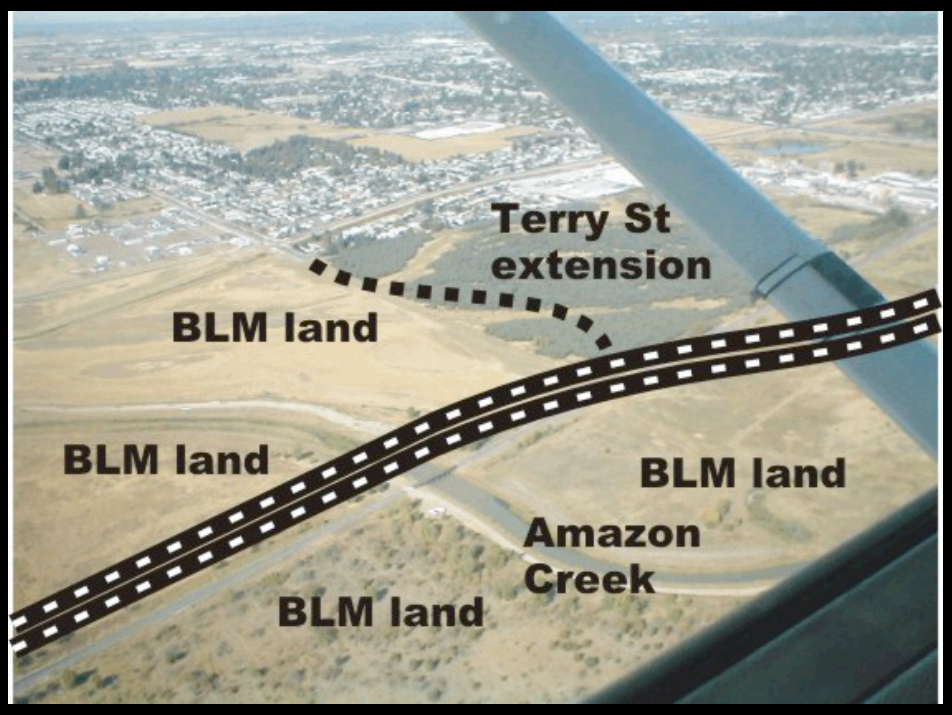
WETLANDS

West Eugene Transportation, Land and Neighborhood Design Solutions

www.permatopia.com/wetlands.html



Hidden History
Sensible Solutions

This slideshow was first presented at a public event on June 15, 2006. Comments, constructive criticism and suggestions are welcome by email at wetlands at permatopia dot com.

WETLANDS is an effort to document how the alternative to the WEP could be implemented and how it outperforms the proposed “parkway.” This slideshow highlights key facts that have been kept hidden during most of the rancorous public debates and hopefully will contribute to greater understanding of the reasons why the WEP will not be built.

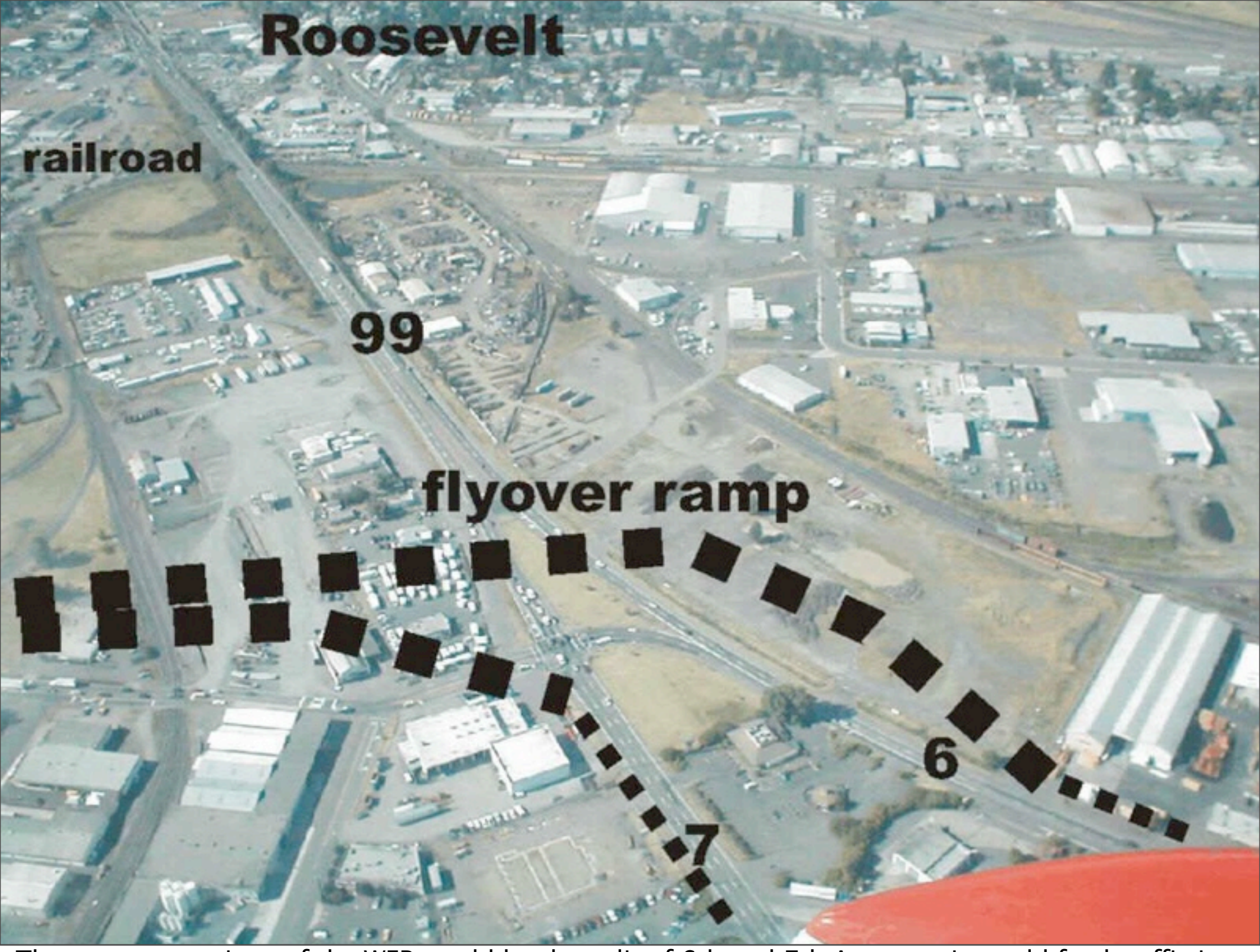
The photo on the left is Bertelsen Slough (one of the natural areas threatened by the highway) and on the right is an aerial photo of part of the Bureau of Land Management’s west Eugene wetlands complex.

