

SouthEast Connector Phase 2 Design: CWG Meeting No. 6, July 11, 2013

ATTENDEES:**CWG**

Andy Bass
Franco Crivelli
Lissa Butterfield
Marge Frandsen
Randy Walter
Roger Frantz
Shannon Windle
Tom Judy
Tory Friedman
Tray Abney
Troy Miller
Valerie Anderson

RTC

Jeff Hale
Michael Moreno

CH2M HILL

Cindy Potter
David Dodson
Leslie Bonneau
Mark Gallegos
Matt Setty
Kaci Thomas

Atkins

Josh Thomson

COPY TO:

Lee Gibson; Garth Oksol; Amy Cummings; Alan Gubanich; Anne Woodring; Charles Johns; David Farley; Geoffrey Schafler; Janet Phillips; Jim Nadeau; Leo Heuston Lisa Mann; Lori Wray; Margo Medeiros; Mike Kazmierski; Mitch Nowicki; Pat Gallagher; Phil Condon; Rae McElroy; Roger Jewett; Scott Carey; Sue Golish; Terri Thomas; Val Martino

PREPARED BY:

Mark Gallegos

DATE:

July 11, 2013

PROJECT NUMBER:

RTC Project No. 532013 / CH2M HILL Project No. 458732

On July 11, 2013, the Regional Transportation Commission of Washoe County (RTC) hosted the sixth Community Working Group (CWG) meeting for the SouthEast Connector Phase 2 Design (SEC) project. The meeting was held at the Associated General Contractors of Nevada (AGC) offices located at 5400 Mill Street, Reno, Nevada. The purpose of the meeting was to provide the CWG with an overview of the 50 percent design; to provide a presentation on wildlife and habitat impacts mitigation; and provide an update on the Phase 1 construction.

5-Minute Opportunity

Attendees were provided a "5-Minute Opportunity" to discuss any items of concern not included within the evening's agenda and suggest topics for future CWG meetings. Items brought forward are as follows:

*Please provide a status of the fence repairs in the area of Clean Water Way; the fences are not being maintained and wild horses are getting through the gaps in the fencing. There is concern that they will make their way into the alfalfa fields at UNR Farms. **There are multiple utility companies working in the area over which the RTC does not have oversight authority. RTC's project manager, Garth Oksol, has been looking into the issue to try and determine the responsible party(s) and to get the issue resolved.***

*When will the City of Reno Special Use Permit application be submitted for the grading work that will be performed? **The Special Use Permit application is scheduled to be submitted Monday, August 12, 2013; their next scheduled intake meeting.***

Wildlife

Matt Setty/CH2M HILL led a discussion of wildlife habitat impacts and mitigation measures proposed as part of the SEC. Presentation graphics are provided as Attachment A to this summary. The Biological Assessment included within the Clean Water Act Section 404 permit application soon to be submitted to the USACE and made available for public review and comment will include a section specific to wildlife species covered under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, specifically, the Lahontan Cutthroat Trout, Cui-Ui, and the Carson Wandering Skipper.

In addition to those wildlife species covered under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, the 404 permit application will provide a discussion of direct and indirect impacts on various wildlife species found within the project area; this was the focus of the evening's discussion.

It is important to note that you cannot separate the species of interest from the habitats that are being provided. In order for specific species to move into and thrive within an area, appropriate habitat needs to be provided. The opportunity that this project provides to influence the overall ecological function of the riparian corridor is afforded due to the need to cut down sections of creek bank as well as lower the grade in many areas in order to provide adequate flood mitigation storage and conveyance. If this need did not exist, there would not be the economic drivers or the justification to undertake such a large environmental restoration project as part of a roadway design. Since down-cutting of stream banks and the lowering of the existing grade in some areas is required to provide flood storage and conveyance mitigation, it makes sense to restore these affected areas as high-functioning, high-diversity biological systems. We are minimizing work within Steamboat Creek to the degree possible to minimize direct impacts to the creek with flood and wetlands mitigation work primarily being performed from the west edge of water to the eastern toe of the roadway embankment depending on the location along the alignment. The work that is being performed as part of this project will reconnect the creek with its flood plain and enhance habitat quality along the creek bank up through the wetlands and upland areas between the creek and the new roadway. Aquatic habitats will also be enhanced with these improvements.

The proposed mitigation wetland habitats are being designed to utilize groundwater, stream, and drainage resources within the area to allow these systems to be primarily self-sustaining. The project includes proposed effluent lines to provide supplemental water to maintain the viability of the Yori Drain mitigation wetlands during times of drought.

