



PAC Meeting Summary

PAC/Planning Commission Meeting #4:
Wheeler – May 12, 2022

Attendance

PAC Members

- Clif Kemp, Wheeler City Council
- Joseph Kelly, Wheeler Planning Commission
- Chantelle Hylton, Wheeler Planning Commission
- Mary Johnson, Wheeler City Manager (Acting)

Staff and Subject Matter Experts

- Sarah Peters, Fehr & Peers
- Kara Hall, Fehr & Peers
- Ken Shonkwiler, ODOT
- Kalin Schmoldt, JLA

Introduction, Agenda Review and Purpose

Kalin Schmoldt, JLA Public Involvement, opened the meeting and reminded those in attendance that the meeting would be recorded. PAC members and staff gave brief introductions

Project Update

Sarah Peters, Fehr & Peers, reviewed the agenda and discussed the purpose of the meeting:

- Provide an update on the Nehalem Bay TSP to Planning Commission.
- Share what we have heard from community members.
- Gather Planning Commission input on the project list and priorities.

Sarah reviewed the TSP Project milestones. The project is currently reviewing and prioritizing proposed projects for inclusion in the Draft TSP.

Sarah shared input received during the online open house that ran from January 25 to February 28, 2022 and included an online “Community Conversation” on January 5. The open house and Community Conversation gave the public an opportunity to learn about the project and provide input on goals and objectives, as well as the regional and local projects lists. There were no

survey respondents who said they live primarily in Wheeler, though there was feedback from nearby areas. Six Wheeler residents participated in the January 5 Community Conversation.

Nehalem Bay TSP Community Projects

Sarah shared public feedback about regional projects:

- Bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure is a high priority for community members
- Bicycle and pedestrian access to the state park will help move visitors without cars
- Several roadways in the County feel unsafe for bicycles and pedestrians (Necarney City Road, Nehalem Road)
- As growth continues and the number of visitors increase, more options for travel will be needed.

She went on to share the highest priority regional projects that were identified by multiple respondents. These included:

- Nehalem Road Bicycle & Pedestrian Enhancements
- Necarney City Road Bicycle & Pedestrian Improvements
- Mohler Trail Connection
- Nehalem Point to Nehalem State Park Bicycle & Pedestrian Connection
- Oregon Coast Trail Realignment

Key takeaways about Wheeler-specific projects and the high priority projects that were identified through public feedback included:

- Desire for investment in the Salmonberry Trail
- Sidewalk improvements to improve access to businesses and residential areas
- Concern about sharrows on US 101 as a short-term solution
- Slowing traffic through Wheeler is important to improving safety and comfort for people walking and biking

High priority projects included enhancements to US 101, sidewalk improvements, adding bicycle lanes on US 101, enhancing the Rorvik Street railroad crossing, and adding gateway elements to the community to help visitors know they have entered the town.

The group had no comments on the high priority projects.

Projects and Priorities

Sarah asked the group to think about the proposed projects and to consider three questions that the team will use to vet the project list before it is presented to the public:

- Do you have any concerns with the projects on this list?
- Do the top performing projects align with what you see as priorities for the community?
- Is there anything missing from the project list?

Sarah shared a table and map that describe the proposed regional projects. Most of the projects include improvements and new separated facilities for bike riders and pedestrians or to address safety issues. There is also a new regional wayfinding project to make it easier for visitors to reach local destinations. Proposed transit improvements will need to be coordinated with Tillamook County Transportation District. Kara noted that these priorities largely reflect interest from Manzanita and Nehalem in separating walking and biking traffic and facilitating connections between those two cities.

Sarah explained how the projects were prioritized based on performance measures that were developed from the project goals and objectives. The list of projects does not necessarily reflect the order in which projects need to be completed. As various funding options become available, the list is intended to help the city decide what to fund and when, and to ensure that the projects are aligned with the City's vision for the transportation system. The goal is to make sure that the projects that advance community goals are the highest priority. Feedback from the Wheeler Planning Commission is particularly important since community engagement from Wheeler has been limited thus far.

Sarah shared the four regional goals that were used to evaluate the potential projects: equitable access, safer connections, weather resilience, and financial viability. There were also two goals identified by the City of Wheeler: 1) improving walking and biking and 2) supporting economic vibrancy.

High Priority Regional Projects Discussion

Sarah showed the top 10 highest performing regional projects. The top projects mostly include a mix of strategic infrastructure for bicycles and pedestrians and providing more dedicated space for those uses where possible.

- **Kara Hall:** We have heard interest in trail options that could provide a separated path parallel to US 101 and/or that could connect Nehalem to the State Park (R11) using an existing access road. Keeping in mind that it would be a long term, higher cost project, are there connections that Wheeler wants to see in order to connect with those trails?
- **Chantelle Hylton:** A water taxi would likely be useful and supported. Digital speed read out signs would be helpful, as speeding through Wheeler is a big issue. Signage and attractive landscaping would help people understand that they are entering a town and need to slow down and pay attention.

- **Sarah Peters:** The regional project list does include a US 101 speed study and speed feedback signs. They were evaluated as 11th and 12th in terms of priority.
- **Kara Hall:** Are there other projects that should be in the top 10 regional projects?
- **Sarah Peters:** In some cases, the prioritization did diverge from community feedback. A trail connection from US 101 to Mohler Road along the railroad tracks and the connection between Nehalem and the state park were also considered important.
 - **Chantelle Hylton:** There is excitement about the Salmonberry Trail. Any support for the trail would be great.
 - **Ken Shonkweiler:** We do want to support the Salmonberry Trail. Definitely.