There is a lot more detail about these issues at the WETLANDS website - this slideshow is a summary of the key points.

Virtual Tour

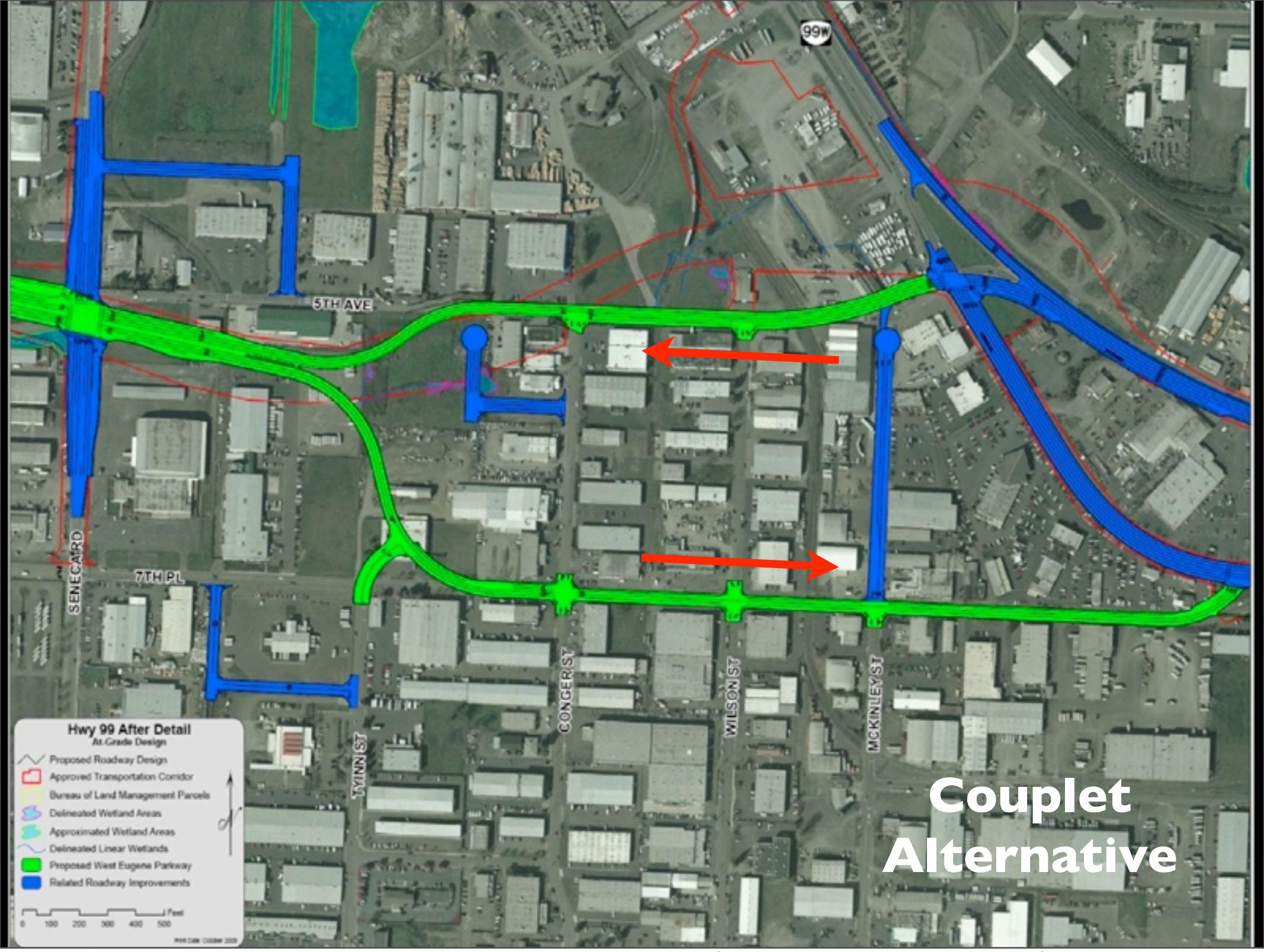
West Eugene Parkway

"Wrong of Way"



The eastern terminus of the WEP would be the split of 6th and 7th Avenues, it would feed traffic into Highway 99 in the direction of downtown Eugene (it would not facilitate traffic movements toward northbound Highway 99).

