

July 16, 2024

To: Joint Committee On Transportation

From: Brad Dennis

Dear Chairs, Co-Vice Chairs and members:

I live in the City of Albany in the North Albany area of Benton County, along with 7000 other registered voters and their families. A couple of years ago, the Oregon legislature passed HB2001 (also known as middle housing) so that developers could quadruple the number of housing units that they could build on a single lot. The impact in North Albany is now being felt. While we voted to annex to the City of Albany in 1991, with the promise of 10,000 sq ft housing lots, the ability to manage our own growth has been stripped away by the legislature.

Most of the residents of North Albany exit their neighborhoods on North Albany Road, Springhill Road and Scenic Drive. All three of these roads impact Hwy 20. North Albany Road and Springhill Road have traffic signals at the intersection with Hwy 20 while Scenic Road does not. There is an ODOT web cam at Springhill Road at Hwy 20 that shows the heavy traffic during peak times. And this is before 500-1000 more cars are added, thanks to the middle housing law.

For 30 years, I've heard talk about adding another bridge over the Willamette. I'm guessing that neither of the two existing bridges would survive the Cascadia earthquake that is predicted. A third bridge could be built to stand up to this earthquake. Accidents and the traffic backups make it difficult or impossible for emergency vehicles to get through. How many cars from North Albany are driving through downtown Albany in order to get to I5? ODOT built a bypass to avoid the downtown Corvallis area about 30 years ago. We need something similar for Albany. I suggest a Hwy 20 bypass starting at Scenic Road, following the path of the railroad tracks and crossing the Willamette River adjacent to the railroad bridge to continue to I5 via 2nd street. This would allow traffic coming from Corvallis, Philomath and the coast to bypass the downtown.

Currently, traffic heading to I5 by heading south across the Ellsworth Bridge often turns left on 2nd avenue. For a short-term solution, please get rid of the parking spaces on Ellsworth, between 1st and 2nd, and make this a dedicated left-turn lane.

And then to avoid left turners from immediately getting a red light at 2nd and Lyon Street, please time that signal so that traffic can flow through easily.

Traffic coming from downtown and traveling across the Lyon Street bridge often turns right at North Albany Road. There is a right-turn lane that is too short, at about 250 ft. This turn lane needs to be extended for the entire length of the self-storage frontage, to the sign that says "Welcome to Benton County". As it currently stands, I have seen right turning traffic back up so that the right travel lane, heading west, on Hwy 20 is blocked. When you turn onto North Albany Road, the road is too narrow – only 1 travel lane. North Albany Road needs to have 2 travel lanes heading north away from Hwy 20. This would allow for right turning traffic to always be free to turn right onto North Albany Road with a continuous green signal. Currently, the right-turn signal turns red so that oncoming traffic, coming from Corvallis, can turn left onto North Albany Road. If the road had two northbound travel lanes, one lane would serve the left turners and the boat ramp traffic and the other lane would serve the right-turners coming from downtown. The two lanes would merge just before Hickory.

The third area of concern is the intersection at Scenic Drive. This is a challenging and dangerous intersection due to the convergence of Kouns Drive, Scenic Drive, West Thornton Lake Drive, the railroad tracks and Hwy 20. With the large population in North Albany, which will be made much worse by middle housing, people use Scenic Drive to get to Hwy 20 on their way to Corvallis. In the morning, I have often seen traffic backed up on Scenic Drive as far as you can see. I believe that a traffic signal at the intersection of Hwy 20 and Scenic Drive will be necessary – and soon!

These are my thoughts.

Sincerely,

Brad Dennis

North Albany