

Harmony needs overpass to fix congestion

Design firm pushes for Linwood overpass

BY MATTHEW GRAHAM

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An overpass over the train tracks at Linwood Avenue is the only way to sufficiently improve congestion along Harmony Road, according to the design firm working on road improvement possibilities.

“If we want to do something with Harmony, you have to do something with the Linwood railroad intersection, you have to do a crossing there,” said Ron Weinman, a transportation planner and project manager with the county. “You have **Clackamas Community College** being built up and then eventually you see the area north of Harmony and Fuller become a mixed-use area – all those things add up to additional traffic.”

The county’s long-term plan for the area envisions Harmony as a major arterial through the area, which Wienman said would also limit adverse affects to the neighborhoods by keeping backed-up commuter traffic from cutting through residential streets.

But many nearby residents are unhappy with the plan. Representatives from the Cedarcrest Neighborhood, the southern border of which is Harmony Road, say they don’t want to sacrifice their neighborhood for Happy Valley and other county commuters.

“Myself and my neighbors do not want any alternative that has an overpass,” said Stan Wax, who lives just north of Harmony in the Linwood neighborhood. “You can put two lanes on 82nd Avenue, get them up Sunnyside to 224.”

Peter Coffey, of Otak consulting firm, said improvements to 82nd Avenue or the creation of the Sunrise Corridor would not significantly pull traffic away from Harmony.

“I’ve done this study with and without Sunrise, and there wasn’t much difference” in the amount of traffic on Harmony, he said.

The county currently has six options it’s considering, though only two of those would significantly improve traffic conditions. Those two involve widening Harmony to either three lanes or three lanes most of the way and five lanes at points. They include a three-lane Sunnybrook extension that would curve behind the colleges and the Aquatic Center but still on top of the ridge, from Harmony down to 82nd Avenue.

Both would also have impacts on the wetlands and waterways in the area.

Charles Kettenring, a representative from ODOT, said the rail route is scheduled to be a “high speed rail corridor.”

“There’s no doubt in my mind that this will be two tracks,” he said. “By 2025 they say rail product will double; this is the only viable rail route. It’s coming and the only safe way to deal with it is to treat it as a highway.”

Kirk Pearson, with **Clackamas Community College**, said improvements to the road will be important for the college site on Harmony, which houses satellite campuses for CCC and the Oregon Institute of Technology, as well as the Aquatic Center.

“I think with the increasing population and the campuses and the park lands, that access is going to be really important,” he said.

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