The proposed environmental enhancements within the project corridor have been designed to maximize, to the extent practicable, the opportunities to increase the biological and ecological function of the corridor. Planting palettes have been developed using plant species that are best suited to the soil conditions and depth to ground water in the various areas. Plant species selection also considers wildlife species that would be expected to migrate into the corridor over time. There will be significant temporary impacts to existing habitat and wildlife populations currently within the corridor due to construction activity; however, after the project is complete there will be more high-quality habitat within the corridor than currently exists. Proposed plantings also include a fair number of trees within the corridor which will provide additional perching and nesting habitat for birds, including raptor species. The proposed mitigation wetlands are designed to provide open water areas with contiguous transitions to upland habitats, providing opportunities for greater biodiversity within the corridor than currently exists.

It should be noted that raptor perches are not currently being proposed as part of the project. This is primarily due to the conflicting feedback received from various wildlife groups, with some preferring to have perches included for raptor species to utilize when hunting in the area, while other groups would prefer to not encourage raptors to hunt within the corridor. Although not currently included as part of the project, the mitigation wetland areas are planned to become a conservation area after the project is complete, and there may be opportunities to install perches as part of future improvements to this conservation area. Trees being planted within the corridor will also eventually become suitable perching and nesting sites for raptor species as well. The CWG is also encouraged to provide input on this issue.

Deer fencing is proposed on both sides of the roadway north of Pembroke to limit opportunities for deer and other larger mammals from entering the roadway and to direct wildlife movement toward crossing areas under

bridges. The bridge structures included within the project will be suitable for wildlife crossings. Some of the larger box culverts being proposed for flood water conveyance will also provide crossing opportunities for larger wildlife, though it is expected that culverts will primarily be utilized by predatory species as deer tend to prefer crossings with greater visibility similar to that provided by bridge structures as opposed to crossing through tunnels. The team has been in consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and NDOW to identify appropriate areas for the provision of wildlife crossings. As the new wetland environment being created within the corridor would also provide good cover for young deer, it is anticipated that we may see more deer rearing their young within the corridor (this currently occurs most frequently further up within the Virginia Range and the Truckee Canyon).

It is anticipated that many of the species currently inhabiting the Truckee River System will move upstream along the Steamboat Creek system to take advantage of the new habitat created within the project corridor; these species are also being considered during the design of the mitigation wetlands system. There are no proposals to transplant any wildlife species into the corridor as part of this project.

Fencing

North of Pembroke, eight-foot deer fencing is proposed on both sides of the roadway to limit opportunities for deer and from entering the roadway and to direct their movements toward crossing areas under bridges. Deer fencing will tie back into the bridge abutments.

Chain link will be used through Rosewood Lakes Golf Course to keep multi-use path users from entering the golf course as well as provide a wildlife exclusion fence. South of Mira Loma, four-strand barbed wire fencing is proposed to keep cattle from entering the roadway. Deer fencing is not proposed within the Butler Ranch area as this does not tend to be a primary migration route for deer.

Proposed fencing will also serve to exclude wild horse herds from the mitigation wetlands and the roadway. Allowing access for wild horses within these areas would have a negative impact on the establishment and long-term functionality of the mitigation wetlands. Wild horses are already excluded from these areas by existing property fencing networks. Areas adjacent to the North Butler Ranch located on BLM land that allow for access to waters of Steamboat Creek will remain unchanged.

Wildlife and Fencing Q & A

*Does Phase 1 include opportunities for deer to safely cross the roadway? **The Veterans Memorial Bridge over the Truckee River will provide a large open area through which deer can freely move between the Virginia Range and the UNR Farms area.***

*When construction begins, the residents in the area will likely see an increase in rodents on their properties. Providing residents with an advisement regarding this potential prior to construction should be considered. **The RTC will take this under consideration.***

*There are currently areas of fencing within the Phase 1 construction area that have been down for quite some time. When are these fences going to be repaired? **There are multiple entities working in this area in addition to the SEC construction team. Garth Oksol has been working with the various crews to determine who needs to address the fences that are down and to get these addressed appropriately. (Garth was not present to provide a status update). Note was made that Phase 1 construction does not include any activity east of Steamboat Creek and that the RTC has no control of the work performed by the other local entities.***

*Who would have ultimate responsibility should any of the wild horses make it out to Sparks Boulevard or other area roadways? **The Nevada Division of Agriculture has the ultimate responsibility and legal jurisdiction for the management of the Virginia herd. The management of the herd is not the responsibility of local agencies or property owners.***

