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**Date:** March 8, 2022  
**From:** Better Eugene-Springfield Transportation  
**To:** Eugene City Council, Lane Transit District Board of Directors  
**Re:** **MovingAhead Analysis and Recommendations**

**Executive Summary**

As we testified in October 2019, BEST supports our community’s vision for *complete streets, Vision Zero, and compact urban development* to advance the triple bottom line of *people, prosperity and planet*.

Moreover, taxpayers want to see a *return on investment* to benefit the community more with limited public dollars.<sup>1, 2</sup>

As we recently explained in a guest viewpoint,<sup>3</sup> based on our updated analysis, BEST supports the staff recommendation for MovingAhead:<sup>4</sup>

Corridor	Locally Preferred Alternative
River Road	EmX
Highway 99	Enhanced Corridor
Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.	Enhanced Corridor
Coburg Road	Enhanced Corridor
30 <sup>th</sup> Avenue to LCC	No-Build

Moreover, to ensure a return on investment, we recommend the following next steps, from highest to lowest priority:

1. Prioritize the Franklin Boulevard Transformation project.
2. LTD completes a 10-year strategic business plan.
3. Build EmX along River Road—after completing a transit-oriented development plan.
4. Pursue Enhanced Corridor along Highway 99.
5. Leverage funding to enhance safety along MLK, Jr. Blvd.
6. Further study Enhanced Corridor along Coburg Road.
7. Revisit 30<sup>th</sup> Avenue to LCC.

<sup>1</sup> “Enhanced Corridor PLUS,” BEST, 10/21/19, [www.best-oregon.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/BEST-Enhanced-Corridor-PLUS-2019-10-21.pdf](http://www.best-oregon.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/BEST-Enhanced-Corridor-PLUS-2019-10-21.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> “MovingAhead Analysis and Recommendations,” BEST, 10/14/19, [www.best-oregon.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/BEST-MovingAhead-2019-10-14.pdf](http://www.best-oregon.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/BEST-MovingAhead-2019-10-14.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> “BEST, Eugene Chamber support MovingAhead,” 2/28/22, [www.best-oregon.org/2022/02/best-eugene-chamber-support-movingahead](http://www.best-oregon.org/2022/02/best-eugene-chamber-support-movingahead).

<sup>4</sup> Eugene City Council / Lane Transit District Board of Directors Joint Work Session, 2/28/22, [eugene.ompnetwork.org/embed/sessions/239109/city-council-lane-transit-district-board-joint-work-session-february-28-2022](http://eugene.ompnetwork.org/embed/sessions/239109/city-council-lane-transit-district-board-joint-work-session-february-28-2022).

Building a successful community by bringing people together to promote transportation options, safe streets, and walkable neighborhoods.

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## Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our MovingAhead analysis and recommendations.

Better Eugene-Springfield Transportation (BEST) is a privately funded, 501(c)(3) nonprofit. In 2012, BEST came together as a broad group of community leaders to support the Eugene City Council in approving the planned West Eugene EmX project.<sup>5</sup> Today, BEST is building a successful community by bringing people together to promote transportation options, safe streets, and walkable neighborhoods.

BEST appreciates the work the MovingAhead team has done to identify investment opportunities, to cull these down to just the five most promising corridors, to prepare an *Alternatives Analysis Report* to objectively identify the costs and benefits of different options,<sup>6</sup> and now to recommend a locally preferred alternative for each corridor.

## Analysis

As we concluded in October 2019, there is broad community support for *complete streets* that enable people to walk, bicycle, or use a mobility device in *safety*; to access *frequent and useful transit*; or to drive. Such complete streets support Eugene's vision for *compact urban development*. To varying degrees, members of the community see that such better transportation is good for the triple bottom line of *people, prosperity and the planet*.

