

W. H. a

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL

2217 Primrose Lane
Florence, OR 97439
July 25, 2005

Lane County Board of Commissioners
125 East 8th Avenue
Eugene, OR 97401

Dear Commissioners Dwyer, Green, Morrison, Sorenson, and Stewart:

Designation of highway 101 as a freight route through our downtown area, as currently recommended by ODOT staff, has been a difficult and deeply divisive issue for our community and City Council. The July 20, 2005 letter signed by the mayor and sent to Robin Marshburn at ODOT with a copy to Commissioner Morrison summarizes the current Council position. As you consider your recommendation to the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) on this issue at your July 27th meeting, please be aware that the current Florence City Council position is supported by a tenuous 3-2 vote after long debate that did not resolve legitimate concerns. Because this issue is so important to our community and there were no answers to legitimate concerns, we are taking the unusual step of sending this letter to you for your consideration as you make a recommendation to the OTC.

Development of an economically viable and pedestrian-friendly downtown from highway 126 to the Siuslaw River bridge is one of the key features of the approved Florence 2020 Comprehensive Plan. A Special Transportation Area (STA) along highway 101 was the tool ODOT recommended to manage traffic to facilitate this. District ODOT personnel were involved in our downtown planning and support our plan. STA designation would be recommended for Oregon Transportation Commission approval. The designation would add to the nearly 100 STA designations now in place in our State. Unfortunately, our STA designation could be a victim of freight lobby politics at the State level.

If highway 101 through our downtown is also designated as part of the state freight route system, the STA will be significantly compromised as will pedestrian safety and economic revitalization plans in Florence. This is not a figment of our imagination. ODOT Highway Policy and proposed changes to the policy make this clear. There are two kinds of STA's—class I is unencumbered by a freight route and class II is encumbered by a freight route designation. Only the latter requires that a new plan be developed and approved by ODOT. Highway Policy also recognizes that the Oregon Transportation Commission, by law, does not have the ability to reduce the long term capacity of a designated freight route with a very limited exception for minor reductions for safety. Because capacity, in the simplest terms, is the number of trucks passing through in a given time period, reducing speed, providing safe pedestrian crossings, adding an additional stop light, traffic calming street architecture, and more pedestrians all mean a significantly lower capacity. Pedestrian safety and economic revitalization are, and must remain, the predominant highway objectives in our downtown from highway 126 to the bridge. They must not be neutralized by equal consideration being given to freight haul speed and efficiency.

The September 1, 2004 ODOT staff report for the Freight Route Analysis Project specifically recommended against any freight route designation on all five highway 101 segments, including our segment between highways 126 and 38. None of the segments ranked very high in ODOT's objective criteria for freight route designation. Our segment is in the lowest category of percent truck use.

The September ODOT staff report did recommend a large increase in statewide freight route designation—a 43% mileage increase. However, the freight lobby remained unhappy and has put pressure on ODOT and some politicians resulting in the current June 17, 2005 review draft staff report

boosting the overall statewide mileage increase to 59%. Despite the fact that relatively few trucks use our subject segment of highway 101 and the segment does not meet other criteria for designation, it was the only segment of 101 recommended for freight route designation in the state. (The only current freight route designation on the entire 300 plus miles of All American Highway 101 in Oregon is the small segment between highways 38 and 42. This loop was included years ago to serve Oregon's second international port at Coos Bay and these routes will always be the best truck routes from either the north or south on I-5.)

In hind site, Florence was probably victimized in this manner due to premature testimony before a Senate Transportation Committee around April 1st. Because timelines were short, the Council members received only cursory individual notification on the new issue, essentially no information, and no opportunity to discuss the issue in with each other in public meeting. Neither did the Council even see the testimony text until weeks after it was given. When the Council finally got a chance to fully consider the issue on May 2, 2005, a lengthy debate ensued and by a 3-2 vote the Council approved a resolution doing 3 things: 1) requesting an STA designation from highway 126 to the Siuslaw River bridge; 2) reaffirming our support for a freight route designation on highway 126 from Belt Line to Florence; and 3) disapproving any freight route designation on highway 101 in our area. We believe there was and continues to be unanimous support for the first two items. In essence, the resolution was only asking that Florence be treated like every major coastal city north of us—a freight route designation as our lifeline to the I-5 corridor and no damaging freight route designation on our All American Highway 101.

Designation of highway 101 as part of the statewide freight route system is highly unlikely to result in improvements on that road for two reasons. First, ODOT policy states that such designation does not provide any additional funding. Second, by sound logic, ODOT spends its scarce investment dollars where it will do the most good (high truck % and volume). This segment of 101 is at the lowest level of truck use. Neither will the addition of 101 result in more funding for highway 126 which carries more truck traffic than 101. Like all the other major coastal cities to the north, 126 is a critical lifeline to a destination and will be supported on that basis.

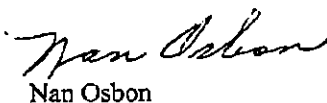
In summary, there is no significant benefit from designation of highway 101 as part of the state freight route system except for putting more miles on the books (a knowledgeable ODOT staffer acknowledged this in a recent telephone conversation). However, it will have a significant negative impact on Florence by compromising our Comprehensive Plan and by extension both pedestrian safety and our economic revitalization in our downtown.

Therefore, we urge your recommendation to the Oregon Transportation Commission be for a STA designation through our downtown and against any freight route designation in our area.

Thank you.

