



memo

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re **City of Hood River, Heights District Urban Design and Engineering**
(MIG 15174.01)
Task 2.3 – Policy, Regulations, and Design Standards Review Summary Memorandum

date **February 4, 2021**

This memorandum has been prepared to summarize findings of a review of existing City and ODOT documents relevant to the Heights District Corridor Study. Existing documents reviewed include those identified by Project Team and City staff and are listed in Appendix A – List of Documents Reviewed. This memorandum is structured to provide highlights of key findings from the most relevant documents reviewed as they relate to project scope.

1999 Oregon Highway Plan, including amendments Nov 1999 through May 2015 (OHP)

Defines policies and goals for the state’s highway system and notes the emphasis to increase partnerships with local governments. The OHP vision “strikes a balance between local accessibility and through movement of people and goods in urban communities.” Several policy goals are applicable to the Heights District study including but not limited to:

- Goal 1. System Definition - focus on contributing to local economies and livability of communities
- Goal 2. System Management - ensure that local mobility and accessibility are met
- Goal 4. Travel Alternatives - function as part of multimodal system

Goal 1 Policy 1A describes the state highway classification system, which guides planning, management, and investment decisions. OR281 (12th and 13th Streets) has been classified as a District Highway. District Highways are facilities of county-wide significance and function largely as county and city arterials or collectors. They provide connections and links between small urbanized areas, rural centers and urban hubs, and also serve local access and traffic. The management objective is to

provide for safe and efficient, moderate to low-speed operation in urban and urbanizing areas for traffic flow and for pedestrian and bicycle movements. Inside Special Transportation Areas, local access is a priority. Inside Urban Business Areas, mobility is balanced with local access.

Introduces “highway segment designations” for Special Transportation Areas (STAs), which are designated to support more compact development patterns and utilize more flexible design criteria. The STA designation process, which begins with a locally adopted plan, gives certainty to ODOT and local governments regarding transportation planning and project development and culminates in approval by the ODOT Transportation Commission.

Goal 1 Policy 1F establishes policies related to motor vehicle mobility, and includes mobility targets for state highways that act as thresholds for the maximum level of congestion desired. The mobility targets in the OHP are to be used to determine when improvements are needed to mitigate congestion. However, the mobility standards in ODOT’s Highway Design Manual (described below) apply when assessing the sufficiency of proposed improvement. For OR281, which is a District Highway inside an urban growth boundary with a posted speed of 25 mph, the OHP mobility targets allow for congestion measured by a volume to capacity ratio up to 0.95.

Goal 3 Policy 3A establishes access spacing standards that describe the minimum separation between public intersections and driveways to state highways. In general, the desired access spacing on OR 281 through the study area is 250 feet in two-way street segments and 125 feet in one-way segments. Because the block lengths in the Heights are only about 300 feet long, this would represent no more than one driveway per side of the street per block, located near the center of the block. While planning efforts or improvement projects would not be required to change property access to comply with these standards, any changes to access should move in the direction of the standards where feasible.

The plan documents ODOT’s commitment to participate actively, early, and continuously in development and review of plans and to look for creative and innovative transportation solutions.

What will we do with the information moving forward?

1. Verify that project specific goals align with OHP policy goals.
2. Reinforce coordination with ODOT and explore the possibility of establishing a highway segment designation for OR281 through the Heights District.
3. Apply OHP mobility targets to assess when levels of congestion will require mitigation.
4. Apply OHP access spacing standards to evaluate any proposed changes to intersection and driveway locations.

2012 ODOT Highway Design Manual (HDM)

Discusses ODOT design standards, policies and processes including a commitment to Practical Design, which is the “use of engineering judgment, focusing on the

project purpose, evaluating the safety and operations of design tradeoffs, and documenting those design decisions.”

The manual presents design controls and criteria, noting some criteria require confirmation with ODOT (e.g. which design vehicle to use), and references additional design guidance for non-transportation elements such as green stormwater management from Metro’s “Green Street” guide. ODOT’s “4R/New Design Standards”, developed for urban areas and arterials, are expected to be applicable to the key study streets for the Heights District; if the City pursues a jurisdictional transfer the American Association of State and Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Design Standards would likely apply.

Design criteria is provided for both Designated and Non-Designated Urban Highways:

- Designated highways include STAs, which are typically “existing downtowns, central business districts, or community centers with lower ADT, lower posted speeds and generally two travel lanes”. STA designations are important for incorporating community and livability along downtown roadway sections and are an excellent location to utilize context sensitive design and practical design.
- Non-Designated Urban Highway are described in the OHP as highways within urban growth boundaries with posted speeds greater than 35 mph; additional description of non-designated highways includes a Central Business District category.

