

Ogden-WSU Transit Corridors AA-EIS Project Status, Conclusions and Recommendations

Executive Summary

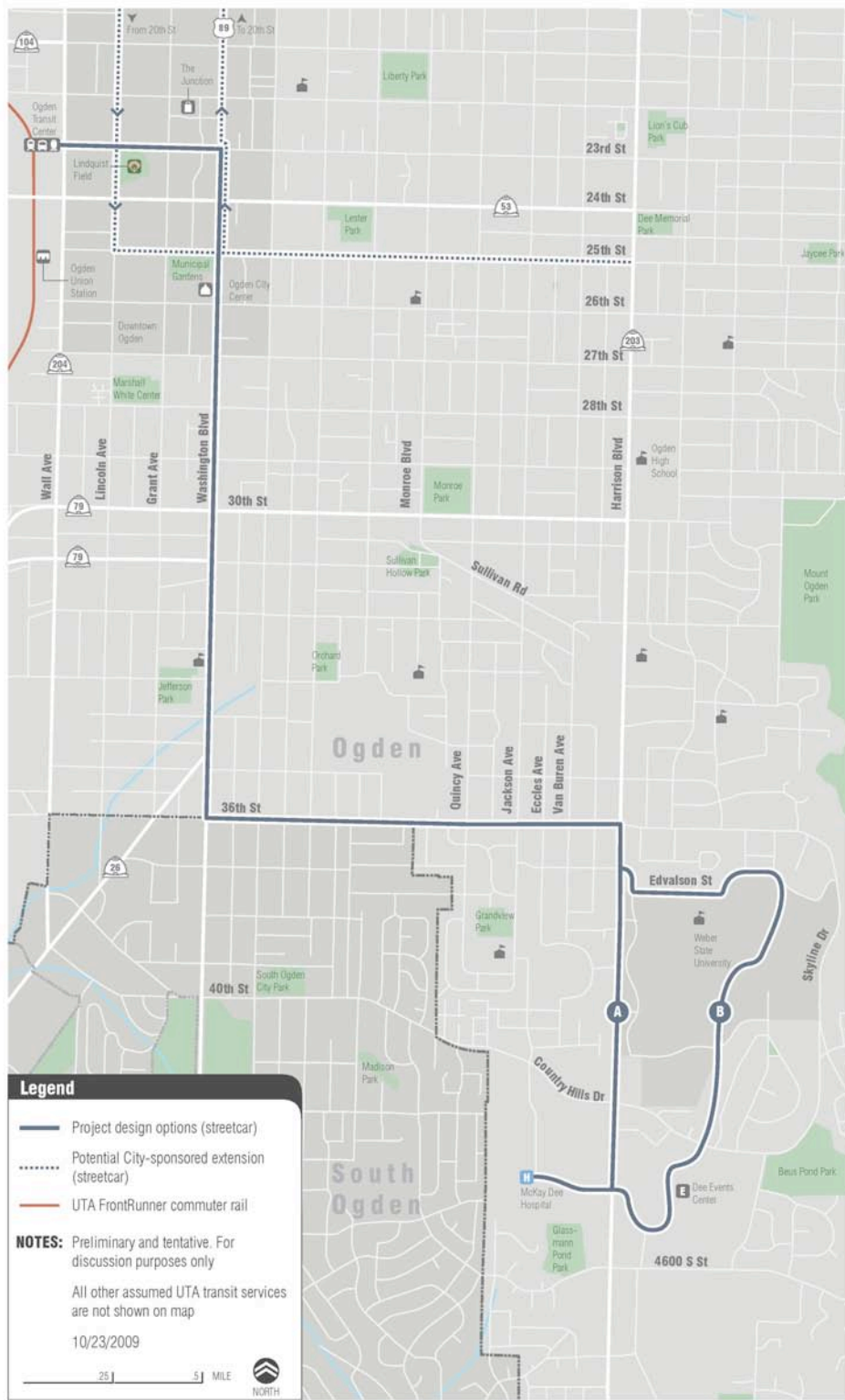
This document presents an update of the summary of progress to date, current status and a recommendation of preferred mode and alignment.