*How will the horse issue be addressed during Phase 2 construction? **One of the proposed early-start environmental items includes a phased fencing plan to help ensure that wild horses and deer are prevented from entering the construction site to the extent possible.***

*Can the RTC look at providing the wild horse herd access to water within Steamboat Creek while still restricting access to the roadway? **This has been discussed and it has been determined that allowing the wild horse herd access to the creek and adjacent proposed mitigation wetlands would have a detrimental effect on the proposed creek and habitat restoration efforts. Providing this access would also serve to encourage the herd to move into the area on a more regular basis which would potentially create safety issues in addition to the impacts to the mitigation wetlands and creek restoration efforts. No additional wild horse access to the Steamboat Creek is proposed as part of this project beyond what currently exists. Existing access will be perpetuated where feasible.***

50 Percent Design Overview

The design team presented an overview of the 50 percent design and provided the CWG with an opportunity to ask questions and provide input on proposed design elements. The CWG was divided into two groups for the purposes of this discussion. Identical displays were presented to both groups and a discussion outline was followed to ensure that the same key points were discussed with both groups (see Attachment B of this summary for the discussion outline). Comments and questions received from each group were noted and reviewed prior to the end of the meeting to help ensure the accuracy and completeness of the notes taken.

Comments and questions received during the 50 percent design group discussions, and design team responses, are included below.

50 Percent Design Comments and Q & A

Concern was expressed regarding median maintenance and that medians will suffer due to lack of maintenance similar to issues seen on southeast McCarran Boulevard. **Proposed median types have been reviewed by Washoe County and the Cities of Reno and Sparks and are being designed to be low maintenance facilities. Any maintenance required will be the responsibility of the City of Reno and Washoe County within their respective jurisdictions.**

What work is planned for the Steamboat Creek banks near South Meadows Parkway? Will these banks also be stabilized? **The western bank of Steamboat Creek will be stabilized throughout the southern portion of the project. The eastern bank will be addressed in several areas that exhibit instability and in areas that require stream realignment.**

I thought the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe was against any work being done within Steamboat Creek? **The RTC and its design team have been in close consultation with the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe. Tribal representatives have had the opportunity to review and comment on the proposed design elements both through representation on the project's Resource Agency Committee (RAC) and through multiple one-on-one meetings. The Tribe is aware of and concurs with the proposed creek restoration efforts being proposed as part of the project.**

How will fencing for wild horses be handled? **Chain-link, four-wire barbed, and deer fencing will be installed, depending on the location along the alignment, to prevent wild horses and other large wildlife from entering the roadway. Existing fencing will also be repaired in some locations to further limit the ability of wild horses to enter the project corridor.**

How will wild horses have access to water? **Existing access will be perpetuated at the BLM property within the north Butler Ranch. The existing access along Steamboat Creek south of the project area will remain unchanged as this area is outside of the project boundaries.**

Will you remove whitetop without the roadway? **Whitetop eradication efforts as part of this project will be limited to within the project corridor. This corridor includes the roadway and the riparian corridor from south Meadows Parkway to Clean Water Way.**

Where will the conservation easement be located? **The proposed conservation easement consists of the area from the eastern roadway toe-of-fill to the west bank of Steamboat Creek for the entire length of the Phase 2 project.**

Will there be barbed wire fencing on both sides of the roadway? ***Fencing is proposed along both sides of the project right-of-way. The type of fencing installed will vary depending on location and purpose.***

Irrigation diversion generally already follows the proposed diversion path. ***In areas within the Butler Ranch new irrigation return flow ditches will be developed to allow the landowner to manage irrigation waters. This new conveyance ditch will be west of the proposed right-of-way fencing.***

Have you considered extending a cross street through the mitigation areas for future access to property east of the SouthEast Connector/Veterans Parkway? ***No, access roads through the mitigation areas are not being considered as part of this project.***

Did you get flood water to balance yet? ***Hydraulic modeling is ongoing and the team continues to look at areas of additional grading and/or possible additional conveyance structures to determine the most cost-effective method of meeting the "no-rise" local flood ordinance requirement.***

Will the cattle guard at Alexander Lake Road be repaired or replaced so that it functions properly? ***The existing cattle guard on Alexander Lake Road is owned by Washoe County and lies within BLM property. We are unaware of any plans the County has to repair or replace this cattle guard.***

