

West Eugene Parkway Assessment

January 2006 –April 2009

Location: Western Oregon

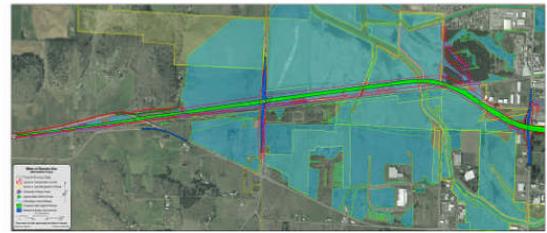
Background

A proposed highway through the west side of Eugene, Oregon, had been the subject of heated debate for over 20 years. Two public votes on the latest proposal, the "West Eugene Parkway," produced conflicting results. Local government administrations took different positions on the issue.

In early 2006, the Environmental Impact Statement for the project was near completion. There was widespread agreement that existing roads were overburdened and regional businesses needed better options for moving freight through Eugene, yet substantial opposition remained because the preferred route ran through a restored wetland with endangered plant and butterfly species. Business and environmental groups and the City of Eugene suggested a pause in the review process to discuss alternatives.

In early 2006, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) and the City of Eugene asked the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution to conduct an assessment of the conflict over how to address the traffic problems.

Under contract with the U.S. Institute, The Osprey Group sought input from decision makers, key stakeholders, and the public on the conflict's history, substantive issues, and how to move forward. Following the assessment, ODOT suspended work on the planned West Eugene Parkway.



Lessons Learned

- New efforts can arise from the ashes of old ones. While some stakeholders were disappointed with the decision not to proceed with the Parkway, the assessment sparked an interest in using collaboration to address transportation issues in West Eugene that led to the formation of the West Eugene Collaborative.
- The WEC expects their recommendations will become part of a larger effort by local jurisdictions, ODOT, and DLCD to update transportation and land use plans.

Results and Accomplishments

Although the U.S. Institute's involvement ended after the assessment, in early 2007, a group of civic, business, environmental, and neighborhood leaders formed the 27-member West Eugene Collaborative (WEC) to "develop an integrated land use and transportation solution supported by stakeholders that will facilitate movement of people and commerce from/through/to west Eugene and west of Eugene while enhancing community, business and the environment." The group was facilitated by the Osprey Group and the Oregon Consensus Program.

- After two years of work, the WEC developed a set of unanimous recommendations that provide a general framework and ideas for addressing traffic and related problems in and near the City of Eugene for the short, medium and long term.

Credits

Partner from National Roster of ECR Practitioners

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