Following a brief initiation phase (December 2008-February 2009) UTA engaged FTA to gain approval in order to proceed with project development activities. This was followed by development and refinement of the Purpose & Need Statement and the Alternatives Analysis phase (February–June 2009) which included scoping, development and evaluation of alternatives. This phase included conceptual design of the transit guideway, stops and platforms, intersection and travel lane geometry improvements, and optimization of signal timing plans with the transit guideway incorporated. Travel demand model runs were completed during this phase to assess project boardings. A Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) was expected by July 1, 2009. Two stakeholder meetings were held in July 2009. As a result of those meetings, additional traffic analysis was requested. The Project Team worked on this analysis and a final traffic study was presented to UDOT in September 2009.

As of October 2009 the Project Team has assembled all of the data relative to the short list of alternatives (see 'Summary of Alignment Evaluation' dated 09/17/09).

Based on these cumulative findings the Project Team is prepared to make a recommendation of a locally preferred mode and alignment and move forward with the publication of the draft Alternatives Analysis document. Once the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) has been adopted, Wilbur Smith Associates will be authorized to proceed with the environmental analysis of the LPA.

Based on the research and analysis, combined with Purpose & Need and input from the public and stakeholders the Project Team recommends streetcar as the proposed mode and the proposed alignment as shown in Figure 1 below. The recommended alignment also includes two design options (A & B) in Focus Area 3. Based on the unknown environmental impacts associated with an alignment through the Weber State University Campus, the Project Team will conduct an environmental impacts analysis on both options and issue a recommended final alignment with the final environmental report.



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Figure 1 - Draft Locally Preferred Alternative with Design Options A & B

Background

The purpose of the Ogden-Weber State University Transit Corridor Project is to provide high-capacity, efficient transit service that:

- 1) improves the level of service and increases transit ridership between the Ogden Intermodal Center, the Ogden Central Business District, Weber State University, and McKay-Dee Hospital and intermediate destinations;
- 2) assists in achieving local and regional economic, land use and community development goals outlined in general plans and related planning studies,
- 3) is cost-effective, affordable and provides the opportunity for more travel choices; and,
- 4) enjoys wide public and stakeholder support, and encourages partnerships among agencies, businesses and organizations in the corridor.

Based on prior transit studies in this corridor and support for a major capital investment in this corridor in regional and local plans, a streamlined schedule for the development of an Alternatives Analysis and Environmental Assessment was developed. Following the hiring of the consultant, Wilbur Smith Associates, a schedule was developed that included a brief initiation phase (December 2008-February 2009). During this phase UTA approached FTA with the outline of scheduled activities on this study and received approval to proceed with project development activities. This was followed by an Alternatives Analysis phase (February–June 2009) that included establishing the Purpose & Need, gathering scoping comments and the development and evaluation of alternatives. This schedule included the selection of a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) by July, 2009. The LPA selected by project stakeholders would then be adopted by principal stakeholder's governing bodies and evaluated in a federal environmental process, concluding in an FTA decision in January 2010.

During the April 2009 meeting of the Management Committee, the Draft Purpose and Need Statement for the project was amended by the stakeholders to include the following important needs. There were 11 stakeholder organizations that participated, and the number of stakeholders identifying with the need is shown in ():

- 1) Minimize travel time between Downtown and WSU/McKay Dee (6)
- 2) Support existing and future transit network growth and connectivity (6)
- 3) Maximize ridership (5)
- 4) Is cost-effective for UTA and its partners (5)
- 5) Create transit improvements that support revitalization (3)
- 6) Maintain traffic capacity on major arterials (3)
- 7) Create a more visible and attractive presence for transit in Ogden (based on community desires (3)
- 8) Maintain left turn access along major arterials (2)
- 9) New service must be of a clearly better quality, visually and operationally (2)
- 10) Relieve the congestion on major traffic corridors (2)

In addition to these ten consensus needs, twenty-six additional needs, some very specific and significant, were identified by individual stakeholders; however, these failed to gain support from other stakeholder organizations and were not included in the final Purpose & Need Statement.