In the early part of the WEP Environmental Impact Statement (1985 to 1990), westbound WEP traffic would have had a traffic light across 7th before getting onto the WEP. This proposal was dropped because the traffic analyses that the Oregon Department of Transportation conducted found that this WEP / 7th Avenue intersection would be overloaded. ODOT decided to build a “flyover ramp” for traffic entering westbound WEP from north/west bound 6th. No access is planned from southeast bound 99 to the WEP.



In October 2005, ODOT quietly unveiled a new proposal for the easternmost part of the parkway. The Parkway's cost has continued to increase as ODOT has include more of the components into the price tag. This "Couplet Alternative" removed the proposed flyover ramps at Highway 99 (bridges are more expensive than traffic lights). This "Couplet Alternative" is similar to a version rejected by ODOT in 1986. ODOT officials have been unwilling or unable to explain how expressway traffic could be accommodated on the local roads 5th and 7th Place, which are not high capacity streets.

The red outlined area shows where the footprint would be for the flyover ramp.

ODOT's desire to cut costs may backfire on their plans. Many of the businesses along 7th Place need street access for delivery trucks and customers. Converting this road into the WEP would interfere with their activities, and probably would require as much condemnation of businesses as the previous WEP route with the flyover ramps.

While a temporary couplet using 5th and 7th has been planned during WEP phasing, the October 2005 proposal would make the completed highway permanently use these local streets as the most congested part of the route. Currently, 7th Place has three stop signs, which is not the design most people envision for a new expressway.

5th & Seneca
needs a traffic light
not a new expressway

Moving further west, the existing intersection at 5th and Seneca needs a traffic light, not the WEP. Currently, traffic backs up at this location because the three-way stop sign is inadequate. City officials have admitted that a traffic light would reduce this congestion from Level of Service F to Level of Service A during rush hour. However, the City is refusing to install a light until this intersection is converted to the WEP -- which allows the problem to fester year after year. The WEP would not allow left turn movements from the WEP onto Seneca, another example of this highway's strange and contorted design.

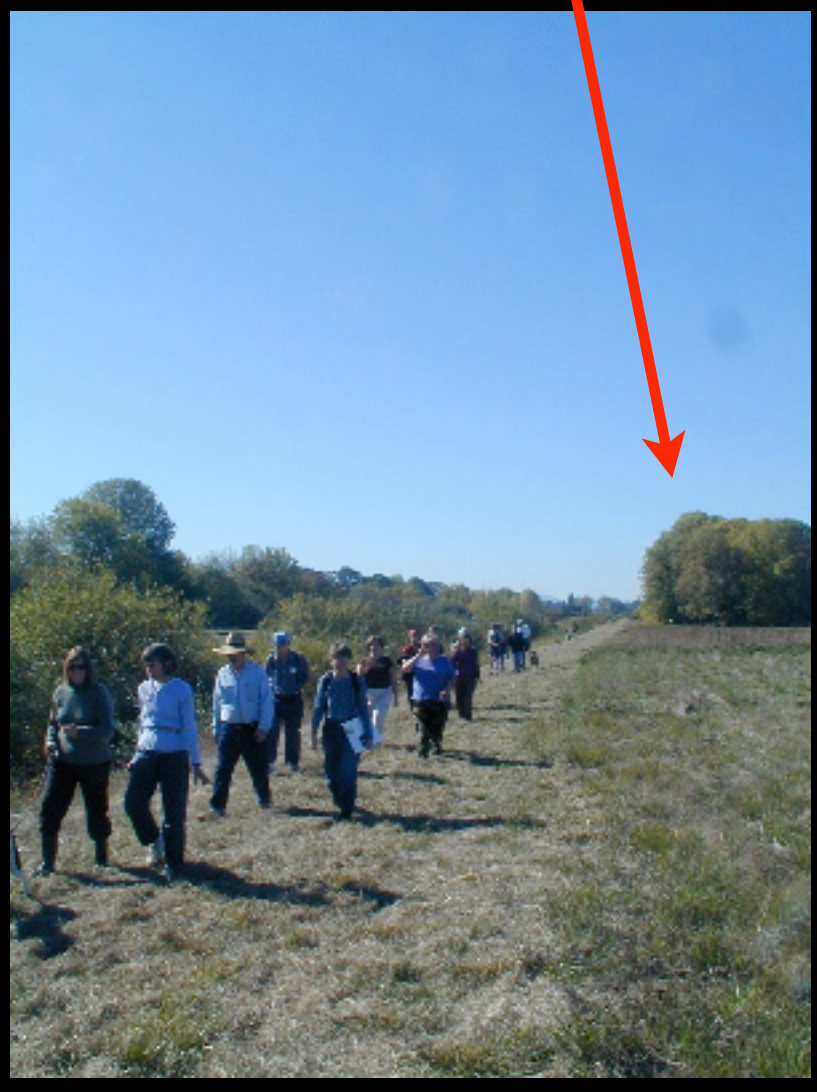
City owned WEP reservations need to be transfered to BLM West Eugene Wetlands

Motorists traveling from downtown to make a left turn at Seneca would have to drive past Seneca and exit at Bailey Hill Road extended and then double back along 7th Place.
The City owns two parcels for the “park” way -- one is a forested wetland at the proposed Bailey Hill / WEP intersection.

Bailey Hill would be widened extended to WEP

Bailey Hill Road would be widened and extended to become a major feeder road for the WEP. Fifth Street would also be extended to connect Bailey Hill to Wallis Street, since Wallis would be severed by the WEP, cutting off access to existing businesses.