Moreover, taxpayers want to see a *return on investment* to benefit the community more with limited public dollars.<sup>7, 8</sup>

We want to emphasize two key and related aspects of this shared community vision:

- **Safety before speed:** We want everyone to be able to get where they are going reasonably *quickly*. But it is even more important that everyone gets there *safely*. Wide corridors such as River Road are currently *dangerous by design*, favoring fast motor vehicles over people walking, biking, or using mobility devices in *safety*.<sup>9</sup> MovingAhead is aimed at transforming corridors into *complete streets* for everyone.<sup>10</sup>
- **Streets as places:** We need some *through routes* designed for motor vehicles to get quickly from Point A to Point B. For example, the Northwest Expressway functions well as a through route because there are few places along it to stop. We also need

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<sup>5</sup> "Rabid Transit: The drive toward West 11th EmX heats up," *Eugene Weekly*, 9/13/12, [eugeneweekly.com/2012/09/13/rabid-transit](http://eugeneweekly.com/2012/09/13/rabid-transit).

<sup>6</sup> *Alternatives Analysis Report*, MovingAhead, Sept. 2018 [www.movingahead.org/alternatives-analysis-report](http://www.movingahead.org/alternatives-analysis-report).

<sup>7</sup> Before his untimely passing, Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce president Dave Hauser at an EmX Steering Committee meeting asked about the *return on investment* of MovingAhead alternatives.

<sup>8</sup> See also "If You're Planning to Invest in Infrastructure, You Need to Understand These 3 Concepts," Strong Towns, 3/25/13, [www.strongtowns.org/journal/2013/3/25/three-core-understandings.html](http://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2013/3/25/three-core-understandings.html).

<sup>9</sup> "Dangerous by Design 2021," Smart Growth America, [smartgrowthamerica.org/dangerous-by-design](http://smartgrowthamerica.org/dangerous-by-design).

<sup>10</sup> "What are complete Streets?" Smart Growth America, [smartgrowthamerica.org/program/national-complete-streets-coalition/publications/what-are-complete-streets](http://smartgrowthamerica.org/program/national-complete-streets-coalition/publications/what-are-complete-streets).

*places* where people live, work, shop, learn, and play. MovingAhead is aimed at transforming corridors into places that drive our local economy.<sup>11, 12, 13</sup>

Since October 2019, relevant changes include the following:

- **COVID-19 and travel patterns:** Hitting in early 2020, the pandemic prompted social distancing, telecommuting, and more for physical activity outdoors. As a result, travel patterns have changed, with bus ridership down and walking and biking up.<sup>14, 15, 16</sup>
- **War and gas prices:** Today in Oregon, the average price of a regular gallon of gasoline is \$4.59, up from \$3.02 just a year ago.<sup>17</sup>
- **Wildfires and climate change:** In September 2020, the series of wildfires along the west coast underscored that climate change is happening here and now.<sup>18</sup>
- **Middle Housing:** Passed in June 2019, House Bill 2001 requires the City of Eugene to provide for middle housing.<sup>19</sup>
- **Transit Tomorrow:** With the pandemic, LTD dropped its operations analysis.<sup>20</sup>
- **LTD 3-Year Strategic Business Plan:** In July 2021, LTD adopted a plan that is more of a short-term look at operations than a medium-term schedule of investments.<sup>21</sup>
- **MovingAhead Packages:** Before, staff presented different combinations of investments as packages; today, each corridor is being considered in isolation.

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<sup>11</sup> According to Charles Marohn: “Roads and streets are two different things.

“**Streets:** The function of a street is to serve as a platform for building wealth. On a street, we’re attempting to grow the complex ecosystem that produces community wealth. In these environments, people (outside of their automobiles) are the indicator species of success. Successful streets are environments where humans, and human interaction, flourish.

“**Roads:** In contrast, the function of a road is to connect productive places. You can think of a road as a refinement of the railroad—a road on rails—where people board in one place, depart in another and there is a high speed connection between the two.

“**Stroads:** Stroads are a mash-up of these two types of paths. We like to call them ‘the futon of transportation’ because, just as a futon is neither a particularly good bed nor a particularly good couch, a stroad is neither a particularly good road or a particularly good street.

“Besides being a very dangerous environment (yes, it is ridiculously dangerous to mix high-speed, highway design geometry with pedestrians, bikers and turning traffic), they are enormously expensive to build and, ultimately, financially unproductive.”

