

# OR 18 FORT HILL ROAD TO AR FORD ROAD

## SPRING 2021 OUTREACH SUMMARY

In May and June 2021, as part of the OR 18 Fort Hill Planning and Design Project, the project's Public Involvement team created an online open house and held a virtual public workshop to further inform the public about the project and to collect feedback on the proposed interchange concepts developed from previous feedback. During both events participants reviewed the initial design concepts for a new interchange, highway widening and facility plan for the project area. This document provides a summary of the outreach methods, activities, and main themes and takeaways from the public.

**Appendix A** provides all responses from the online open house and contact information for the participants. It also includes a list of the attendees from the virtual workshop.

## Outreach Methods and Strategies

The comments and responses summarized in this report were collected from:

- A virtual public workshop, which gave attendees an opportunity to learn more about the project from the project team, ask questions, answer poll questions and provide general feedback on initial design concepts. The virtual public workshop was held on May 19, 2021, between 6:00 pm and 7:00 pm, and had 10 attendees.
- An online open house, which gave participants an opportunity to learn more about the project and provide feedback on the same initial design concepts. The online open house was open from May 24 to June 11, 2021 and received responses from 31 participants.

The project team publicized these input opportunities through a postcard mailed to every building and PO Box in the area, three email updates, and stakeholder phone calls to local businesses and organizations. These communications explained the project and directed the public to the project website for online open house and virtual event details.

## Main Themes and Takeaways

Overall, the participants at both events were interested in the project with some concerns but not opposition. Safety concerns were universally acknowledged but the way to handle the safety issues was debated and highlighted differences of opinion. The following themes arose at the virtual workshop and online open house:

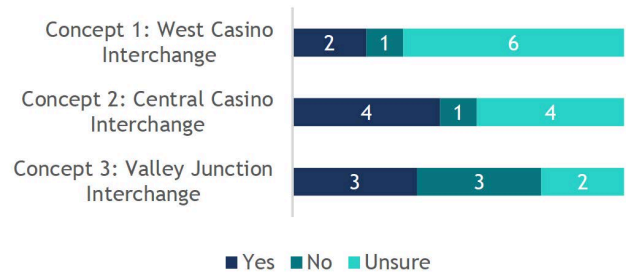
- Desire to utilize the overpass that's already here.
- Concern about impacts to businesses/properties as the road widens.

- Questions about home displacement for each initial design concept.
- Impacts of widening the highway to the north or south.
- Effect of the project on high-value farmland.
- Questions about the preferences of the Confederated Tribes of Grande Ronde.
- Uncertainty about different modes of transportation such as pedestrian and bicycle.
- Desire for providing redundancy of the corridor, but also concerns about handling traffic on area roads.

## Comments by Event Type

### Virtual Workshop

Once the three potential interchange concepts were presented to attendees, three polls were conducted. Each poll that accompanied the concepts asked “Are we on the right track with this concept?” and respondents were given the option of answering “Yes”, “No”, or “Unsure”. Nine participants responded to the polls for “Concept 1” and “Concept 2”, and eight responded to the poll for “Concept 3”. From the polls conducted, “Concept 2: Central Casino



Interchange” had the most respondents say the concept was on the right track, with four saying “Yes”, and “Concept 3: Valley Junction Interchange” had the most say that “No” the concept was not on the right track, with three.

The complete chat text from the virtual event is available in **Appendix B**.

### Online Open House

The online open house had five stations. Participants could answer questions or just read more about the project.

- Project History – Gave visitors a brief overview of the project background and community comments collected so far.
- Existing Conditions and What We’ve Learned – Provided information about the existing highway issues and opportunities in the project area.
- Development of Design Concept – Visitors could view the initial design concepts, developed based on the existing conditions research and community feedback.
- Feedback on Our Most Promising Concepts – Visitors could provide feedback on the three design concepts, as well as any additional comments on the project in general. Visitors could also sign up for the project email list and choose to provide demographic information.
- Next Steps – This station thanked visitors for their attention to the project and displayed a project timeline.

## Feedback on Design Concepts

The online open house asked participants to share whether they felt the project team is “on the right track” with each of the draft design concepts. Participants showed a slight preference for Concept 3: Valley Junction Interchange over the other two concepts, with thirteen respondents saying this concept was on the right track. Concept 1: West Casino Interchange had the most negative responses (10 respondents said the concept was not on the right track).

Are we on the right track?	Yes	No	Unsure
<b>Concept 1: West Casino Interchange</b>	8	10	11
<b>Concept 2: Central Casino Interchange</b>	10	7	11
<b>Concept 3: Valley Junction Interchange</b>	13	9	7

Some respondents chose to leave additional comments on each concept. These are listed below, with some small edits for clarity.