City owned
WEP land



The Bertelsen (or A-3) tributary of Amazon Creek is one of the most polluted in the Eugene area. When the WEP is canceled, the best use for the public lands purchased for the porkway would be buffer from nearby industrial pollution. The City and ODOT properties would be excellent demonstration sites for bio-remediation of toxic runoff. Wetland plants can help break down some types of toxins and improve water quality. The US Army is funding research on mycroremediation - using mushrooms for detoxification. This would not be a substitute for shifting to non-toxic practices, but for existing problems, the West Eugene Wetlands could be a national model in cooperation with the University of Oregon and Oregon State University for how businesses can work with nature, instead of against it.

Bertelsen Nature Park
south of WEP route
looking east

Bertelsen Nature Park is part of the West Eugene Wetlands, the largest natural area inside the Eugene – Springfield Urban Growth Boundary.

The WEP would clearcut the forest paralleling Bertelsen Tributary of Amazon. There is a lot of public concern about protecting the Amazon Headwaters from suburbanization, but the downstream parts also needs protection.

Bertelsen Slough

owned by ODOT

needs to be transfered to BLM

Bertelsen Slough is currently “owned” by ODOT. When Bertelsen Slough is transfered from ODOT to the BLM, then the WEP can be considered to be canceled. (The WEP would slice through the forest north of the slough, on the left of this photo.)

Beltline Interchange

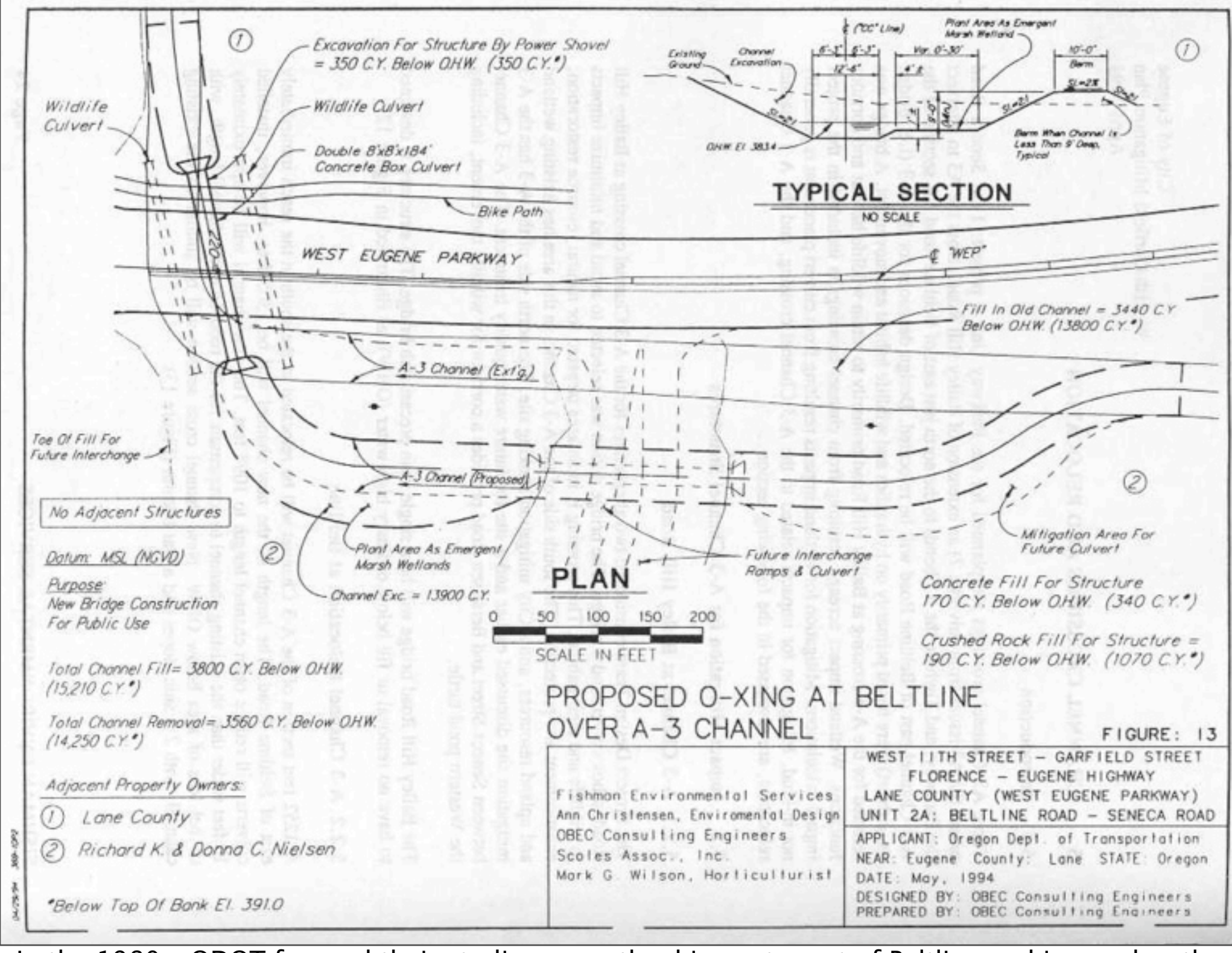
The largest structure on the WEP would be a partial cloverleaf interchange with Beltline highway, with ramps in the northwest and southeast quadrants. The WEP would have two traffic lights (one on either side of Beltline) for traffic going to and from the ramps. No lights would be added to Beltline, but the conversion of the WEP / Beltline traffic light controlled intersection (to be built in the first phase) to a grade separated interchange would be complicated and expensive, especially due to the nearby railroad overpass.