“The Stroad,” Strong Towns, 10/30/17, [www.strongtowns.org/journal/2017/10/30/the-stroad](http://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2017/10/30/the-stroad).

<sup>12</sup> See also “What’s a Stroad and Why Does It Matter?” Strong Towns, 3/2/18, [www.strongtowns.org/journal/2018/3/1/whats-a-stroad-and-why-does-it-matter](http://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2018/3/1/whats-a-stroad-and-why-does-it-matter).

<sup>13</sup> See also “Not Just Bikes: ‘The stroads to hell are paved with good intentions,’” Strong Towns, 4/27/21, [www.strongtowns.org/journal/2021/4/26/not-just-bikes-the-stroads-to-hell-are-paved-with-good-intentions](http://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2021/4/26/not-just-bikes-the-stroads-to-hell-are-paved-with-good-intentions).

<sup>14</sup> See “COVID-19 Impacts on Future Transportation: Anticipated Changes in Long Range Travel Forecasts,” ODOT, 3/8/21, [www.oregon.gov/odot/Planning/Documents/TrafficForecastsPost.pdf](http://www.oregon.gov/odot/Planning/Documents/TrafficForecastsPost.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> See also “COVID-19 Traffic Reports,” ODOT, [www.oregon.gov/odot/Data/Pages/Traffic-Counting.aspx](http://www.oregon.gov/odot/Data/Pages/Traffic-Counting.aspx).

<sup>16</sup> See also “COVID-19 Resources,” ODOT Public Transportation Division, [www.oregon.gov/odot/RPTD/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx](http://www.oregon.gov/odot/RPTD/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx).

<sup>17</sup> “Oregon Average Gas Prices,” AAA, [gasprices.aaa.com/?state=OR](http://gasprices.aaa.com/?state=OR).

<sup>18</sup> See “Climate crisis ‘a hammer hitting us in the head,’ says Oregon governor as wildfires rage,” The Guardian, 7/25/21, [www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/jul/25/wildfires-california-oregon-west](http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/jul/25/wildfires-california-oregon-west).

<sup>19</sup> “HB 2001: Middle Housing Code Changes,” City of Eugene, [www.eugene-or.gov/4244/Middle-Housing](http://www.eugene-or.gov/4244/Middle-Housing).

<sup>20</sup> LTD’s “Transit Tomorrow” webpage has been removed, [www.ltd.org/transit-tomorrow](http://www.ltd.org/transit-tomorrow).

<sup>21</sup> “Strategic Business Plan,” LTD, [www.ltd.org/strategic-business-plan](http://www.ltd.org/strategic-business-plan).

- **IJA:** In November 2021, Congress passed and President Biden signed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, creating a short-term opportunity for increased federal investments.<sup>22</sup>
- **DeFazio:** Our congressman, who has been the chair of the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee, announced he will be retiring at the end of this year.<sup>23</sup>

The IJA and DeFazio's imminent departure argue for adopting MovingAhead now to be eligible for federal funding when available. War and wildfires argue for taking immediate action to shift from more expensive fossil fuels to lower-carbon forms of transportation, like walking, biking, and riding the bus.

But with COVID-19 and the lack of a Transit Tomorrow plan making future transit service needs less clear, and without a medium-term strategic plan nor a clear understanding of how multiple investments in EmX might interact with each other, it makes even more sense to pursue the more incremental "Enhanced Corridor *PLUS*" approach we advocated.