- **Concept 1: West Casino Interchange (11 responses)**

- Moving HWY 22 traffic to Fort Hill Rd. Interchange is not a good idea. The approach (specifically onto HWY 18 Eastbound) is not good.
- We feel that the Rowell Creek Rd. access road should parallel close to the new 4 lane road and not through middle of the field. This would also be easier construction. Realize you don't know what buildings will be taken out, we would like to know.
- Prefer concept 1 and 2. Thank you
- How does this affect my property at XXXXX Salmon River Hwy?
- I don't see much difference between concept 1 and concept 2 other than the exit to the casino. I chose two because I am a little nervous with the casino ramp being so close to the ending of the 4 lane highway. I chose #2 as there is a greater distance between the casino ramp and the ending of the 4 lane highway, as I believe this is going to bottle neck there and will cause issues for Grand Ronde Road.
- Concept 1 is better than Concept 3.
- Does not utilize existing casino exit/underpass
- Rest stop much needed in Fort Hill area
- I see no words or anything in the picture which relates to bicyclist safety. Will there be a shoulder once the road goes to 4 lanes? Will the bridge over the South Yamhill River be widened and also have a shoulder? Will there be a bike/ped connection to Yamhill River Rd?
- Widening 18 to west of the casino seems like just a case of kicking the current bottle neck down the road a little further. It doesn't make sense to widen and then narrow the road over and over. The new local access roads that lead to cul-de-sacs seem like a road to nowhere. To connect to Jahn Rd seems like a project that would involve far too much work to make that connection to McPherson would be a huge project. The interchange west of the casino could be a roundabout type of arrangement and be inconvenient, the connection to the already existing Fort Hill

connection might make more since. The realignment of Hebo Rd as shown on the map would put the road on top of Cosper Creek, doesn't seem like a good idea.

- Long parallel of 18 and 22 seems inefficient. Major advantage seems to be that it would be cheaper as only a new alignment of 18 would be built.
- Seems duplicative of the existing land impacts from the Spirit Mountain interchange. What's the benefit of this one vs. the Central Casino interchange?

- **Concept 2: Central Casino Interchange (11 responses)**

- Moving HWY 22 traffic to Fort Hill Rd. Interchange is not a good idea. The approach (specifically onto HWY 18 Eastbound) is not good.
- How do I get to my property at XXXXX Salmon River Hwy?
- I like that there doesn't seem to be much of a change and will allow alternate routes in case of accidents. The frontage roads will make it easier for residents to get on and off the road. This last weekend was a busy weekend and there were vehicles pulling out in the middle lane at valley junction to merge into traffic going east bound. This is about the only way for cars to get out, but it is very dangerous.
- Concept 2 is better than Concept 3.
- Utilizes existing casino exit/underpass. Minimizes impacts to resource lands.
- No reason to not be utilizing overpass at mile marker 25
- Building the new bridge over Yamhill probably expensive but you would utilize the existing Fort Hill overpass so much better (I hardly ever see traffic on there). Westbound off of 22 could just connect with Spirit Mountain interchange (probably light traffic as most of 22 wants to go eastbound on 18). I don't think you need to four lane this section right away. Eliminating the current Valley Junction with the new routes would be great. I've seen accidents there and feel bad for the backed-up traffic on 22 trying to turn left on busy days.
- I see no words or anything in the picture which relates to bicyclist safety. Will there be a shoulder once the road goes to 4 lanes? Will the bridge over the South Yamhill River be widened and also have a shoulder? Will there be a bike/ped connection to Yamhill River Rd?
- Please see my comments on Concept 1. Additionally, putting the exchange inside the casino facility seems like it would cause an even greater congestion problem.
- Long parallel of 18 and 22 seems inefficient. Major advantage seems to be that it would be cheaper as only a new alignment of 18 would be built.
- This appears to have the least amount of land impacts

- **Concept 3: Valley Junction Interchange (16 responses)**

- This is the best concept. It also is what the community has exposure and knowledge about (since 2004). This concept definitely reduces the safety risk associated with residents who live along HWY 18.
- How do I get to my property at XXXXX Salmon River Hwy?
- This concept seems like the least disruptive option for local residents.
- I don't see why we would need two clover leaf exchanges so close. It actually doesn't do much other than make the entrance to the Casino more convoluted and I am afraid that it could cause more accidents as people realize they have missed their exit and will then try to find a way back.