Management Committee meetings were held June 2nd 2009 and July 9th 2009 to present additional analysis and seek consensus on a narrower set of alignment alternatives. Consensus was achieved on a short list of alternatives that would be compared for selection of the final Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA). The alignments associated with these alternatives are shown in Figure 2 below. From these meetings it was determined that there was additional traffic analysis required, specifically with regard to the proposed alignments that used Harrison Blvd. Throughout the remainder of the summer the Project Team completed traffic modeling and progressively more detailed design of all the alignment segments still under active investigation. This included conceptual design of the transit guideway, stops and platforms, intersection and travel lane geometry improvements, and optimization of signal timing plans with the transit guideway incorporated. Concurrently, travel demand model runs were completed to assess project boardings and determine if the federal share of the proposed project could be justified to FTA. The final detailed traffic study was completed in September 2009 and distributed to the Management Committee members.

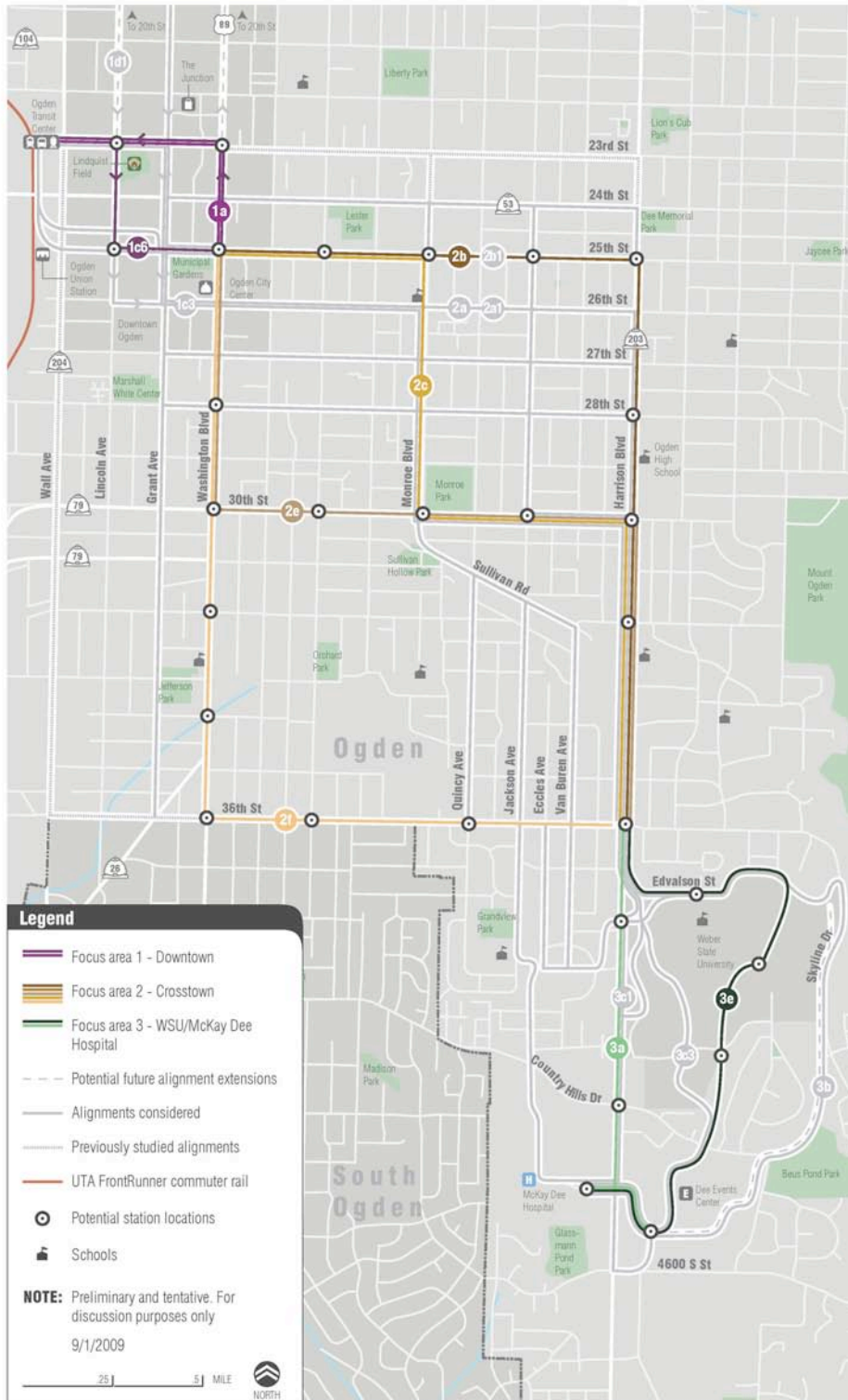
The entire analysis of all of the alternatives was completed in September 2009 and the summary materials were distributed to the Management Committee in preparation for the scheduled for September 17th meeting. This meeting was delayed to allow additional time for individual meetings with stakeholders to review these results. This meeting has been rescheduled for November 19th 2009.