## Recommendations

To advance the shared community vision for better transportation, BEST recommends approving the staff recommendations for MovingAhead:

Corridor	Locally Preferred Alternative
River Road	EmX
Highway 99	Enhanced Corridor
Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.	Enhanced Corridor
Coburg Road	Enhanced Corridor <i>[requiring additional study and community engagement]</i>
30 <sup>th</sup> Avenue to LCC	No-Build <i>[reconsider this corridor after other agency studies and projects are completed]</i>

Moreover, to ensure a return on investment, we recommend the following next steps, from highest to lowest priority:

1. **Prioritize the Franklin Boulevard Transformation project** and seek funding to make needed improvements as soon as possible to enable more frequent transit service, create a complete street, and support new development around the UO.<sup>24</sup>
2. **LTD completes a 10-year strategic business plan**, before pursuing major transit investments in any of the MovingAhead corridors. The plan should articulate the outcomes the community desires, select strategies for achieving those outcomes,

<sup>22</sup> "Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act 2021," ODOT, [www.oregon.gov/odot/Pages/IJA.aspx](http://www.oregon.gov/odot/Pages/IJA.aspx).

<sup>23</sup> "Congressman Peter DeFazio Announces He Will Not Seek Re-Election," 12/1/21, [defazio.house.gov/defazio-to-retire](http://defazio.house.gov/defazio-to-retire).

<sup>24</sup> "Franklin Boulevard Transformation," City of Eugene, [www.eugene-or.gov/3830/Franklin-Boulevard-Transformation](http://www.eugene-or.gov/3830/Franklin-Boulevard-Transformation).

provide a timeline of actions to implement those strategies, and provide a funding plan to ensure there are sufficient resources.<sup>25</sup>

Such a 10-year strategic business plan should include these elements:

- a. By Spring 2023, complete a comprehensive operations analysis (COA). As part of this study, look specifically at the implications of adding EmX to River Road for the operation of the overall EmX and transit network.
- b. A year after the COA has been implemented, assess changes in ridership and community demand for more service—both longer hours and more places. Determine how much more operating funding, if any, would be needed to provide the community with the transit service it needs.
- c. Include a 10-year Community Investment Plan.<sup>26</sup>
- d. Develop a long-term transit financial stability plan that identifies a needed level of financial reserves to ensure LTD can guarantee the community some minimum core service during up and down business cycles.
- e. Develop a climate change policy to guide efforts to increase transit service and ridership in line with local plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transportation.<sup>27, 28, 29</sup>
- f. With the cities of Eugene and Springfield, develop a right-of-way protection policy to protect existing right-of-way for desired future improvements and to limit adjacent development that could make the cost of acquiring additional right-of-way prohibitive.<sup>30</sup>
- g. Develop a major improvements policy to guide when major transit investments are warranted.<sup>31</sup>
- h. Develop a policy to guide when, if ever, it would make sense to divert transit funding from service to major investments.
- i. Develop a policy that prior to committing to a major transit investment along a corridor, first design the *place* the community wants the corridor to become. Work with the host city to develop a transit-oriented development plan that

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<sup>25</sup> Since March 2016, LTD has recognized the need to develop a 10-year strategic business plan.

<sup>26</sup> “Community Investment Plan,” LTD, [www.ltd.org/cip](http://www.ltd.org/cip).

<sup>27</sup> For example, see the *Central Lane Scenario Plan*, LCOG, June 2015, [www.lcog.org/367/Central-Lane-Scenario-Planning](http://www.lcog.org/367/Central-Lane-Scenario-Planning).

<sup>28</sup> For example, see “Climate Recovery Ordinance and Climate Action Plan 2.0,” City of Eugene, [www.eugene-or.gov/3210/Climate-Recovery-Ordinance](http://www.eugene-or.gov/3210/Climate-Recovery-Ordinance).

<sup>29</sup> For example, see “Greenhouse Gas Inventory Results FY12–18,” LTD, available in the board packet, 9/16/19, [www.ltd.org/file\\_viewer.php?id=3909](http://www.ltd.org/file_viewer.php?id=3909).

<sup>30</sup> As part of its work, the West Eugene Collaborative called on the Eugene City Council and the Eugene Planning Commission to change setback requirements in order to preserve potential right-of-way for future improvements. See “Building setback standards along West 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue,” Larry Reed & Rob Zako, 10/15/08, [www.best-oregon.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/WEC-ECC-Setbacks-20081015.pdf](http://www.best-oregon.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/WEC-ECC-Setbacks-20081015.pdf).