Sincerely,


Dave Braley


Nan Osbon

Enclosures: Resolution No. 10, Series 2005
Letter to Robin Marshburn, 7/20/2005

RESOLUTION NO. 10, SERIES 2005**A RESOLUTION CALLING FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF A SPECIAL TRANSPORTATION AREA (STA) ON HIGHWAY 101 FROM THE HIGHWAY 126 INTERSECTION TO THE SIUSLAW RIVER BRIDGE, OPPOSING FREIGHT ROUTE DESIGNATION ON HIGHWAY 101, AND REAFFIRMING SUPPORT FOR FREIGHT ROUTE DESIGNATION ON HIGHWAY 126 TO THE CITY LIMITS.**

WHEREAS, Highway 101 serves as Florence's Main Street from Highway 126 to the Siuslaw River Bridge; and

WHEREAS, the Florence Comprehensive Plan and Downtown Plan provide for development of an attractive, safe, pedestrian friendly Main Street to enhance the economic viability of downtown and the quality of life for citizens and visitors; and

WHEREAS, the primary objective of a Special Transportation Area (STA) under the Oregon Highway Plan is to provide access to community activities, businesses, and residences and to accommodate pedestrian movement along and across the highway in a downtown with local auto, pedestrian, bicycle, and transit movements that are as important as through movement of traffic, generally resulting in traffic speeds of 25 mph or less; and

WHEREAS, the primary objective of the State Highway Freight System is to facilitate rapid interstate, intrastate, and regional movements of trucks on major truck freight routes; and

WHEREAS, Highway 101, in recognition of its exceptional scenic views and tourist popularity, is marketed nationally and internationally as an All American Road, the highest such designation in the United States; and

WHEREAS, highway safety improvements on Highway 101 are made based on demonstrated need and should be influenced by the National All American Road designation, the State Scenic Byway designation, and heavy seasonal tourist traffic; and

WHEREAS, designation of Highway 101 from Highway 126 to the Umpqua River as a Freight Route would tend to undermine and neutralize many of the objectives and benefits of both the STA and the All American Road designations; and

WHEREAS, both the STA and All American Road designation benefits are critical components in achieving the economic viability and quality of life goals that the Comprehensive and Downtown Plans aim to achieve; and

WHEREAS, Lincoln City, Astoria, Clatsop County, the Economic Development Council of Tillamook County, and the Northwest Oregon Area Commission on Transportation have formally opposed designation of Highway 101 as a Freight Route, citing negative effects on tourism and safe local traffic movement; and

WHEREAS, Highway 126 from Eugene to Florence is a lifeline to I-5 and carries significant truck traffic while Highway 101 north of Gardiner to Florence is categorized by ODOT in the lowest category for freight truck use.

NOW THEREFORE, the City Council of the City of Florence calls for the designation of Highway 101 from the Highway 126 Intersection to the Siuslaw River Bridge as a Special Transportation Area, reaffirms its support of Highway 126 from the Eugene area to the Florence city limit as a State Highway Freight Route, and opposes any designation of Highway 101 north of Gardiner to north of Florence as a State Highway Freight Route.

Passed By the Florence City Council this 2nd Day of May, 2005

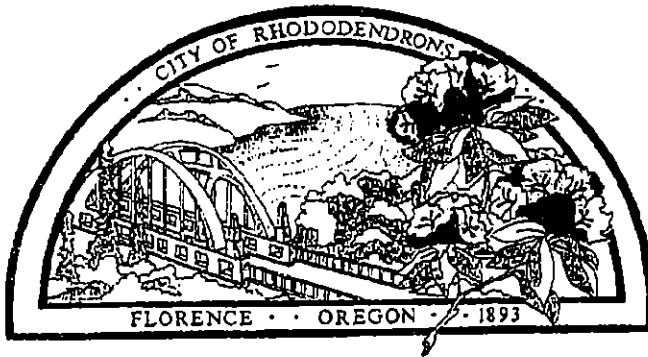


Phil Brubaker, Mayor

ATTEST:



Barbara Miller, City Recorder



City of Florence

Mayor and Council

250 Highway 101
Florence, OR 97439-7628

Voice/TDD: (541) 997-3437
FAX: (541) 997-6814

July 20, 2005

Mr. Robin Marshburn
Oregon Department of Transportation
Transportation Development Division
Planning Section
555 Thirteenth Street NE, Suite 2
Salem, Oregon 97301-4178

Dear Mr. Marshburn:

Please register the support of the City of Florence for the designation of State Highway 101 as a "Freight Route" within the State Highway Freight System. This letter of support alters the previous position of the Florence City Council regarding the Freight Route designation for this portion of the State Highway System. It is conditioned upon the portion of the route that lies within the City limits of Florence being given the status of a Special Transportation Area (STA) at the same time.

Coming to this resolution has been very difficult for the Florence local elected body. We are very concerned about the quality of development with our "Main Street" area as defined by the City's Downtown Plan. The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) was heavily involved in the crafting of the Downtown Plan and with the process that led to its mutual approval. The interface between the State Highway System and the people and properties of this community is critical to our long term success. It is our strong feeling that an STA is necessary to preserve the opportunities we so avidly pursue. Please convey our thoughts to the Oregon Transportation Commission along with our urging for the contemporaneous actions.

Thank you for your excellent efforts on our behalf and for your work in continuing to improve the State transportation system.

Sincerely,

Philip N. Brubaker
Mayor

Copies: Florence City Council
Commissioner Anna Morrison
Senator Joanne Verger