Current Status (11-09-09):

The purpose of this overview is to update the current status of the project, summarize the conclusions that have been drawn from the technical analysis, identify a recommended Locally Preferred Alternative, and outline the next steps in the process.

The current status of the project is that the Project Team has conducted its technical analysis and is prepared to make a recommendation of a Locally Preferred Alternative based their findings and in light of the stated Purpose & Need.

The initial Draft Purpose and Need Statement was prepared in February 2009 to guide the development and evaluation of project alternatives. At the conclusion of the scoping process in April, the Management Committee approved revisions to the Draft Purpose and Need Statement to more clearly define project objectives. Subsequently, an Initiation Package was provided to FTA Region 8 in July 2009 by UTA outlining the Purpose & Need as well as a summary of the scoping comments that had been received.



ALTERNATIVE ALIGNMENTS WITH PROPOSED STATION LOCATIONS

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Figure 2 - Alignments Considered in Alternatives Analysis

Over the course of the Alternatives Analysis (AA) process that followed, the Project Team prepared a detailed analysis of the various alignment segments across three focus areas that might be combined into a complete alignment. Typically, the level of conceptual design and analysis required for selection of a Locally Preferred Alternative is focused on factors that help differentiate the performance of alternatives based on their comparative benefits, costs, and impacts. The technical work does not rise to the level required for final approval or “permitting” by federal, state or local agencies. The project work scope and budget called for selection of the Locally Preferred Alternative (alignment and mode) in June 2009.

The purpose and need statement is largely focused on the intended benefits of the project to major population and employment centers in the Ogden area. However in the course of analyzing several of the proposed alignments additional technical analysis was conducted to address localized concerns in subareas of the study area (i.e. downtown circulator, rail line on Monroe St, fixed guideway in Harrison Blvd.). The Project Team took each of these issues under consideration as they evaluated the alignments for feasibility. In the end, the final proposed alternative offered comparable or better performance in terms of benefits, costs and impacts. A short summary of the most significant localized issues is included below.

Harrison Blvd.

The candidate corridors provided in the project work scope identified UDOT facilities (Washington, Harrison and 30th Street) as potential alignments, with Harrison as an initially preferred route. While the prior study of Harrison Boulevard (Baker 2005) included some traffic, ridership and capital cost analysis, that study did not rise to the level of an Alternatives Analysis. When the additional impacts were assessed in this study including property acquisition costs, UDOT permitting requirements and the incompatibility of a fixed guideway alignment with projected future volumes of traffic, it was determined that an alignment within Harrison Blvd. between 25th St. and 36th St. was not feasible.

WSU & McKay-Dee

The difficulty of serving both WSU and McKay-Dee Hospital with fixed guideway transit service which does not impose a travel time penalty on either and avoids the congested intersection of Harrison Blvd and Country Hills has proven to be one of the most difficult challenges faced by this project. Solutions that serve WSU’s interior campus and support intercampus circulation further penalize travel to the McKay-Dee Hospital campus. The Project Team determined that this area of the project could benefit from additional environmental analysis as well as value engineering to produce the most efficient and cost-effective alignment.

East Central Community (The Trolley District)

The Ogden City East Central Community Plan (draft) proposes renaming that district “the Trolley District” and the plan strongly advocates trolley (streetcar) service along 25th Street and no future expansion of Harrison Boulevard. Stakeholders who have supported this plan have been waiting for the results of the Project Team’s analysis. There were originally three alignments (2b, 2c & 2e) proposed that would have each served parts of the East Central community. After assessing the impacts of these three corridors, the additional property acquisition costs, potential impacts to historical properties and future traffic volumes along Harrison Boulevard it was determined that these alignments were not feasible. **Table 1** below summarizes potential full or partial property takings by alignment in Focus Area 2).