The designation for OR281 (assumed as a non-designated highway) will need to be confirmed with ODOT based on existing land use and posted traffic speeds. The HDM also recommends coordination with ODOT Region Planning Manager, and/or Area Manager to gain a better understanding of the previous planning efforts. Additional guidance for non-designated highways is provided in ODOT’s Blueprint for Urban Design (2020).

Projects must meet standards presented in the HDM or receive a Design Exception. The manual documents the process for obtaining design exceptions and notes design exceptions may be needed for planning studies. Plans should not be adopted with nonstandard features unless a Design Exception has been approved by ODOT.

- For a project that may be constructed within five years, contact ODOT’s Region Roadway Manager to assist in putting together design exception requests.
- For projects that may be constructed within five to ten years, the design exceptions should be identified, and it is recommended the State Traffic-Roadway Engineer give a written indication that a design exception is warranted and would probably be approved.
- For projects anticipated beyond 10 years to construction, consultation with Roadway Engineering Unit staff in Technical Services about non-standard items should be made, but no formal action is required on these types of

projects. Non-standard design items should not be shown on plans or maps when the project is more than ten years to construction.

“Unless a Design Exception has been previously sought, future projects linked to an adopted plan may be required to follow ODOT standards regardless of the design elements or features that may have been identified in the plan.”

What will we do with the information moving forward?

1. Confirm the applicable design standards for the project and refer to design criteria and controls as concepts are being developed.
2. Coordinated with ODOT to confirm existing highway designation and document past planning efforts.

Blueprint for Urban Design, January 2020

The manual is a “bridging document” that establishes revised criteria from the 2012 HDM to be used when designing urban projects on the state system until the 2012 HDM manual is updated. When no highway segment designation exists, design standards are established by considering the urban context and identifying ways in which design flexibility can accommodate individual community needs.

The manual introduces ODOT’s six Urban Context Descriptions and presents a framework to determine the context based on predominant land use, modal priorities, roadway function, or other major considerations. The two context descriptions most applicable to OR281 are:

- Traditional Downtown/Central Business District: vehicle speeds should be 25 mph or below, and higher levels of congestion are expected; curbside uses are important and may include loading/unloading, parking (vehicles, bicycles, etc.), and other uses; landscaping and street trees...are appropriate in this context.
- Urban Mix: vehicle speeds are typically 25 to 30 mph, and higher levels of congestion are acceptable; curbside uses are important and may include loading/unloading, parking (vehicles, bicycles, etc.), and other uses; landscaping and street trees are appropriate in this context.

ODOT has final determination on the urban context and maintains design decision-making for projects on state-owned roadways, including projects led by local agencies.

In addition to presenting design guidance, the document presents a decision-making framework for planning and design projects. The first steps of this process (establishing goals, confirming context and desired outcomes, evaluating performance of alternatives, and selecting and developing a preliminary design) are similar to the scope of the Heights District corridor study.

What will we do with the information moving forward?

1. Confirm the urban context and other roadway characteristics of the key study streets.

Oregon Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, Adopted May 19, 2016

An element of the state Oregon Transportation Plan. Provides policy direction, a decision-making framework, implementation considerations, and investment strategies for improving the state's transportation system. Local jurisdictions must be consistent with the Plan in local planning documents

The plan establishes goal areas that support the vision of the plan, several of which are consistent with opportunities and needs of the Heights District corridor study.

Provides an overview of funding streams and opportunities.

What will we do with the information moving forward?

1. Project specific goals and opportunities can build on state goals to reinforce community needs and document consistency with the state's plan.
2. The plan will be a resource for the project team to develop the final Action Plan and identify potential funding streams for future implementation.

ODOT's A Guide to School Area Safety, January 2017

Provides an overview on Safe Routes to School Programs and street design and traffic control elements to support SRTS goals.

What will we do with the information moving forward?

1. Document will be a resource for the project team as concepts are being developed to address existing problem areas as documented in local Safe Routes to School Plans.

Access Management Rules (OAR 734-051)

"Division 51" rules establish procedures, standards, and approval criteria used by ODOT to govern highway approach permitting and access decisions. This includes the establishment of the access spacing standards that are also included in the 1999 Oregon Highway Plan (previously described).

