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Bridge traffic options sought

By Tim Neff
Emerald Associate Editor

Final options to alleviate traffic congestion on the Ferry Street Bridge are about to enter a new phase of public review and comment.

The City of Eugene, working with a Citizen Advisory Committee and OBEC Consulting Engineers, have pared the options for bridge improvement down to four alternatives.

- Alternative A: No new construction. Maintain existing bridge.
 - Alternative B: Expand Ferry Street Bridge to six lanes. Build a new bridge across the Willamette River to Agate Street for buses, shuttle vehicles, pedestrians and bicycles only. Improve bridge approaches. Estimated cost — \$60 to \$65 million.
 - Alternative C: Expand Ferry Street Bridge to eight lanes. Improve bridge approaches. Estimated cost — \$55 to \$60 million.
 - Alternative D: Expand Ferry Street Bridge to six lanes. Build new four-lane bridge across the Willamette River, routing traffic onto Agate Street. Improve bridge approaches. Estimated cost — \$75 to \$80 million.
- The alternatives were developed through the Ferry Street



Photo by Jeff Paslay
The City of Eugene and a citizen committee have proposed four options to relieve traffic congestion on the Ferry Street Bridge. More than 60,000 vehicles now cross the bridge every day.

Bridge Study, commissioned by the city two years ago. The ongoing study is a response to the familiar traffic snarls along the Ferry Street Bridge corridor.

More than 60,000 vehicles cross the bridge every day. That number is expected to approach 100,000 in the next 20 years.

The heavy traffic, coupled with a large number of merges in a short distance, have made the corridor extremely accident

prone, said Eugene Transportation Planner Nathan Duke. The Seventh Street on-ramp has the highest accident rate in Eugene.

Each alternative, besides the "no-build" option, seeks to solve the problem by increasing the corridor's traffic capacity, resolving conflicts between cars and bicycles and encouraging the use of "alternative travel modes," such as walking, riding bicycles and taking the bus.

Duke said a successful solution must strike a balance between easing car travel and encouraging the use of alternative travel modes.

"We have to build some congestion into the transportation system and provide for alternative modes of travel," Duke said.

But Michael Strain, a member of the South University Neighborhood Association, said increasing the number of lanes on the Ferry Street Bridge would only encourage more people to drive.


"Even transportation engineers admit that when you build new capacity into the system, you alleviate problems in the short term, but in the long term, traffic increases," Strain said.

Duke called that concern the "Field of Dreams syndrome."

"It's like, 'If you build it, they will come,'" Duke said. "If you build a new lane, it will fill up. But in reality, people are making those trips anyway, but not on this corridor."

Proposals to build bridges

Turn to BRIDGE, Page 11



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