Alignment	No. of Full/Partial Takes	Estimated Cost
2b	70	\$5.8 million
2c	22	\$2.8 million
2e	38	\$3.3 million
2f	2	\$120 K

Table 1 - Full or Partial Property Takings

These examples illustrate just a few of the challenges which the Project Team encountered in evaluating the results of their analysis. The conclusions and final recommendations of the Project Team as stated below are based a professional assessment of the data gathered in light of the stated Purpose & Need.

Project Team’s Conclusions on Alignments

Every alignment proposed by stakeholders and the general public, including the recommended alignment from the previous feasibility study completed in 2005 was advanced to a very high level of detail, including several design variations that were suggested as ways to improve performance in cost, travel times or reduce environmental and traffic impacts. With this background and the detailed analysis that has been completed, the Project Team puts forth the following conclusions and recommendations:

Downtown Ogden Alignments (Focus Area 1)

The Project Team considered Ogden City’s request for an alignment that would provide a circulator loop in downtown. The Project Team created alignments 1c6 and 1a as single track, one-way alignments to create a “Downtown Loop”. The Project Team and UTA analyzed the ‘split’ alignment for operational suitability and concluded that based on the Purpose & Need the Downtown Loop (1C6) would be an inefficient route for UTA to operate and that the additional (\$7M) cost presented a cost effectiveness burden that would not be justifiable in a federal project where transportation benefits are the primary objective. The Project Team recommends alignment 1a as a double track system

operating in mixed traffic along 23rd St from the Intermodal Hub to Washington Blvd and from 23rd St to 25th St in Washington Blvd. as part of the Locally Preferred Alternative.

Cross-town Alignments (Focus Area 2)

Washington Boulevard: With very slight modifications to UDOT's current design standards, the proposed transit dedicated fixed guideway in Washington Boulevard from 23rd to 36th Street (Alignment 2f) is feasible and can be designed and constructed to meet UDOT requirements without any property acquisition outside the existing right-of-way. This was made possible partially through removal on-street parking and an existing southbound travel lane. The loss of the travel lane on Washington Boulevard was shown to not degrade operational performance below acceptable levels when modeled with future demand estimates. Minor mitigation will be required to offset the removal of on-street parking south of 26th Street. Washington Blvd. offers the greatest opportunities for existing and future economic development. Many of the retail/commercial properties along this corridor are 'transit/pedestrian oriented'. "Transit/pedestrian" oriented in this case means that many of the properties front Washington Blvd. directly and are not set back from the curb and sidewalk across large expanses of vehicular parking. The Project Team recommends this alignment as part of the Locally Preferred Alternative.

30th Street: The proposed transit guideway project in 30th Street can be constructed and meet UDOT design and traffic standards with minor ROW widening while there are 16 full or partial property acquisitions near the intersections of Washington, Jefferson, Jackson and Monroe Avenues where stops and signals are required and at the intersection of Harrison Boulevard. On-street parking must be removed along this entire segment; however, this can be partially mitigated through preservation of the 8ft shoulder lane. With minor impacts and some additional costs, a dual transit dedicated fixed guideway can be constructed and operated in 30th Street. However, vehicular travel demand along 30th St. is expected to increase significantly by the year 2030 and UTA would be expected to mitigate impacts from lost capacity on future traffic volumes, requiring further road widening. Also, if Harrison Boulevard is not widened in the future to accommodate additional demand projected on that corridor, then 30th St could experience even higher future traffic volumes than illustrated by current travel demand models. The Project Team has determined that this alignment is not feasible.

