

BENTON COUNTY TRANSPORTATION SAFETY ACTION PLAN

TASK FORCE MEETING #1 SUMMARY

Meeting Date: January 9, 2025

Meeting Time: 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM

Meeting Location: Benton County Public Works

Meeting Purpose: Orient Task Force members about the project and their role and discuss the public involvement strategy and the overall vision statement

Attendees: Resident from Philomath - Rich Saalsaa
Philomath Fire and Rescue - Captain Viktor Bovbjerg
Benton County Sherriff's Office - Lieutenant Toby Bottorff
North Albany Resident - Guy Graham
Mid-Willamette Bike Club - Steve Harvey
Corvallis School District - Rebecca Weeks
Multi-modal Advocate and Corvallis Resident - Jay Thatcher
Benton County Health - Cynthia De La Torre

Other Attendees:

Benton County - Laurel Byer
Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) - Nicholas Fortey
City of Corvallis - Adam Steele
DKS Associates – John Bosket, Lacy Brown, Harshala Sardar
JLA Public Involvement – Franziska Elliott

INTRODUCTION

- All the members introduced themselves.
- The consultant team went through the agenda of the meeting.
- There was a question about which datasets will be used in the plan. The most recent five years of crash data from ODOT will be used. The crash data available

on the ODOT website is typically about two years old. Any additional datasets are welcome.

- The sheriff's department has the 2024 incident data for Benton County (would include crashes that may not have been reported and therefore would not show up in ODOT's data).

PROJECT ORIENTATION

- The consultant presented on Transportation Safety Action Plans (TSAPs), SS4A requirements, and the Safe System Approach.
- The consultant went through the schedule of this project. We anticipate completion by March 2026, with major public outreach periods this spring and again in the fall. As will be discussed in detail later, Corvallis is working on their own TSAP along the same timeline and we will be attempting to align the schedules for these parallel efforts as best we can.
- There was a question if cities like the Philomath, Monroe, etc. need to adopt the Benton County TSAP. The cities do not need to adopt the plan but we would like to have their support.
- Coordinating the Benton County and Corvallis TSAPs
 - The County and City TSAP project managers are attending bi-weekly project status meetings for both projects to support coordination efforts.
 - We will be coordinating the schedules for these projects as best we can to support efficient use of resources and make public participation easier.
 - The Benton County TSAP will evaluate countywide crash trends, including those within urban areas. However, project prioritization and investments decisions are expected to be focused on County-owned facilities. Needs on facilities under the jurisdiction of cities or ODOT will be coordinated with those agencies. Proposed actions in urban fringe areas will be coordinated with adjacent cities.
 - Benton County and the City of Corvallis will share all the data collected for their respective TSAPs and the crash data will be analyzed concurrently for efficiency.
 - Public engagement efforts will be coordinated to provide consistent messaging. Public input received will be shared between the County and City projects, two joint open houses will be held in Corvallis and project websites will be linked with joint comment mapping to facilitate engagement.
- During the development of the recent Transportation System Plan (TSP) update, the need for further investigation into solutions to address conflicts between heavy vehicles (trucks, agricultural equipment, etc.) and people biking on four key corridors was noted. These included the parallel north-south corridors of Independence Highway and Springhill Drive in the north county and Fern Road and Bellfountain Road in south county. The County will be using this TSAP to explore those issues and potential solutions further (referred to as the

“Multimodal Corridors” in this plan). The team is in the process of making a list of stakeholders for interviews and involvement in this effort. The Task Force suggested reaching out to the following:

- The Mid-Valley Bike Club meets once a month.
 - Facebook Groups – Hwy 20 west of Philomath
 - Next Door
 - Independent Community Club, they meet up at an old school which can be a good venue for future outreach events of this project.
 - Recommendation to reach out to the representatives from the Timber industry.
 - Grange Group
 - Knife River
 - School Bus Companies
- There was a question if the state highways will be analyzed in this plan. The state highways are included in the plan.
 - There was a question about whether railroad safety is included. The crashes associated with rail crossings will be studied. This safety study is focused on streets and roads.
 - There was a question if air transport is included in the plan, and the answer is no. This safety study is focused on streets and roads.
 - There was a question if intercity bus travel would be considered. Yes, those would be included in the streets/roads analysis.
 - There was a question if weather is part of the analysis. The crash data has weather information which will be considered in the analysis.
 - The consultant team discussed the role and responsibility of task force members.
 - It was asked who makes the decisions for this plan. The task force will provide recommendations to the project team. The project team will consider those and make recommendations to the Board of Commissioners. The Board of Commissioners will be the ultimate decision makers. Where project team recommendations differ from task force recommendations, we will do our best to be transparent about that and explain why.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT COORDINATION AND EARLY TASKS

- The consultant team discussed the planned public involvement activities, with key components including two rounds of in-person open houses with three meetings each, online open houses that will run concurrently with the in-person open houses, stakeholder interviews, five task force meetings, and two stakeholder advisory committee meetings.
- The consultant team will work with County’s Public Information Officer on social media content.
- Recommendations on key messaging in the Public Involvement and Coordination Strategy:

- Update the 3rd bullet point in key messaging as “The plan will align with Safe Streets for All making Benton County eligible to unlock future funding...”
- Use plain language and visuals to aid communication. Maybe include a glossary of technical words?
- Use the Vision Zero goal statement (when available) in public communications.
- Include “reducing fatal and serious injury crashes” in one of the key messages, maybe 4th point.
- Be clear about funding realities and discuss options for future funding.
- Any policies that address behavioral changes.
- The Philomath fire department has an annual open house in October that is well attended. Maybe we can use that to help with engagement?

VISION STATEMENT

- The consultant team explained SS4A requirements of Vision Zero statements and provided some example statements for the Benton County TSAP that would be compliant and asked for feedback. Comments received are summarized below.
 - Like having both an ultimate goal and an interim milestone.
 - The word “Vision” is weaker than “Goal” – prefer calling it a goal. I like the examples from Maui and Los Angeles.
 - How do we get community buy-in on a zero vision? Can we reach kids through schools?
 - Like having a clear date for the zero goal. It should align with that of the Corvallis TSAP.
 - 2040 sounds like a good zero target date.
 - Our goals should be measurable so we can use them to “keep score” on progress. As part of the plan there will be a project monitoring system in place for County to keep track of the progress on projects.
 - The zero goal should be stated as zero serious injuries “or” fatalities rather than “and”.
- In conclusion, the task force recommends having both a clear date to reach zero serious injuries or fatalities and including an interim milestone for achieving progress towards the goal (like the second example provided). The project team will share that recommendation with the Board of Commissioners.

NEXT STEPS

- Conduct stakeholder interviews regarding the Multimodal Corridors.
 - The project team will meet with the Board of Commissioners to discuss the Vision Zero goal statement and will share the recommendations of the Task Force.
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- Perform crash data analysis to identify trends, emphasis areas, and a “High Injury Network”
- Host first round of in-person and online open houses (March/April)
- Hold Task Force Meeting #2 to discuss the above tasks
- Identification of High Priority Corridors
- Hold Task Force Meeting #3 to discuss priorities
- Hold Stakeholder Advisory Committee Meeting #1