**DOT-- DeArmoun Phase II, Public Meeting**
**HALO/Rabbit Creek Community Council Joint Meeting**
**November 6, 2003 Holy Spirit Retreat Center**
**Highlights**

Meeting chaired by HALO President Chris Hamre. Attendance list and minutes were recorded. Meeting commenced at 7:10 with Rabbit Creek Community Council members Diane Holmes, Ky Holland, Susanne Comellas, Nancy Pease, Greg Ross and Jess Grunblatt in attendance. Approximately 50-70 were present. DOT and VEI personnel were in attendance.

Chris read an introductory note regarding the complexity of road design including the role of AMATS and other government agencies. Chris went over rules of conduct for asking questions and providing testimony.

Therese Stokes, DOT's project engineer for the DeArmoun Rd Phase 2 design spoke on how the public process for the project began in 1997. Alternatives were added as the process advanced. Since the Oct 9 public meeting DOT considered alternative designs. She stated that as a result an option to reduce the overall width was developed and the grade of the slope separations reduced. Accident and area wide speed data were compiled in a new chart that would be soon available showing the relative accidents and speeds on roads including Abbott, O'Malley, Huffman, Hillside, Birch, Rabbit Creek and the current DeArmoun Rd.

The meeting was opened to public for their comments and questions. Much time was spent on issues of speed and why DOT could not design for lower speeds. The engineer explained the 50mph was the design speed because that was the typical speed of cars on hillside irrespective of the road design. Further the 50mph design speed allows better visibility and consequent reaction times. Design elements include curvature (up/down and side to side). Width of the ROW is determined by sideslope and other uses of the ROW. Residents questioned the 50 mph road since it might encourage higher speeds. Concern for ROW impacts on adjacent properties was voiced. The engineer responded that hillside data does not support the assumption that people will drive faster with an improved road. Others in the audience suggested that road calming strategies should be considered.

Additional comments concerning ROW impact on private property were raised. The current alignment alternatives (3) call for 1 -7 houses to be removed. Designs also limit driveway access to DeArmoun for several houses and would require significant access modifications for those residents. Another design that does not require house removal is being considered but it significantly limits road improvements. Additional design work is aimed at reducing fill at the corner to allow surrounding residents driveway access to DeArmoun.

Support for the separated trails and safety considerations for children was voiced by some in the audience. Support for horses and a soft trail was also noted. Horses are forced off trails as they are paved for bikes.

Other questions raised were:
What do accident stats reveal. Answer: there are a variety of accidents some that will be affected by the design speed, other that will not be affected.
Will there be an evaluation of design vs risk of accident that contains confidence assessments? Answer: this is in the design report but does not contain risk confidence intervals.
Does the design consider future road construction and changes such as stop lights at Buffalo and DeArmoun considering higher traffic and pedestrian use from High School and what were comprehensive planning and design considerations. Answer: The design is based on the current area wide transportation plan and based on 20 projections.
How much right-of-way will be taken to accommodate the trail. Answer: Perhaps none in areas depending on slopes, the ability to use the shoulder, and trail ROW for utilities. The utilities need 15' ROW and the trail needs about 10' plus 2 feet which is part of the 5' separation from the road. Utility companies can be reluctant to share ROW but have been forced in other projects to share ROW.
Can the road designation be changed from urban collector? AMATS would have to decide on that.
What is the proper trail designation and what do multiuse or sidewalk imply (narrower, unpaved, separate, etc) and what is the Area Wide Trails Plan designation (paved or unpaved). Answer: need to review the plan and clarify language.

The close of the comment period was extended to Dec. 20, 2003.

**Summary**

Process: There will be another meeting Nov 20 however the format and goal is not clear. An additional public session after the Nov 20 meeting was suggested by DOT. No clear indication of how the public can be constructively involved has been presented other than question and answer. The agenda and goals of the Nov meetings remain unclear particularly as they relate to the presentation and consideration of alternatives or developing additional alternatives. Several additional alternatives were presented at the Nov 6 meeting that were not presented at the October meeting. The relationship of this process to the project schedule is also unclear. Funding for the project (10% State match) is in question.

Criteria: Upper DeArmoun remains configured much as the original pioneer road was put in and is one of the last major hillside roads to be redesigned. The criteria guiding the redesign is accident frequency and focuses on larger radius for the curve, grade changes, visibility, shoulders and side grading. The design is for 50mph with an expectation that it will be posted 45. Traffic studies by DOT suggest that traffic on the hillside is 50 mph regardless of design. DOT maintained they had evaluated anticipated traffic and did not see significant design considerations based on increasing traffic volume. Based on public comments/concerns, DOT should include minimizing acquisition of private property as another explicit criteria.