Harrison Boulevard (general conclusion): Based on projected future travel demand volumes and the lack of other major north/south arterials through this part of Ogden, UDOT has informed the Project Team that they would not be comfortable approving or permitting the construction of a fixed transit guideway alignment within Harrison Blvd. With this information in mind, the Project Team evaluated all of the alignments that were proposed to use Harrison Blvd. and assumed a strict compliance with UDOT design and traffic standards that would be required to preserve existing and future capacity. It was determined that the mitigation for any future impacts to traffic volumes would require large-scale acquisition of private property at considerable project expense. In particular, the acquisition of property along Harrison Blvd. north of 30th Street proved impractical due to the number of residential private properties (some of which are located in a

Historic District) that would be required. In addition to the additional costs, the acquisition of these properties also introduced additional risk and uncertainty that did not seem practical particularly when a less impactful alternative was available. As this document will eventually lead to an Environmental Assessment of the preferred alternative concluding with a Record of Decision by the Federal Transit Administration, the Project Team can not recommend any general alignment that would include a fixed guideway transit project in Harrison Blvd. between 25th St and 36th St.

Harrison Boulevard 25th to 30th Street (Alignment 2b): Based on the strict requirements to maintain UDOT's roadway design standards, construction of a single track fixed guideway in this segment was investigated by the Project Team in an attempt to find a viable solution. It was determined that such a configuration would require acquisition of all homes (including historic properties) along one side of the roadway and full reconstruction of the roadway in a non-linear configuration,. The impacts to private property, alone, would trigger an extended environmental process with an uncertain result. Again, this alignment was determined not to be feasible by Project Team particularly when more feasible and less impactful alternatives were available. The Project Team has determined that this alignment is infeasible..

Harrison Boulevard 30th to 36th Street (Alignments 2b, 2c & 2e): Based on the strict requirements to maintain UDOT's roadway design standards and traffic levels of service (LOS) each of the alignments in this section of Harrison Blvd. would require significant acquisition of both residential and business property along the corridor, especially at intersections. In addition, a fixed guideway project would significantly reduce left turn property access to those properties with driveways along Harrison Boulevard and redistribute these turning movements to signalized intersections. Since there is only one signalized intersection between 30th and 36th the concentration of these volumes at the signalized locations will further impact failing operations in the future. UDOT has made it clear to the Project Team that any future capacity along Harrison Blvd. must not be impacted by any proposed fixed guideway transit. Additional property acquisition that might be required would certainly trigger an extended environmental process with an uncertain result. This particular alignment offers relatively few economic development opportunities and those that are available are not 'transit/pedestrian oriented'. Transit Oriented in this case means that the retail/commercial opportunities along this corridor are set back at significant distances from the street and are accessible only by traversing large expanses of vehicle parking areas. The Project Team has determined that this alignment is infeasible.

Harrison Boulevard 36th to 44th Street (Alignment 3a): This particular section of Harrison Blvd. has been recommended to be advanced for full environmental analysis as a 'design option' to be compared with Alignment 3e which is located on the Weber State University (WSU) Campus. Alignment 3e is discussed in further detail in Focus Area 3 below. Alignment 3a presents an alternative to Alignment 3e which only serves the WSU campus directly. . The cost of Alignment 3a, even with required property acquisition, is comparable to segment 3e. The difficulties that arose in the analysis of this particular alignment had to do with future (2030) traffic volumes at the intersections

at 4200 South (Country Hills) and 4400 South. These intersections are projected to fail (LOS F) under 2030 conditions. While, alternative 3a has been designed to meet UDOT geometric standards and does not significantly worsen projected 2030 delay at 4200 South and 4400 South, UDOT may require additional precautionary measures to be implemented in order to prevent future intersection failure. Construction of a transit guideway in this segment would require developing a shared solution in close coordination with UDOT at these two failing intersections. Additionally, Alignment 3a does not serve either WSU or McKay Dee Hospital Center directly, rather it splits the difference and additional pedestrian scale improvements may be required. The Project Team has recommended that this alignment be considered as a “design option” for the purposes of the environmental analysis.

36th Street (Alignment 2f). The Project Team analyzed traffic volumes, roadway geometry and transit operations in 36th Street and recommends an alignment that would operate in a mixed flow traffic environment. Both single and dual guideway configurations are also feasible, but are not recommended due to additional cost and impacts to the residential communities along the corridor. Some intersection improvements are required at Jefferson Avenue and Quincy Avenue; however these are relatively minor. High frequency transit operations in 36th Street in a mixed flow traffic environment are compatible with year 2030 traffic demand and require only minor roadway design improvements at station locations. There are relatively few opportunities along this alignment for economic development. This alignment is also supported by the South Ogden City Administration as it offers access to a major fixed guideway transit project in their community. The Project Team recommends this alignment as part of the Locally Preferred Alternative.