One of the primary reasons the cost of WEP is more than the $88 million price tag used to sell the road for many years is that $88 million cost never included the interchange.

The interchange would be in seasonal wetland that is the historic floodplain of Amazon creek. Amazon got its name because in the wintertime it formerly had a very wide area of flow. This wetland is mostly dry in the summertime, but during the peak rain events of the winter it is a critical part of the regional hydrology.

A close-up view of the proposed interchange.

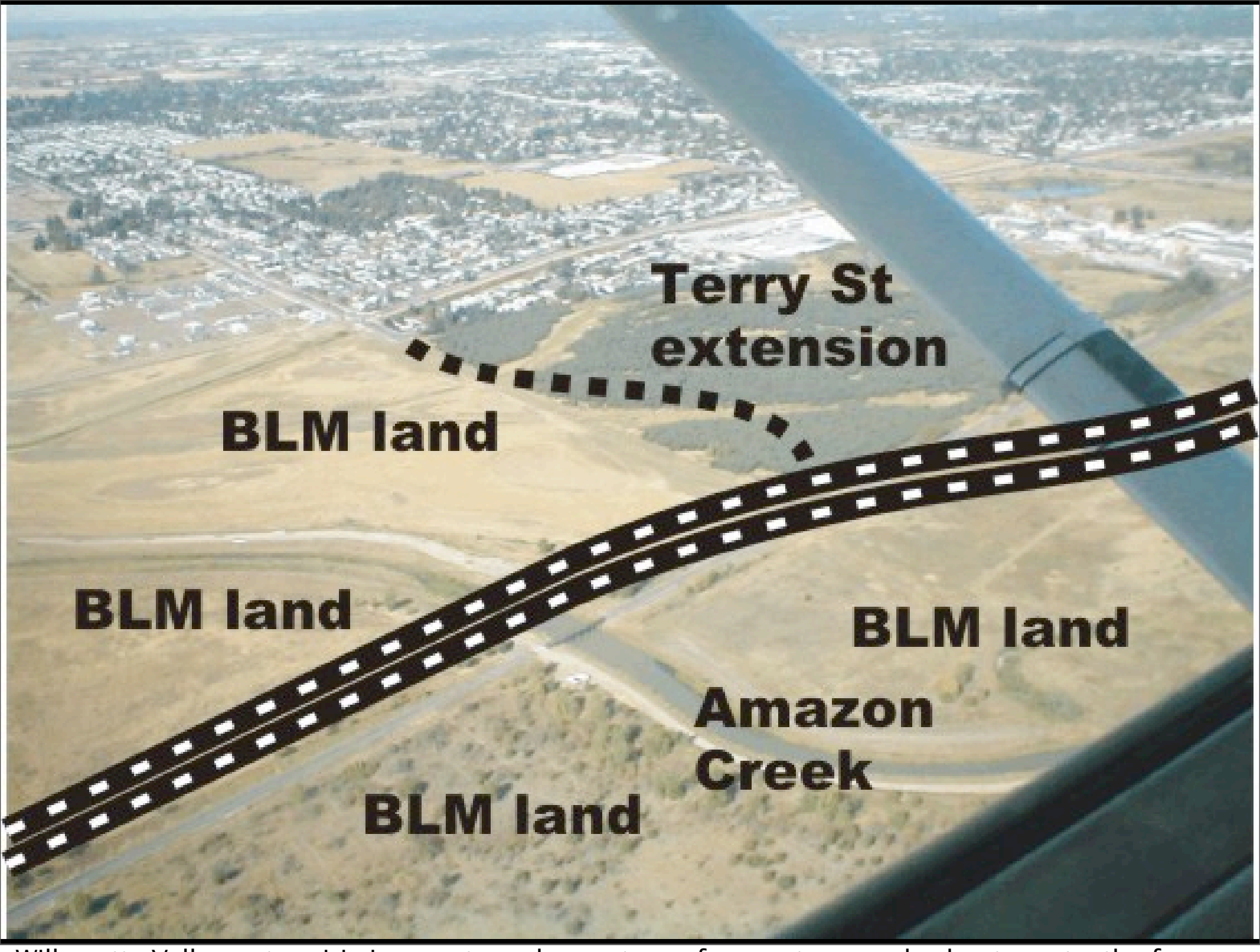
The WEP would clearcut the forest in the background (which is along the A-3 /Bertelsen tributary) and the interchange ramps would displace these Oregon ducks. This photo was taken in January 2006, and a new building is now in the background, adjacent to the proposed ramp area. If the WEP is built, there would not be any open space remaining in this immediate vicinity.



In the 1980s, ODOT focused their studies on wetland impacts east of Beltline and ignored wetlands west of Beltline. For the past decade, ODOT has examined wetlands west of Beltline and ignored wetlands east of Beltline. The east-of-Beltline wetlands do not have the endangered species that live west of Beltline, but they are extremely rare in the Eugene area even if they don't qualify for the Endangered Species Act.