Context: The Trails Plan was referred to, however there is no Hillside Traffic Plan to demonstrate how this project is integrated into strategy for traffic movement/evacuation of the hillside. A Lounsbury 20 year traffic study was referred to in this design. Two trails were originally proposed to accommodate the Trails Plan. The 1998 Dowl Engineers study that has been referred to was only a concept design and not a detailed engineering study. A detailed study using the existing alignment at current engineering standards was one alternative presented Nov 6.

Alternatives: Since the Oct meeting alternatives for a variety of design elements were developed. They include:

*Alignment:* Three road alignments were shown on maps that differed primarily in their treatment of the curve. One used the largest radius curve, therefore the "safest" curve. Another example used the existing alignment and curve with modification to conform to engineering standards. A third alternative with a moderate curve was also shown although the criteria for selecting this alignment were not made clear. From comments I am guessing that it was chosen as the largest increase in curve radius that could be accomplished with the minimum taking of property. A comparison of the right of way acquisitions and private property impacts required for each option should be developed and criteria for each alternative made explicit.

*Width/Trails*: A variety of options for varying the width of the project were proposed. This included altering the sideslopes from 5:1 (recoverable slope), to 3:1 (won't roll but won't easily return); altering the shoulder width, altering the separation, number and width of trails. The impact of varying these variables on ROW acquisition was presented in table format. The narrowest project option is expected to have the least ROW impact. The October presentation provided one alternative with two trails and the maximum width "clear zone" to achieve the highest values in safety according to specific engineering standards. Public concern over ROW acquisition and alternative literature that points to safety with smaller roads emphasizes minimizing project width.

*Trails:* It was clear that at least one trail can be included in the project design with no impact on design width since it would be built on top of the utilities. Concern was raised over the surfacing of the trail. The proposed trail would only be partially paved due to slope concerns. Horse owners expressed concern that a soft trail was required for their use. DOT indicated that one trail has been dropped from consideration based on input from the community and that a RAP surface could be used that is appropriate for horses. The Trails Plan indicates two trails: multiuse (paved?) and unpaved. One interesting note (see 42 below): if ROW is acquired for utilities, it seems owners may not be compensated but they might if ROW includes the trail (need clarification).

**HALO/RCCC November 6, 2003**
**DeArmoun Road Design Phase II**
**Detailed Meeting Minutes**

1) Suspicion about speed limit. Highway manual design speed of 30mph has higher capacity than higher speed. High speeds create hazards for moose and pedestrians. Answer: Average speed of current drivers is 50mph. True that max flow rate is at 30 but 50 is better for safety (of drivers).
2) Accident frequency and severity: where, what severity. 10 year study shows 16 in 1000 feet. Causes: curve, steep lead-in, crest curve (top), sag curve at base. Curves and crests create poor sight lines. Need info on severity.
3) Citizen response: 28% of accidents on curve. 40% at intersections.
4) Vary the standards: Strawberry Rd and 15th Ave are examples where DOT varied standards to better suit neighborhoods. Quote from document that narrower lanes will reduce speeds. Dan Burran (sp?) is outside consultant with more information and will visit in Dec. Check out Strawberry Road process.
5) Show predicted reduction in accidents for various alternatives. Also the certainty. Answer: some of that is in 3R report. Comparable studies of other roads (where?).
6) How does 50mph improve safety. Speed studies from all over contradict this. Neighbors prefer slower.
7) Don't just consider car and driver safety.
8) Safer geometrics on this road will reduce accidents. Other hillside roads don't have 60mph traffic. The main safety feature in redesign is sight distance.
9) Moose collision outcome is worse at 50 than at 30mph.
10) What is correlation between design speed and actual speed. Won't a 50 mph curve encourage 55 to 60 mph. Answer: Rabbit Creek speeds (posted 45) don't exceed 60. DeArmoun studies show posted speed drop from 45 to 40 was followed by speed increase.
11) What season were design speeds (sampled). not in bad weather.
12) Palmer Hay Flats is example of wider = faster.
13) Moose kill on O'Malley - what is it and comparisons.
14) What is the context for this development. What about Birch stoplight, other connections, what are the other hillside design criteria, why is design a piecemeal process, what are the east-west traffic loads and design options. Answer: How do we improve curve and reduce condemnation. A 30 - 40 mph curve is the best that can be designed. This is about the same design as on Abbott (470' radius curve). Traffic use forecast and design plans that exist are used in planning. Lounsbury study of 20 year growth forecast was used.
15) Please give handout of the speeds and accidents map. Is curve speed really 50?
16) Disappointment that curve will be tighter than Abbott. Will there be guardrails, swales. Guardrails can be a hazard (by confining cars to slippery road and rebound to impact other traffic). Answer: clear zone is the solution but it takes more ROW width. Super-elevation (sloped clear zone) is in design.
17) Design will encourage and enable faster speed. Answer: people already drive fast. Rebuttal: try maintenance and enforcement.
18) Listen, legislators hillside wands speed control and enforcement. Neighborhood wants traffic speed reduction features. Answer: residential collector needs to move traffic. We could slow traffic down but that might divert traffic (and just transfer problems elsewhere).
19) This is a substandard section that surprises drivers who expect to go faster. Rebuttal: Community keeps saying slow it down. Reply: Empirical data compels a fast design or reclassify the road through an AMATS reclassification.
20) If road design is slower and cheaper to build, can $ be saved and go to MOA enforcement. Anwer: (No)
21) State wants to take more ROW because of reluctance to put gasline under multiuse path. Answer: On lower DeArmoun, telecom underlies the bike path. There is still time/effort possible to reduce property take. Priorities are first to meet fed/state/MOA standards. The utility companies press for wider takings but DOT tries to reduce takings.
22) What is the minimum width for road and trail? Answer: 34 foot road width, 8 foot trail w 5 foot separation from road.
23) Is pathway required for federal funding. Answer: No. AMATS approved Trails Plan.
24) Wrong to take property for utility corridor when they could tunnel under the trail. Answer: Required separation distances between utility and road. Utilities do not get reimbursed for undergrounding. Utilities need to put next 5 years of upgrades into corridor.
25) Shoulders: are they a part of the separation zone. Answer: a minimum of 2 foot shoulders.
26) Trail features: Horse riders are not served by paving. 4000 horse riders are in the Bowl. Parts are too steep to pave. Answer: the Anchorage Trails Plan calls for unpaved horse trails plus paved trail but ROW required for 2 trails was opposed by neighbors. Rebuttal: horse riders are frustrated. What can they do.
27) The Trails Plan shows an unpaved multiuse trail.(verify).