Division 51 also includes required procedures for addressing property access as part of Facility Plans and Project Delivery. Central to this is the documentation of Key Principles, a Methodology, and an Access Management Strategy that communicate how decisions regarding access changes will be made. Division 51 includes specific requirements for such decision making processes, such as how property owners must be engaged. At this time, this study has not been determined to be an official ODOT Facility Plan, but these procedures may become necessary as the project evolves.

What will we do with the information moving forward?

1. Apply access spacing standards to evaluate any proposed changes to intersection and driveway locations
2. Coordinate with ODOT regarding the need to follow Division 51 requirements for Facility Plans as the project evolves.

City of Hood River Transportation System Plan, October 2011 (TSP)

Serves as the transportation element of the City's Comprehensive Plan, which was developed with public participation (e.g. included the Heights Business District). The plan establishes transportation goals and policies, several of which are applicable to the Heights District corridor study:

- Goal 1 – creating a balanced transportation system
- Goal 2 – designing facilities to enhance livability
- Goal 3 – providing a safe transportation system, designed to serve the anticipated function and intended use as determined by the comprehensive plan
- Goal 5 – providing facilities that are accessible to all
- Goal 6 – designing facilities to support freight access while protecting the function of Heights commercial district

The plan identifies specific sidewalk (gap on 13th east side), intersection crossing improvements (at May and Belmont at 12th and 13th streets), bicycle (bike lanes at Belmont) and motor vehicle projects (traffic signals at May and Belmont on 13th; modifications at 12th/Belmont).

The plan includes specific street cross sections for 12th and 13th, which remove on-street parking on one side of the street to provide buffered bike lanes.

It also documents a traffic analysis completed showing how the existing and planned system meets mobility standards based on ODOT's OHP and HDM requirements or where there are deficiencies (e.g. 12th/Belmont; also notes require ODOT design exception is needed for the implementation of planned traffic signal project at 13th/May)

Identifies alternative funding sources, outside of planned budgets to assist with implementation of projects outside of financially constrained plan.

Includes a mobility standard for City facilities that allows for congestion up to a Level of Service D. The ability to meet this standard will be assessed for any changes to City facilities.

What will we do with the information moving forward?

1. Verify that project specific goals align with TSP goals
2. Consider how planned projects can be integrated into proposed concepts for the key study streets.
3. As part of public outreach communicate to stakeholders and the public that the current TSP includes street cross sections for 12th and 13th Streets that remove on-street parking on one side of the street to provide buffered bike lanes.
4. Include specific street cross sections proposed for 12th and 13th Streets in the at least one of the proposed concepts
5. Evaluate proposed changes to City streets for compliance with the adopted mobility standard
6. The plan will be a resource for the project team to develop the final Action Plan and identify potential funding streams for future implementation.

City of Hood River Engineering Standards, July 8, 2019

Provides technical guidance for designing engineered facilities for public and private improvements under jurisdiction of the City; proposed Design Exceptions should be discussed with the City Engineer.

Outlines engineering plan review submittal requirements, general design criteria applicable to infrastructure under City jurisdiction (e.g. typical street sections (non-ODOT), sidewalks, stormwater, sewer, water distribution).

What will we do with the information moving forward?

1. Refer to design standards as concepts are being developed for elements of the project that are under City jurisdiction.

US Access Board's (Proposed) Public Rights-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines, July 26, 2011 (PROWAG)

The proposed guidelines are developed specifically for pedestrian facilities in the public right-of-way and address conditions and constraints that exist in the public right-of-way, including elements such as pedestrian signals and roundabouts. Although the guidelines have not been officially adopted PROWAG is accepted by the Federal Highway Administration and ODOT as "best practice." The document contains scoping and technical requirements to ensure that facilities in the public right-of-way are readily accessible to and usable by pedestrians with disabilities.

What will we do with the information moving forward?

1. PROWAG design guidance will be referred to as concept design are developed.

Appendix A: List of Documents Reviewed
Heights District Corridor Study
 MIG #15174.01

Date: December 2, 2020

Existing Document
1999 Oregon Highway Plan, including amendments Nov 1999 through May 2015 (OHP)
2012 ODOT Highway Design Manual (HDM)
Blueprint for Urban Design, January 2020
Oregon Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, Adopted May 19, 2016
ODOT's A Guide to School Area Safety, January 2017
Access Management Rules (OAR 734-051)
City of Hood River Transportation System Plan, October 2011 (TSP)
City of Hood River Engineering Standards, July 8, 2019
US Access Board's (Proposed) Public Rights-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines, July 26, 2011 (PROWAG)