- This idea is the worst one. It is very disruptive to the local community, especially Rowell Creek Road residents. This concept would take our whole property at XXXX Rowell Creek Road. PLEASE do not go forward with this concept.
- Does not utilize existing casino exit/underpass.
- This concept kills 2 birds with 1 stone (an interchange serving both Spirit Mountain and OR 22).
- No reason to not be utilizing overpass at mile marker 25.
- This is getting really close to addressing all issues brought up earlier; SMC guests/employees have easier access, Hebo Rd traffic can avoid GR Rd with new interchange, no more pulling out onto Hwy 18 from Hwy 22 at Valley Junction, gives home owners' access without pulling out on Hwy 18, also helps Rowell Cr Rd out with an interchange at the casino. Still Kissing Rock corners need to be cleaned up, widened, no blind corners with log/hay/milk trucks coming into opposite lane of traffic. The Fort Hill interchange missed the mark and only helped out local traffic on Yamhill River Rd and almost sank Fort Hill businesses, also just created another road for more traffic to filter onto Hwy18 at a horrible spot when the highway merges from 2 lanes to 1 and speed limit decreases.
- Have to build expensive overpass.
- I see no words or anything in the picture which relates to bicyclist safety. Will there be a shoulder once the road goes to 4 lanes? Will the bridge over the South Yamhill River be widened and also have a shoulder? Will there be a bike/ped connection to Yamhill River Rd?
- Feel there would be a back up from traffic to and from the casino.
- As above I don't see how widening the highway is a solution. Also this cloverleaf plan adds layers of construction and disruption to the area around the junction. This is a rural area and all of this looks more like trying to turn the area into a possible Portland/Salem suburb.
- Best solution. 18-22 junction is sharp, centralizes 22 and casino traffic onto one interchange. It would be even better if a WB 18 to WB 22 ramp were added on NE quadrant so traffic onto 22 wouldn't conflict with casino traffic, although this would likely conflict with the north-side frontage road.
- Looks like this requires the creation of a lot of length of new local roads, particularly on the south side with more potential costly creek crossings.
- This seems to meet everyone's needs – an interchange for the casino and OR 22, extending the freeway and limiting the right in - right out at Rowell Creek.

**Do you have any overall comments about the project? (17 responses)**

- ODOT should implement Concept 3
- I'm not sure how this will affect my property line, my fence line, espresso shop, and my carport.
- Initially, the red and purple concepts had the best scores. Both of those concepts showed the highway in front of our home at XXXX Rowell Creek Road as a frontage road with 18/22 moving north. The red and purple concept would be ideal for all the people on Rowell Creek Road, including us. But, when you displayed the most promising concepts, 18/22 remained essentially where it is but with widening AND a frontage road eating into our property either in the front (Concepts 1 & 2) or eating into our property in the front with the widening and creating the frontage road behind our house (Concept 3). All

3 of these concepts are encroaching on Rowell Creek Road and all of its residents. Please call me to discuss this.

- I don't see the purpose of widening OR 18 to a four lane highway because it will continue being an area of major congestion. The expansion of the highway to 4 lanes between Willamina and Fort Hill have only created a speedway, essentially, where traffic rates increase to approx 70-75mph which creates hazardous road conditions for those driving the speed limit. Widening the highway will only continue those dangerous driving speeds through the town of Grand Ronde, which is dangerous for the residents and their children/elderly who walk. There is a crosswalk across 18 at Grand Ronde Rd that already no driver obeys, and widening it will further increase the risk of someone being hit by careless drivers.
- I believe this is a needed project, but don't believe ending this project at Jahn Road is the right way to go. If this project was extended beyond Jahn road, there is pretty much a 3 lane road right now going west at Grand Ronde Road. It would only take a slight addition to this project to get the 4 lanes to the Corridor, and would alleviate the bottle neck that already happens at Grand Ronde Road.
- No matter what you do to these areas you are still dealing with too much traffic that these roads cannot hold. You are planning on doing the same concept you did at Fort Hill Rd make it 4 lanes then bottle neck everything back down to two lanes. It never has worked. Traffic still gets backed up. Now you will make it even harder to get out on the highway at valley junction and also at Grand Ronde rd.
- This idea would take our whole property at XXXX Rowell Creek Road. We just purchased this property on June 3, 2020 and we have put A LOT of money and effort into remodeling the home and upgrading many other features of the property.
- The biggest problem is the speed limit dropping to 45 at the bottle neck at fort hill. It makes smooth merging impossible. Widen the bridge, and keep the speed limit at 55 or lower it at Wallace bridge to allow traffic to adjust.
- I am looking at each of these design concepts from the perspective of a cyclist traveling from Grande Ronde to Willamina. I would like very much to avoid as much of Hwy 18 as possible, and particularly to avoid the narrow bridge crossings where I feel very vulnerable because of inadequate shoulder. Normally I get off Hwy 18 and transition by dirt trail to Yamhill River Road ... not because that is a good transition, but it at least gets me off Hwy 18. Will the new local access roads give me a better way to avoid or get off Hwy 18? It doesn't look like they will. Will the expansion to 4 lanes include provision of adequate shoulder for safe cycling? I can't tell.
- This is more a question. We live at XXXX Hebo Rd in the Valley Junction circle. All these maps seem to show the road going over or on the borders of our property. Am I right?
- Hwy 18 has to be widened throughout the project area; have to have Kissing Rock corners fixed due to commercial trucks; Concept 3 is the best solution to the problem.
- I see no words or anything in the picture which relates to bicyclist safety. Will there be a shoulder once the road goes to 4 lanes? Will the bridge over the South Yamhill River be widened and also have a shoulder? Will there be a bike/ped connection to Yamhill River Rd?
- All of the solutions presented here hinge on widening Highway 18. The project that widened the highway at Fort Hill succeeded in creating a bottleneck in each direction depending on the time of day.