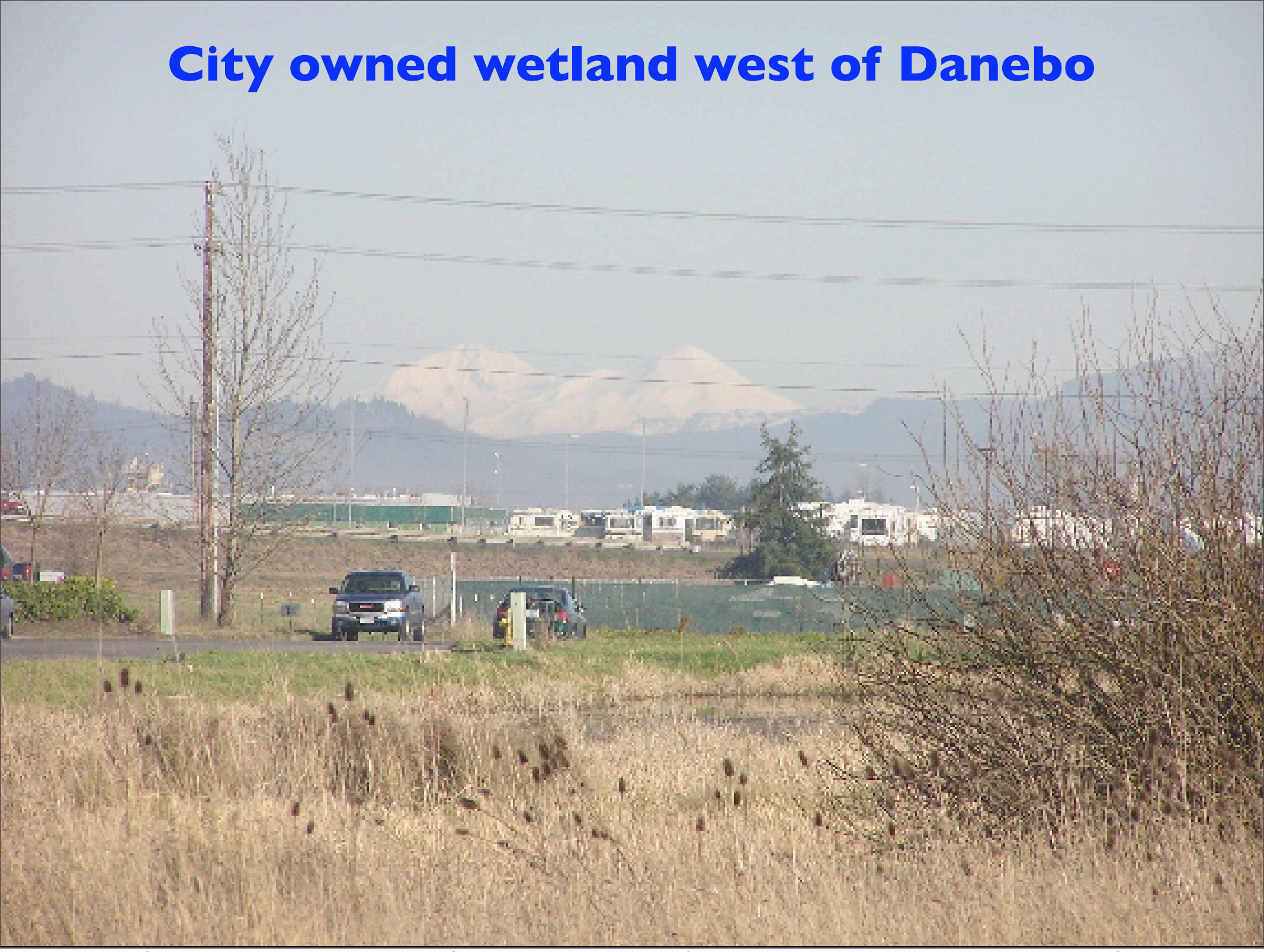
Most of the direct devastation to Amazon Creek would be east of Beltline -- one half kilometer would be filled in or covered over. This engineering diagram from 1994 shows that the existing creek would be filled in, relocated and partially channeled into a long culvert. The latest design for the interchange would also require filling in of the creek channel on the west side of Beltline near the railroad overcrossing.

WET PRAIRIE



Willamette Valley wet prairie is an extremely rare type of ecosystem – only about one tenth of one percent is still intact. The West Eugene Wetlands are one of the few examples of wet prairie that remain. It is so rare that a few decades ago scientists thought it only existed in one location (Findley National Wildlife Refuge south of Corvallis). Much of the wet prairie in west Eugene is now owned by the BLM for restoration and conservation.