WSU and McKay Dee Alignments (Focus Area 3)

Providing an efficient rail connection to each of these two trip generators, which are separated by a principal arterial, has proven challenging for Project Team. Various alignment options were investigated. There are many unknown variables that have yet to be evaluated with regard to Alignment 3e that runs through the WSU campus and there are two significant trip generators (McKay Dee Hospital Campus and the Flying J Headquarters) located along Alignment 3a. The Project Team feels that in this Focus Area both Alignment 3a and Alignment 3e should be considered for further investigation as part of the environmental analysis in order to determine the most cost efficient alignment possible without sacrificing service or ridership.

Recommended Federal (FTA) Project

The recommended project is a ***modern streetcar system which connects the Ogden Intermodal Center to Weber State University and McKay Dee Hospital using alignment segments 1a, 2f and either Alignment 3e or Alignment 3a.*** Storage track and basic maintenance facilities should be developed at minimum cost and located within or adjacent to the Ogden Intermodal Center.

The recommended alignment would run east from the Intermodal Center along 23rd Street to Washington Boulevard and then southbound on Washington Boulevard to 36th Street. All operations on 23rd Street and the segments of Washington Boulevard between 23rd and 25th Streets would be mixed flow. Operations would employ center-running dedicated lanes from 25th Street until 36th Street on Washington Boulevard. Operations along 36th Street would be mixed flow with a queue jump lane at Monroe Street. Upon reaching Harrison Boulevard, the alignment would either turn east into the campus on Dixon and Edvalson Dr. and operate in a dedicated guideway through the campus or continue south on Harrison Blvd. The line would have a stop at the Dee Events Center park-and-ride lot and also cross Harrison Blvd. at 4400 South, with the end-of-line at the McKay Dee Hospital campus. The approximate capital cost including design and rolling stock is \$155 M and \$162 M. Annual operating costs are projected to be \$3.5M in 2016 and are estimated to increase at 4% per year.

The recommendation of this project was tied primarily to the adopted purpose and need statement, as described below.

1. Improves the level of service and increases transit ridership between the Ogden Intermodal Center, the Ogden Central Business District, Weber State University, and McKay-Dee Hospital and intermediate destinations

The recommended alignment is the most direct and nearly the fastest route in terms of travel time. Estimated ridership is marginally lower than the highest observed.

2. Assists in achieving local and regional economic, land use and community development goals outlined in general plans and related planning studies

Nearly all routes, including the recommended alignment, help facilitate the City's community development goals. All sections of the recommended alignment, except portions of 36th Street, run within transit supportive land use designations in City's current and future development plans. These designations include urban mixed-use, commercial mixed-use and neighborhood commercial centers. This alignment also traverses all redevelopment areas along Washington Boulevard.

3. Is cost-effective, affordable and provides the opportunity for more travel choices

Due to the directness of the route, the recommended alignment is one of the least expensive options to get from the Intermodal Center to McKay Dee and does not compromise travel time or ridership. The proposed alignment would have one of the best costs to rider ratio. A BRT project in this same alignment would have the best cost to rider ratio but would not meet the fourth and final purpose and need objective.

4. Enjoys wide public and stakeholder support, and encourages partnerships among agencies, businesses and organizations in the corridor.

The recommended mode an alignment best satisfies the stakeholders, partnering agencies and business better than other alignments considered. The recommendation for streetcar over BRT was derived from the overwhelmingly strong support for streetcar over BRT by nearly all parties.

Comments on the Recommended Alignment

UTA supports the recommended alignment since it does not include any single track segments and provides minimal mixed flow operations which tend to make system reliability difficult. The direct Downtown alignment is supported by UTA in order to reduce costs, simplify operations and improve rider expectations.