Is the multi-use path crossing under the structure at Alexander Lake Road? ***Yes, from South Meadows Parkway to Alexander Lake Road, the multi-use path is located on the east side of the Connector. The path crosses Alexander Lake Road near the existing cattle guard, then turns to the west and crosses under the Connector. From Alexander Lake Road north, the multi-use path is located on the west side of the Connector all the way to the Truckee River and Greg Street.***

Need to deal with irrigated pasture water/tailwater ditch on Butler side of fence – they will want to control. ***As a first order of work during construction, a ditch will be constructed on the west side of the roadway, on the Butler side of the property line. This ditch will intercept irrigation tailwaters which will be conveyed to culverts under the roadway and flow towards Steamboat Creek.***

Will there be fencing on the east side of Steamboat Creek? ***Existing fencing on the east side of Steamboat Creek will be perpetuated and any existing gaps will be closed.***

Stay away from BLM corridor. ***No construction on BLM land will be performed. There is an area in the North Butler Ranch where the BLM lands cross Steamboat Creek. This area will remain unchanged and will provide access from the BLM lands to the portion of Steamboat Creek located on BLM land.***

Is there a lot of whitetop in the old Tahoe-Pyramid Link corridor? ***Yes. This area is incorporated into the Weed Management Plan and will receive mechanical and chemical weed treatment.***

Check with Washoe County Department of Water Rights on their monitoring station at Mira Loma. ***The RTC and its design team have been in close coordination with the County as well as the Federal Water Master with regard to water-rights issues and monitoring stations.***

What about the toxic plume that affected Hidden Valley? ***RTC Consultants have communicated the proposed project with Washoe County. The proposed project is not expected to influence groundwater contamination issues within that area. Ongoing coordination of this potential concern will continue through final design to ensure appropriate input from Washoe County.***

How high is the concrete barrier? Where is it on the typical section? ***Where proposed, concrete barrier will measure 32 inches in height; barrier rail is only being proposed in areas where embankment slopes are less than 4:1 and where it is needed to separate pedestrians from vehicle traffic.***

Boynton Slough is a concern. ***The hydrology and flooding issues associated with Boynton Slough have been considered in the flood modeling efforts conducted to support the design and satisfy the regulatory requirements of the project.***

How will the Rosewood Lakes area comply with flood mitigation requirements? ***Hydraulic modeling is ongoing. It is anticipated that the Rosewood Lakes area will provide for sufficient flood storage and conveyance with***

minimal, if any, changes required to the existing grade. The areas around Rosewood Lakes will be incorporated, along with the rest of the project area, in the no-rise analysis. The project hydraulic models illustrate that the water surface elevation of the 117-year flood event will not be increased as a result of this project.

Has someone actually laid out the new golf course? **The City of Reno is developing proposals for the Rosewood Lakes Golf Course. Changes to the layout of the golf course are not included as part of this project. Any work within the golf course will take place independently of the SEC and under the jurisdiction of the City of Reno.**

Is there something more attractive than chain link fence that can be used through the golf course? (That's the last of our worries, more concerned with environmental impacts). **RTC will take this under consideration.**

What is the elevation of the roadway north of Pembroke Drive? Is it higher than through Rosewood Lakes? **The elevation of the roadway north of Pembroke is slightly higher than the elevation through Rosewood Lakes. In both locations, one lane in each direction will remain above the 117-year flood elevation; the flood elevation at these locations is constant. In Rosewood Lakes, the roadway elevation is slightly higher (2-3 feet) at the bridges to cross over the slough and drainages. North of Pembroke, the existing ground is lower and slopes toward the Truckee River, so the embankment height is slightly higher through this area to compensate for the difference in existing grade while maintaining the roadway elevation above the flood elevation.**

Are there enough box culverts for flood equalization north of Pembroke Drive? **Yes, however, hydraulic modeling is ongoing. The final culvert number, sizes, and locations are yet to be finalized.**

Has all of the needed right-of-way been secured? **All needed right-of-way has been obtained with the exception of property through north and south Butler Ranch. The RTC will enter into negotiations with the Butler Trust once right-of-way needs through this area have been finalized.**

How do you provide the 1:1 flood mitigation in areas with high ground water? **Depth to groundwater is considered within the flood volume storage mitigation basin calculations. Only flood volume storage created above the ordinary high groundwater and groundwater elevations is counted as part of the 1:1 mitigation credit. The design team has installed 22 monitoring wells to assess the elevation and fluctuation of the groundwater through the project area. This data is used in determining the available volume to be developed for flood mitigation.**