City owned wetland west of Danebo



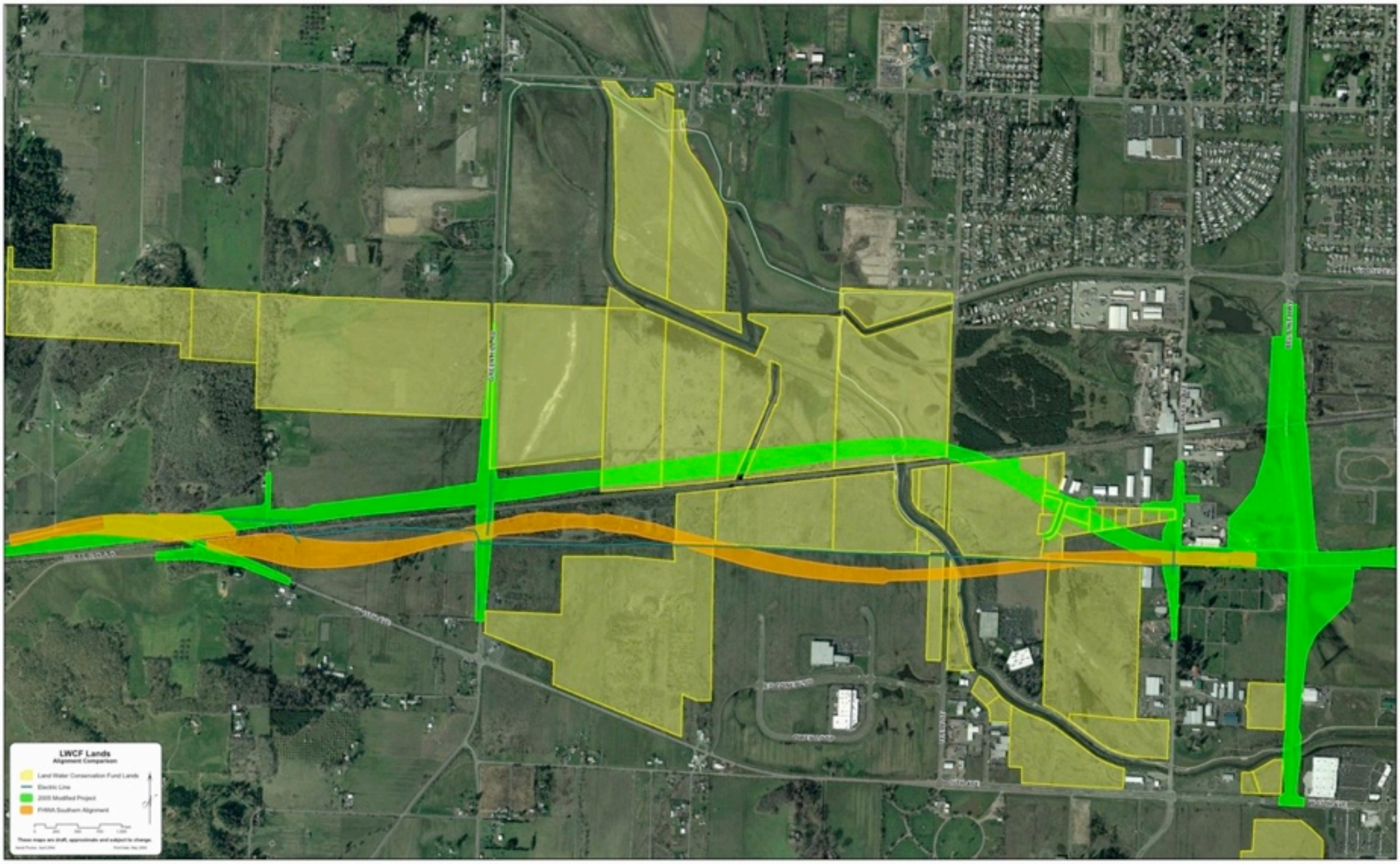
The City of Eugene owns a parcel of wet prairie west of Danebo road that was purchased for the porkway. If the City made its two WEP parcels into parks, or transfered them to the BLM's conservation project, that would make the WEP even more illegal. Federal law prohibits building transportation projects through parklands if there is a prudent and feasible alternative.

Ground Zero

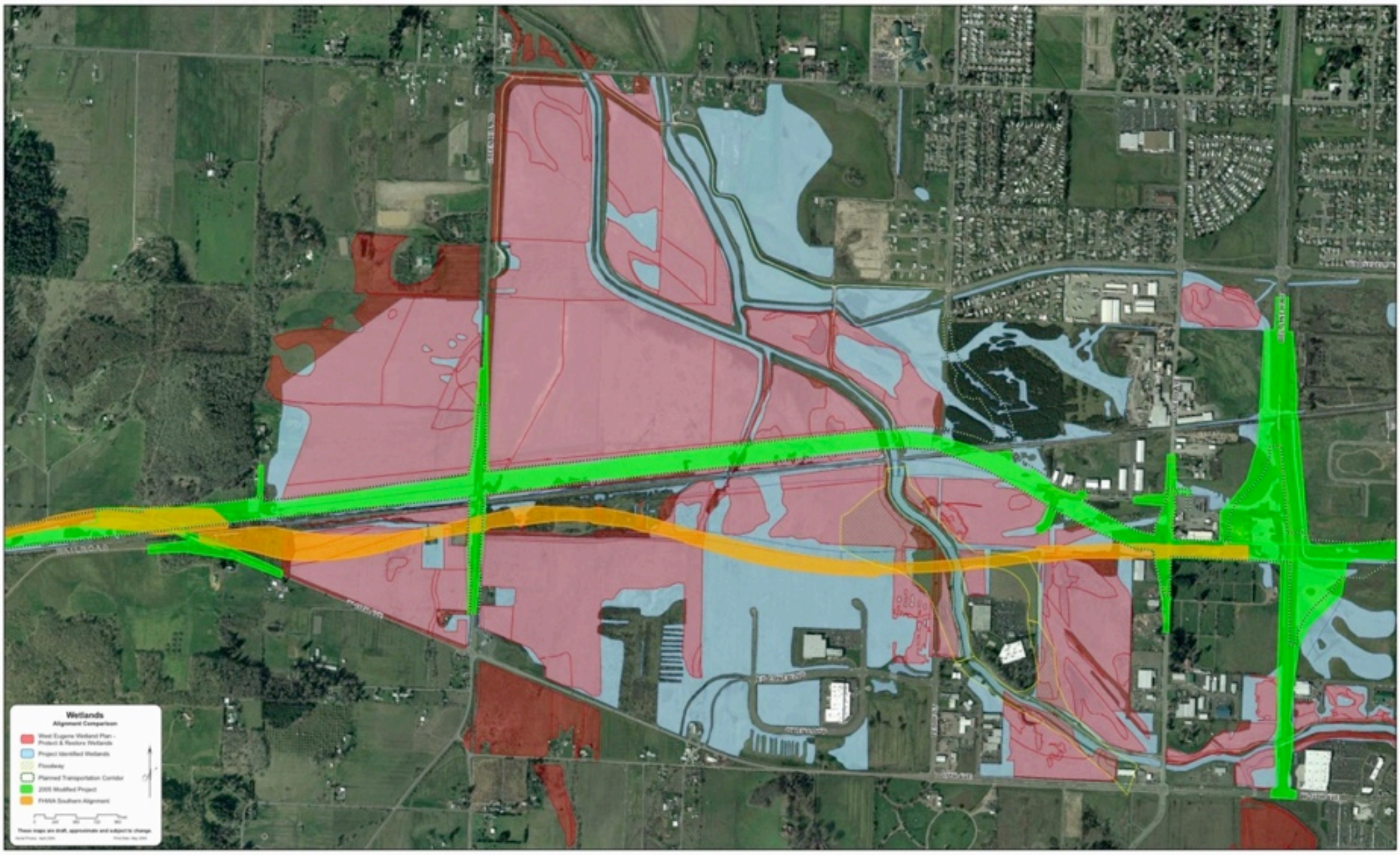
In the 1980s, the City of Eugene and ODOT pretended there were only a few wetlands in the WEP's path. The wet prairie is seasonally wet – in August (when this picture was taken) the wetlands are mostly dry, and a casual observer might not realize they are wetlands.