28) How much ROW for the trail at what cost. Answer: 10-12 feet with undetermined cost.
29) By coming in 5 feet on either side the affected ROW drop is 40% and this would lessen utility relocation. Retaining walls could reduce ROW width at a cost.
30) What is the term for this minimum width, unpaved trail. How narrow can we go. Answer: 8 foot minimum for 2 way cycle use with 5 foot minimum separation from the road. Any less is pedestrian only. 60% will be paved, 40% unpaved. (RAP surface can be used which is like consolidated gravel).
31) Can an unpaved path benefit the utilities? Answer: Plan is to put the utilities under paved path. It is difficult to put utilities under road or slopes because of timing of construction.
32) There are special exceptions for 2 foot separation from road to path if curb.
33) Have you studied high school traffic on feeder roads (Evergreen, 140th, Buffalo). More subdivisions off Rabbit Creek. Answer: 140th intersection has been upgraded. (I was told that traffic analysis did not indicate volume concerns).
34) This school will create pedestrian traffic. 5 foot is scarcely enough separation for a path. Answer: Path on DeArmoun to 140th is 10 foot with ?? separation.
35) Crossings? Answer: DOT rejected a crossing at 140th because traffic was spaced out.
36) Some people feel that trails are essential.
37) Has DOT done an alternative since October? Answer: Yes with a different curve of 330 feet radius as well as 3:1 slope clear zone instead of 5:1.
38) Can utilities share trail footprint (and not impact project width). Answer: trails can share trail footprint.
39) How about putting trail along Rabbit Creek instead of along road? (one needed on road)
40) If utilities need more ROW, its not accurate to say the trail is causing ROW expansion. What is ROW needed for utilities. Answer: Not set. Utilities want 15 feet (which is sufficient for trail).
41) Path seems essential for school students (discussion that students from this area won't walk to HS but might take bikes.)
42) Do utilities need a set back from the road? Answer: They can go at edge of the slope (about 15 feet from road??). DOT would acquire utility easement but not purchase the property for a corridor used only by the utilities.
43) People here criticize the design and want change. Do we have to go to AMATS? Where is AMATS chair Mike Scott. Answer: He sends regrets and was caught unaware of the meeting.
44) Mr. Traini: Did this project come to AMATS. Answer: Yes 2001. Rebuttal: But project is in flux because DOT won't give match funding to MOA. MOA could drop the priority. Where will $ come from to purchase property.
45) There is flexibility in ASHTO and DOT won't explore it. Road is to serve the community so where should the community go to be heard. Answer: Go to community council if you want to cut bike trail then to AMATS. Rebuttal: How can we be heard to get a redesign. Answer: go to AMATS. AMATS deals with scope, schedule, funding. DOT deals with geometrics. Rebuttal: DOT can use its flexibility in design. Community wants slower speed and narrower ROW.
46) Mr. Hamre: We're in a comment period now not redesign. That happens after 11-20.
47) In trying to accommodate horse users, did you get any data on level of horse use? Answer: not within the project area. Trails plan has horse use maps somewhere in background or in plan.
48) Community councils shouldn't necessarily bear the burden to resolve these issues and be burned in effigy. Especially if councils aren't given any authority.