<sup>31</sup> “It is the policy of the State of Oregon to maintain highway performance and improve safety by improving system efficiency and management before adding capacity. ...” See Policy 1G: Major Improvements, 1999 *Oregon Highway Plan*, ODOT, [www.oregon.gov/ODOT/Planning/Pages/Plans.aspx](http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/Planning/Pages/Plans.aspx).



focuses on the experiences of people using the corridor and that identifies land use changes along the corridor and connectivity improvements in the surrounding neighborhood.<sup>32, 33, 34</sup>

3. **Build EmX along River Road:** As part of the River Road Corridor Study,<sup>35, 36</sup> a transit-oriented development plan that is part of the larger River Road - Santa Clara Neighborhood Plan,<sup>37</sup> decide locations for and land use changes around EmX stations along River Road. Only after this work is completed, build EmX along River Road.
4. **Pursue Enhanced Corridor along Highway 99:** Convene transportation disadvantaged people especially living in the Bethel area to learn what transportation service or infrastructure improvements—or other changes—would do the most as soon as possible to improve their options for getting where they need to go. Assess land uses and potential ridership in the Bethel / Danebo area. Then pursue Enhanced Corridor along Highway 99.
5. **Leverage funding to enhance safety along Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.:** Seek federal funding to leverage state All Roads Transportation Safety funding<sup>38</sup> to improve safety along this corridor.
6. **Study Enhanced Corridor along Coburg Road:** Convene a select task force of key property / business owners and other stakeholders to assess whether the business-as-usual scenario of no major improvements and growing traffic congestion along Coburg Road is acceptable, or which targeted Enhanced Corridor investments make sense.
7. **Revisit 30<sup>th</sup> Avenue to LCC:** After Lane County completes its East 30<sup>th</sup> Avenue Active Transportation Plan,<sup>39</sup> and after LTD has completed a comprehensive operations analysis to determine service in south Eugene along Willamette, Oak / Pearl / Amazon, and Patterson / Hilyard, revisit needs to invest in this corridor.

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<sup>32</sup> For example, see “Streets as Places Toolkit,” Project for Public Spaces, 9/15/15, [www.pps.org/article/streets-as-places](http://www.pps.org/article/streets-as-places).

<sup>33</sup> See also “Designing Street for People,” Transportation Alternatives, 10/23/18, [medium.com/vision-zero-cities-journal/designing-streets-for-people-13b8078abd07](https://medium.com/vision-zero-cities-journal/designing-streets-for-people-13b8078abd07).

<sup>34</sup> In Spring 2019, UO Prof. Yizhao Yang’s GIS class conducted a detailed block-by-block analysis of Gateway EmX, finding the transit service to be excellent. But their data suggests there have not been sufficient changes to the pedestrian environment to connect people in surrounding neighborhoods to that service.

<sup>35</sup> “River Road Corridor Study,” City of Eugene, [www.eugene-or.gov/4110/Corridor-Study](http://www.eugene-or.gov/4110/Corridor-Study).

<sup>36</sup> Note that LTD partnered with the UO on three student projects: “River Road Corridor Transportation Hubs,” “Re-imagining River Road for Ecological Equity,” and “River Road Station Site.” See “Sustainable City Year Program: LTD,” [sci.uoregon.edu/sustainable-city-year-program-lane-transit-district](http://sci.uoregon.edu/sustainable-city-year-program-lane-transit-district).

<sup>37</sup> “River Road - Santa Clara Neighborhood Plan,” City of Eugene, [www.eugene-or.gov/3558/River-Road---Santa-Clara-Neighborhood-Pl](http://www.eugene-or.gov/3558/River-Road---Santa-Clara-Neighborhood-Pl).

<sup>38</sup> “All Roads Transportation Safety Program,” ODOT, [www.oregon.gov/odot/engineering/pages/arts.aspx](http://www.oregon.gov/odot/engineering/pages/arts.aspx).

<sup>39</sup> “30<sup>th</sup> Avenue Active Transportation Plan,” Lane County, [lanecounty.org/30thavenue](http://lanecounty.org/30thavenue).