UDOT supports the recommended dedicated fixed guideway alignment in Washington Boulevard because of the lower traffic volumes in this corridor and it does not severely impact a critical north/south facility (Harrison Blvd.). Harrison Boulevard does not have a north/south relief route to distribute future congested traffic and is envisioned as the primary regional route for vehicular traffic in eastern Ogden. This role is consistent with the regional transportation plan (RTP) future transportation network. Washington Boulevard also does not have any intersections which fail under the existing or future PM peak hour conditions, even with the removal of a southbound travel lane between 26th and 36th. Recent modifications within the Downtown area along Washington Boulevard indicate this facility is already slowly transitioning into a more context-sensitive facility through integration of bicycle and pedestrian enhancements. Rather than maximizing vehicular throughput, these efforts support a more pedestrian-friendly environment where travel speeds are lowered and safety is improved.

This alignment aligns with the City of Ogden's plans to support existing and planned development at the Junction and future development north of Downtown. It takes advantage of the most significant transit oriented development (TOD) potential that exists in Ogden by continuing economic development momentum south along Washington Boulevard.

This alignment is favored by the City of South Ogden more so than any other alignment. It provides an opportunity for residents of this community to connect to the regional transit network and supports planned redevelopment in South Ogden City near Washington Boulevard and 36th Street.

Based on comments received during the public scoping period, there is general support for an alignment which reduces travel time between the Intermodal Center and Weber State University and an alignment which spurs economic development along Washington Blvd. Based on the analysis of property impacts associated with the alignments along 25th Street and Harrison Boulevard alignment. It was anticipated that significant opposition would have likely occurred from property owners who would have been impacted and/or displaced as a result of selecting those alignments.

Other Considerations

As part of a final solution to help determine the cost effectiveness of design options A & B, suggested adjustments may be considered for the UTA fixed-route bus system to better serve both the WSU campus and the McKay Dee Hospital campus.

Realizing that the capital costs of the recommended project significantly exceed original projections, the Project Team will continue to investigate several alternative strategies to reduce costs and meet other objectives that are beyond the scope of this project. These alternative strategies are presented below.

Project Refinements: Further refinements could reduce the capital cost considerably. These refinements might include reducing the number of stations, optimizing station placement, and opportune purchase of rolling stock. These additional planned steps will help highlight the true strengths of the recommended project in meeting the purpose and need. Updated costs and performance measures will be completed as part of the project's refinement process and will support both the federal and local funding applications.

Phasing: Depending upon the final project cost and the availability of funding, this project may need to be phased. However, phasing should be carefully considered in light of the fact that stopping the project short of either the WSU or McKay Dee Hospital would leave crucial ridership on the table.

Circulator Service: While the recommended mode and alignment does not serve all of Ogden City's downtown circulation interests, it could act as a catalyst for future complementary projects. For example, a city-sponsored streetcar extension might serve the Downtown area and could be extended east along 25th Street from Union Station to serve the East Central neighborhood. Such future extensions would serve as feeders for the recommended Locally Preferred Alternative and improve local circulation and take advantage of economic development opportunities along 25th St.

Mode Choice: The recommended alignment and guideway can support any transit mode from dedicated bus service to BRT modern streetcar.. The recommended mode is streetcar; however BRT II/III service could be provided as an interim mode and could be upgraded in the future. While this mode, clearly, is not preferred by many stakeholders, it could provide many of the transportation and redevelopment benefits at a substantially initial lower cost. As noted above, the Project Team recommends that streetcar be selected and additional funding sources be sought to offset the capital cost.

Next Steps

Continuation of the project requires concurrence or all project sponsor and stakeholders with the recommended alignment and mode. The Project Team will be holding a joint meeting of the Management and Policy Committees on Thursday November 19th 2009 at the Weber County Municipal Offices in Ogden. At this meeting the Project Team will present the recommended Locally Preferred Alternative along with the supporting data used in determining that recommendation. The Project Team will work with all of the members of both committees to come to a general consensus on the recommendation in order to move forward with the next steps in the study.

Once a general consensus has been reached the Project Team will proceed with the final publication of the Alternatives Analysis and begin with environmental analysis work on the recommended alternative.

If no consensus can be reached among the committee members, a plan of action will need to be established to determine whether or not the project will continue.

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