High Priority Wheeler Projects Discussion

Sarah showed a map of the projects considered to be the highest priority in Wheeler. Projects included:

- Sidewalks all over town. This was a high priority because of the safety and economic benefits.
- Enhanced crossings of US 101 at Gregory and Rorvik, and at Rector. This would include crosswalks and lighting.
- Enhancements along Hospital Road, including dedicated signage and striping to help drivers know what to expect.
- Connecting 4th from Spruce to Pine.
- Paving 4th from Gregory to Rorvik and paving and improvements to other various streets.

Sarah noted that the variety of projects with the same scores shows the need for paving and street condition improvements as well as dedicated bike and pedestrian space throughout.

Kara noted that the project list no longer includes sharrows on US 101. This was a controversial idea and people did not feel it was immediately necessary. Instead, there is now a long-term project to widen US 101 so that it could include a bike lane in the future.

- **Chantelle Hylton:** Is there a way to reroute bikes and pedestrians to avoid the dangerous parts of the highway but without spending millions of dollars?
 - **Ken Shonkweiler:** There is not a lot of space to reroute south of Wheeler because of the hillside. Widening US 101 is presented as a long-term option that could be part of the Oregon Coast Bike Route, though it could be just as expensive to widen US 101 shoulders as it would be to focus on the Salmonberry Trail which would support more users.
 - **Chantelle Hylton:** Can we see plans or get more information about how shoulders could be widened?

- **Ken Shonkweiler:** Yes, though it is very high level right now.
- **Clif Kemp:** I'm concerned about how much focus there is on bike paths in Wheeler when there is only light bike and pedestrian traffic. There is virtually no bike travel on these streets. They are steep, narrow roads that are hard to negotiate with a car, let alone a bike. It is not an area to spend a lot of time or money on. Any highway widening should not impact the two parking areas on US 101 between Gregory and Spruce, which are currently controlled by ODOT and the railroad. Those parking areas are important to the downtown core. They are used for loading and unloading by the grocery store and other businesses. They also serve as long-term trailer and truck parking during fishing season.
 - **Kara Hall:** Are there different local streets where we should focus investments on making business access easier?
 - **Clif Kemp:** We should route travelers onto County Road and First Street instead of US 101. This is more important than making other bike improvements in Wheeler.
 - **Kara Hall:** I want to note that these are only low-cost improvements to the bike/ped routes. They would include signage and striping to increase driver awareness and make it clear where different users might be.
- **Clif Kemp:** I echo the safety issues related to speed on US 101. I encourage looking at speed zones at either end of town and extending the 35 MPH zone. There is a lot of heavy, dangerous traffic on US 101. I have concerns about creating dangerous US 101 intersections if there is new development along the waterfront.
- **Chantelle Hylton:** I think that the demographic in Wheeler seems to be changing, and people may want to walk and bike more in the future. I'm not sure we want to just use the cookie cutter approach to "Welcome to Wheeler" signs. More young couples are buying houses in Wheeler, and I appreciate being forward-thinking about this.
- **Joseph Kelly:** Is there a specific timeframe for the proposed roadway improvement projects? Specifically, the 4th street improvement off Dubois?
 - **Kara Hall:** The TSP itself doesn't come with money or timeframes, but it is a strategy and a plan for seizing opportunities as they become available.
 - **Joseph Kelly:** Will federal infrastructure spending be available?
 - **Ken Shonkwiler:** The Oregon Transportation Commission has announced some grants, but the first step is creating an adopted plan and a framework to allow participation in the grants process.
- **Clif Kemp:** Rorvik Street will be torn up for six months next year due to water line construction. Be aware when thinking about bike/ped improvements.
 - **Ken Shonkwiler:** From a timeline perspective, we are looking far down the line. As an example, we're just now building some projects in Garibaldi based off a 2003 directive.

- **Kara Hall:** Do you have any questions or feedback about the overall TSP process?
 - **Chantelle Hylton:** Do you want more community involvement?
 - **Sarah Peters:** Yes, we didn't hear much from full-time Wheeler residents, though we have probably heard from part-time residents. We have also been mostly hearing from people over 40.
 - **Kalin Schmoltdt:** We did see more participation in our earlier TSP survey, and it's not unusual to see some falloff over time during long-term projects.
 - **Sarah Peters:** There is often a lull in the middle of a planning process, but now we will have a full draft TSP for people to respond to.
 - **Kara Hall:** There will be an open house on June 15. We will be working with the cities to get the word out in advance. There will also be an opportunity to provide input online.
 - **Sarah Peters:** After public feedback is incorporated, the team will share the revisions with the Planning Commission and with the City Council and allow them to weigh in again. Final changes will be incorporated into a final TSP that will be adopted by the individual cities.
- **Chantelle Hylton:** Can you provide some background about the origins of this process?
 - **Ken Shonkwiler:** ODOT has a competitive grant process that funds TSPs for communities. It was innovative to try to do three TSPs at once, so ODOT decided to separately fund this approach as a cost-saving model. Fehr & Peers was hired by ODOT and the city Community Managers to do the work.

Next Steps

Sarah concluded the meeting by encouraging the group to reach out, send thoughts, questions, changes, priorities, and anything that might be missing so it can be incorporated into the draft TSP.