



Final Memorandum #2: Goals, Objectives and Evaluation Criteria

Critical Link Project Refinement
La Grande, Oregon

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1 Introduction

This memorandum describes the goals, objectives and evaluation criteria for the La Grande Critical Link Project. The document begins with a description of the goals and supporting objectives guiding the overall planning effort. A discussion of the project evaluation criteria follows, including the multi-step process that will be used to determine a Preferred Critical Link Alignment and its conceptual design elements.

2 Goals and Objectives

The following goals and objectives serve as guiding principles for this planning effort. While establishing overall guidance, the goals and objectives will also inform the development of the Critical Link's alignment alternatives and subsequent concept design options. The goals and objectives also directly informed the criteria (described later) against which the alternatives will be evaluated. The five project goals, and supporting objectives, include the following:

Goal 1: Expand transportation options and access to opportunities.

Objectives:

- Promote solutions that encourage walking, bicycling, transit and other sustainable travel modes to meet the daily needs of study area residents, students and visitors.
- Promote a comfortable and safe travel environment for people of all ages and abilities, especially vulnerable roadway users such as people walking, bicycling, accessing transit, youth, seniors and people with disabilities.
- Enhance mobility and accessibility, with particular emphasis on improving conditions for historically underserved or marginalized communities.
- Prioritize solutions emphasizing multimodal safety.

Goal 2: Strengthen active transportation linkages between Eastern Oregon University (EOU), surrounding neighborhoods and Downtown La Grande.

Objectives:

- Establish a low-stress walking and bicycling route seamlessly linking Eastern Oregon University with neighborhoods to the north and south, while also providing regional connectivity throughout La Grande.
- Develop a project meeting functional transportation needs while encouraging visitation to the EOU campus.
- Leverage the study area's existing walkway and bikeway network, including EOU's campus pathway system and the surrounding neighborhood street network.

- Develop creative solutions to overcome active transportation connectivity barriers such as major street crossings, steep hillsides and physically constrained areas.

Goal 3: Build upon recent, ongoing and upcoming public realm investments.

Objectives:

- Incorporate projects (or project elements) identified in previous publicly-vetted planning efforts such as La Grande's Pedestrian/Bicycle Improvement Plan, La Grande Safe Routes to School Plan, and EOU Master Plan.
- Investigate the feasibility of augmenting upcoming City street improvements to increase their viability as potential Critical Link alignment options.
- Strengthen active transportation linkages to new development and redevelopment sites such as EOU's Field House and the growing business community on Adams Avenue.
- Explore opportunities to incorporate the forthcoming Grand Staircase improvements as an element of the Critical Link project, and/or as a distinct destination of its own.

Goal 4: Apply context sensitive approaches respecting the study area's unique character.

Objectives:

- Minimize visual interruptions to EOU's established viewshed corridors, as well as views of (and from) the Grand Staircase, historic buildings and other assets.
- Establish a consistent design theme providing visual cues of the Critical Link's route, while visually tying into the surrounding landscape.
- Utilize creative design approaches to minimize user conflicts and clarify intended pathway uses (e.g., shared bicycle/pedestrian segments, bifurcated segments)
- Improve access, while minimizing adverse impacts, to natural, cultural, historical and other resources.

Goal 5: Leverage the strong partnerships between the City, EOU and other project partners and position this project for timely implementation.

Objectives:

- Develop a cost effective, fundable and implementable plan through a balance of aspirational yet practical solutions.
- Consider Federal, State, regional and local funding opportunities, and associated requirements, when developing Critical Link alignment and concept design elements.
- Consider ongoing maintenance and associated labor and cost commitments.
- Consider a phased implementation approach, with clearly defined responsibilities for participating agencies, to maintain momentum while demonstrating a commitment to complete the proposed Critical Link project improvements.

3 Evaluation Criteria

Working with the Steering Committee, stakeholders and broader community, the Project Team will develop Critical Link alignment alternatives with the primary aim of improving pedestrian/bicycle connectivity between EOU and destinations to the north and south. Guided by the Project's goals and objectives, the Team will apply a two-stage evaluation process to determine a single preferred alignment and its conceptual design features. This process consists of the following:

1. The Project Team will evaluate the alignment alternatives with a set of **preliminary evaluation criteria**. This qualitative “scorecard” exercise will narrow the initial universe of options to a single Preferred Alignment. This initial step enables subsequent concept design work to focus on the most viable alignment for the Critical Link corridor. The preliminary evaluation criteria include the following:
 - Level of comfort for people walking (particularly minimizing conflicts with motor vehicle traffic)
 - Level of comfort for people bicycling (particularly minimizing conflicts with motor vehicle traffic)
 - Route directness (between the study area’s northern and southern ends)
 - Connectivity/proximity to the heart of EOU campus
 - Connectivity/proximity to historical/cultural/interpretive opportunities.
 - Potential to leverage or incorporate previously-identified and/or pending/funded improvements
 - Grades (climbing or descending)
 - Ability to directly serve historically-marginalized communities
 - Potential environmental resource impacts (e.g., wetlands, waterways, steep slopes, mature trees)
 - Potential eligibility for Oregon Community Paths Program construction funding
 - Community, stakeholder and Steering Committee support (based on input received at community events and Steering Committee meetings)
2. Upon confirming the Critical Link’s Preferred Alignment, the Project Team will develop conceptual design options for the alignment. Sample options may include shared use paths, bifurcated paths (e.g., adjacent bicycle-only and pedestrian-only paths), on-street treatments, and intersection improvements. These options will be presented in the form of cross-sections and intersection renderings, with the ultimate goal of solidifying design assumptions to be applied corridor-wide. The Team will evaluate the concept options with a set of **secondary evaluation criteria**. This evaluation will be quantitative or qualitative depending on the criterion under focus and availability of information to support the evaluation. The secondary evaluation criteria include the following:

- Ability to minimize conflicts between Critical Link pathway users (e.g., people walking versus people bicycling)
- Potential bicycle/pedestrian conflicts with other travel modes (e.g., motor vehicle traffic on streets/internal campus access roads/parking lots)
- Potential visual impacts (e.g., impacts on open spaces, EOU's defined viewshed corridors)
- Potential private property impacts
- On- and/or off-street parking impacts (net gain or loss in supply)
- Built environment impacts (e.g., impacts to existing building accesses, courtyards, plazas, quads, sports fields)
- Potential implementation cost
- Magnitude and complexity of ongoing maintenance needs
- Community, stakeholder and Steering Committee support (based on input received at community events and Steering Committee meetings)