Have maintenance needs been coordinated with NDOT? **NDOT is aware of the project and all bridges are being designed according to NDOT standards. However, maintenance of the new roadway and bridges will be the responsibility of Washoe County and the Cities of Reno and Sparks as the new roadway is not a state highway. The Cities may elect to have NDOT perform the routine, periodic inspections of the bridges once constructed.**

Who will be responsible for maintaining the bioswales? **Washoe County and the Cities of Reno and Sparks will be responsible for the maintenance of the new roadway and associated appurtenances, including bioswales.**

Are you increasing flows within Steamboat Creek? **While the proposed improvements include some changes to the way water moves through the system, the overall volume of water moving through the system will remain unchanged.**

There is an area within the Rosewood Lakes Golf Course, at the southwest corner of the course adjacent to Mira Loma, which tends to have drainage issues. **The design team will meet with representatives from the City of Reno Parks and Recreation and the golf course to discuss this area in more detail. If a workable solution can be developed to alleviate these drainage issues it will be incorporated into the project.**

I have concerns regarding potential increased flows to Steamboat Creek. **While the proposed improvements include some changes to the way water moves through the system, the overall volume and flow rate of water moving through the system will remain unchanged.**

Have the proposed new trees been approved as part of the permit? Where will these new trees be? **Proposed planting palettes have been included within the Clean Water Act Section 404 permit application for review and comment. The actual location(s) of tree plantings is a design detail that will be addressed later within the design process.**

Will there be a golf cart path connection at the northwest corner of Mira Loma? ***Golf cart path connections will be determined by the City of Reno. The RTC has no jurisdiction with regard to the future golf course design and operations.***

There is concern that the new road will create a dam through Rosewood Lakes. ***Hydraulic modeling is being performed for the project to ensure that the final design appropriately accommodates flood flows throughout the project corridor. Flood equalization structures will be included and their final locations will be determined by the findings of the hydraulic modeling efforts.***

Need to consider bird east/west migratory paths; the airport is concerned with potential increased bird populations within Rosewood Lakes flying through runway flight paths. ***The design team will meet with the Reno-Tahoe Airport Authority to discuss further and determine appropriate mitigation measures.***

Can we post the displays to the website? ***Yes.***

Will there be fencing on the west side of the multi-use path to separate path users from UNR Farms property? ***Yes, fencing is proposed on both sides of the alignment. Fence types will vary depending on their locations and purpose.***

UNR and Rosewood Lakes Golf Course have requested copies of the plan view displays for the alignment through/adjacent to their respective properties. ***These displays were provided on the night of the meeting.***

Will there be a runner's edge along the multi-use path? ***While there is currently no specific runner's edge included within the design, the proposed multi-use path includes a narrow shoulder which could be used for this purpose.***

Who will be responsible for trash pick-up along the multi-use path? What about dog waste? ***Washoe County and Cities of Reno and Sparks will be responsible for the maintenance of the multi-use path within their jurisdictions, including trash pick-up. The County and Cities would also be responsible for determining if pet waste clean-up stations will be provided along the path as well as maintaining supplies at these stations, if provided.***

Phase 1 Construction Update

Jeff Hale/RTC provided an update on Phase 1 construction. Work is progressing on schedule. There was a recent closure of Sparks Boulevard which included the southbound lanes and all but one northbound lane to allow for 24-hour concrete paving operations. Property owners were given advance notice of the closure and night work. The work was completed ahead of schedule and without incident. Drilled shaft construction continues according to schedule on the south side of the Truckee River for the Veterans Memorial Bridge and construction of the pier columns has begun. NV Energy has begun the construction of a temporary shoofly to provide access for the construction of the Clean Water Way Bridge. The team is working on acquiring the final FCC approval needed for the relocation of the radio towers south of Clean Water Way to a location north of their current location and west of the new roadway. The relocation of the towers is needed to accommodate the new roadway. Steel bridge girders are currently scheduled to begin arriving on site in the first week of August 2013. Phase 1 is currently on schedule for completion in October 2014.

Clean Water Act 404 Permit Application and 401 Certification

The Clean Water Act 404 Permit application and 401 Certification is on schedule to be submitted to the USACE on Friday, July 19, 2013. The USACE will do an initial review to determine that they have received a complete application prior to opening up a public comment period. We encourage the CWG and all interested parties to review and provide comment on the application package during the public comment period.

Meeting adjourned at 7:20 pm. The next CWG meeting is scheduled for September 12, 2013. The CWG will not meet during the month of August.

Attachment A
Wildlife Presentation Boards

Attachment B
50 Percent Design Discussion Outline
