that it may be infeasible, in some cases, to meet the standards in OHP Policy 1F, and allows for the adoption of alternative mobility standards in metropolitan areas or portions thereof, provided that the local plan also includes specific actions to manage transportation demand and ensure efficient use of the capacity of the state highway system.

Alternative performance standards have already been adopted for the Portland and Medford metropolitan areas. In addition, both the Portland and Medford areas have ‘interim’ alternative standards for specific highway segments, pending completion of refinement plans and new capacity additions.

Requirements for Alternative Mobility Standards

The OHP has the following applicable requirements involving the process for development of alternative mobility standards:

“The standards shall be adopted as part of a regional and/or local transportation system plan.” (OHP, page 77)

“In metropolitan areas, the alternate highway mobility standards will become effective only after the standards have been approved by the metropolitan planning organization and adopted by the Transportation Commission.” (OHP, page 78)

In addition, the OHP lays out the following requirements for the alternative standard itself:

The alternate standards shall be

1. Clear and objective;
2. Related to volume to capacity ratios (V/C); and
3. Adopted as part of a regional and/or local transportation system plan.

The analytical basis for the alternative standard must:

1. Demonstrate that it would be infeasible to meet the highway mobility standards in Policy 1F of the 1999 OHP.
2. Include all feasible actions for:

- a. Providing a network of local streets, collectors and arterials to relieve traffic demand on state highways and to provide convenient pedestrian and bicycle ways;
 - b. Managing access and traffic operations to minimize traffic accidents, avoid traffic backups on freeway ramps, and make the most efficient use of highway capacity;
 - c. Managing traffic demand, where feasible, to manage peak hour traffic loads on state highways;
 - d. Providing alternate modes of transportation; and
 - e. Managing land use to limit vehicular demand on state highways consistent with the Land Use and Transportation Policy (Policy 1B).
3. Include a financially feasible implementation program; and
 4. Demonstrate strong public and private commitment to carry out the identified improvements and other actions (OHP, pages 77-78).

The approval process of implementing alternative mobility standards requires approval of the alternative mobility standards by both the MPO and OTC, followed by amendment of the RTP by the MPO to incorporate the approved alternative mobility standards.