Widening the road leads to people driving faster and a rush to attempt to pass as many cars as many possible before the merge, creating very long backups, especially during the summer months.

I feel that a stop light at Valley Junction and at Grand Ronde Road would make turns safer, while slowing thru traffic, it would help to control speeding if there were no passing lanes that lead back to merges.

There are 2 traffic lights on Highway 18 in McMinnville and traffic still flows through the area.

Perhaps the money for such large projects could be applied at smaller scale ideas and the surplus used to fund law enforcement presence to curb speeding and reckless driving.

- Any of the concepts would be an improvement on a troublesome stretch. Hopefully, a further extension of 4-lane 18 through or around Grande Ronde will quickly follow.
- I am the current property owner at XXXXX Salmon River Hwy, Willamina, Oregon 97396. I would like information on how much acreage the project is proposed to take of my property. How will it affect the dwellings on the south edge of my property, closest to Highway 18 and the main house further back on the property.
- This is sorely needed, incredibly lengthy delays and dangerous movement to take a left from OR 22 onto OR 18 at the intersection, particularly during the height of summer travel. Anything is better than the present condition!
- Extend the 4 lanes! Every bit helps.

#### **Is there anything else you would like the project team to know? (5 responses)**

- The road at Kissing Rock is dangerously narrow with sharp curves. There is no guard rail at park of the road that has no shoulder that plunges down toward the creek right next to Kissing Rock. If ODOT is wanting to continue using this section of highway for OR 22 traffic going towards Hebo, then there should be some serious consideration about how to widen the road around the curves between Valley Junction and Kissing Rock. Also, take out the stupid parking area at Kissing Rock where cars park and pull out in front of semis that are going too fast and crossing the center line, nearly causing collisions. While these concepts appear to be slightly better than the current traffic pattern, I feel like it would make more sense to build a bypass route around Grand Ronde for traffic that is going directly to the coast. Similar to the new highway from Philomath to Newport that directs traffic around the small communities as to minimize the congestion, noise, and increased dangers of large volumes of fast-driving traffic. These proposed concepts appear to only have the casino guests in mind and not the actual residents of Grand Ronde who are trying to live our simple lives out in the country and way from the chaos of Portland/Salem traffic.
- I will say again, even though this isn't part of this project, that HWY 22 at St. Michaels needs the bridge and eroding bank evaluated soon. I am not sure if this is the right forum to address this or if I should reach out to someone else?
- This project is about 10-15 years overdue and is needed for the local communities and population that is completely shut down on weekends during the summer months.
- Driving from our home (on Hebo Rd west of Grand Ronde Rd) has become such a chore that we have been avoiding any travel on weekends during tourist season. Even during the week in less busy periods

getting on to Hwy 18 can be a slow and tedious event, this causes many chancy driving maneuvers and close calls as well as a well documented number of accidents, injuries and deaths.

Nothing blocks traffic like an accident and it seems like a cruel joke when Trip Check tells you to take an alternate route.

Stop lights seem like a solution that would solve problems without creating many others including more speeding and environmental disruption.

- No. Thanks for the opportunity to comment.

### **Additional questions**

The online open house asked if there were additional stakeholders the team should reach out to. Eight respondents shared the following comments:

- Doug Littlejohn. Gary Littlejohn.
- Businesses and residents that live along OR 18 and OR 22 between Fort Hill and Grand Ronde, including the residents on Grand Ronde Road.
- Spirit Mountain Casino, CTGR, Hofenbridahl Logging, Littlejohn Logging.
- Homeowners and businesses on Fort Hill Road.
- Obviously Grand Ronde Tribes.
- Bicyclists! This is a major route to/from the coast/Pacific City!
- It sounds like you've already included all important stakeholders.
- George E Hollmann. I am the current property owner at 26375 Salmon River Highway. My father Ernest G Hollmann passed away September 2019. I am the trustee of the Hollmann Family Trust.

Twelve respondents asked for the project team to follow up with them.

Visitors were asked to share how they found out about the OOH. This optional question was answered by 22 respondents. The most common response was "social media post".

- Email – 6
- Postcard mailer – 7
- Social media post – 9
- Prefer not to say – 1
- Other (please specify) – 1

### **Demographics**

- Gender: This optional question had 23 responses. 6 respondents identified as female, 15 as male, and 2 selected "prefer not to say"
- Household number – This optional question had 22 responses. 5 respondents lived alone, 7 respondents lived with one other person, and 10 respondents lived with 2 or more people.
- Age: This optional question had 24 responses. 8 respondents were 65 or older, 12 respondents were between 36-65 years old, and 3 respondents were between 19-35.



- Race: This optional question had 23 responses. 17 respondents identified as white, 2 identified as American Indian/Alaska Native, and 2 identified as Hispanic/Latnio.
- Languages spoken at home: This optional question had 23 responses. 22 respondents selected English and one selected “prefer not to say.”

## Appendix A: Detailed comments and contact information from Online Open House

### Appendix B: Virtual Event Chat Log

Brandy Steffen, Facilitator (JLA)(in Waiting Room) : Thanks for attending. We'll get started at 5:30 pm.

Brandy Steffen, Facilitator, JLA (she/her)(in Waiting Room) : Thanks for attending. We'll get started at 5:30 pm.

Brandy Steffen, Facilitator, JLA (she/her): Just a reminder that we'll be recording the meeting.

Brandy Steffen, Facilitator, JLA (she/her): If you have any questions, feel free to add them here in the chat.

Brandy Steffen, Facilitator, JLA (she/her): We will also have a time for questions after Marc is done speaking.

Ariella Frishberg (she/her), facilitation support: You can find this information on the project website, here:

<https://www.oregon.gov/odot/projects/pages/project-details.aspx?project=18854>

Paula Runnells: What happens to the property when the interchange goes right through it?

Brennan Burbank (ODOT): Hi Paula, Thanks for the question. If a property is impacted by the project we will use our Right of Way process to talk with the property owner about the needs of the project and impact to the property.

Ariella Frishberg (she/her), facilitation support: Additional information and images for these maps can also be found on our online open house. If you know someone who would be interested in providing their input but couldn't make it tonight, please share the link to the open house with them! <https://odotopenhouse.org/or-18-and-22-road-improvement>

Paula Runnells: The interchange looks like it goes directly thru the property

Michele Becker: For those of you who were 'unsure' would you mind typing in any concerns you may have?

Michal Young: I am marking "unsure" because I find it difficult to guess what the options for non-motorized traffic (e.g., bicycles) would be like.

Brennan Burbank (ODOT): Thanks Michal for the comment. Because we are early on in the process we have not done any detail design around Bike and ped facilities. We would love to hear more from you in the question and answer section.

Carla Finegan: Concept 3 appears to affect high-value farmland, so it will be harder to farm those fields.

Ken Jeske: I simply need to study this more

Ken Jeske: how many homes will be displaced in each plan

Ronda Wilhoit: with the widening are you going to take equal from north and south?

Ken Jeske: thank you

Ronda Wilhoit: thank you

Carla Finegan: Do you have time estimates for each of the concepts?

Justin Smith: I agree

Ariella Frishberg (she/her), facilitation support: As a reminder, You can find information on the project website, here:

<https://www.oregon.gov/odot/projects/pages/project-details.aspx?project=18854> Additional information and images for these maps

can also be found on our online open house. If you know someone who would be interested in providing their input but couldn't make it tonight, please share the link to the open house with them! <https://odotopenhouse.org/or-18-and-22-road-improvement>

Ronda Wilhoit: how many phases are in there in total?

Michal Young: Thank you. I need to drop off now, but will look at the recording later and the online materials.

Ronda Wilhoit: correct

Ronda Wilhoit: thank you

John Mercier: Thank You. Gotta BBQ.

Ronda Wilhoit: thank you all I gotta go