FHWA Southern Alignment June 2006

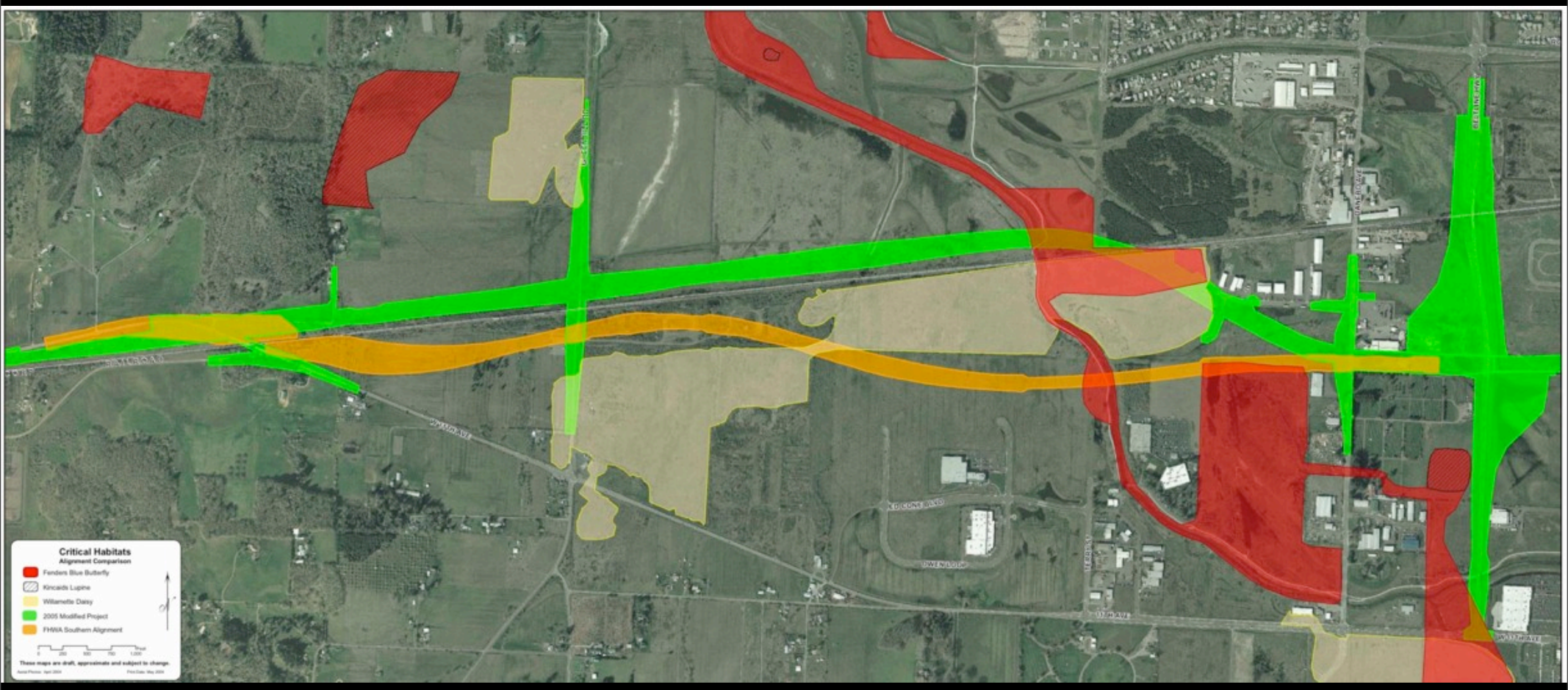
In June 2006, the administrator of the Oregon Division of the Federal Highway Administration offered a slight variation on the WEP route in a last gasp effort to try to win approval for this dinosaur.



This map shows the western half of the WEP route from the Beltline interchange (on the right) to the western terminus (on the left). The green shaded area depicts the WEP route that has been considered for nearly a decade (but without the planned Terry Street connection), and the orange line shows the FHWA suggestion. The yellow areas are the BLM's lands that were bought with Land and Water Conservation Funds – areas that cannot be used for purposes other than conservation. While the FHWA alignment shift would slightly reduce the direct footprint on these lands, the consensus that FHWA and other government agencies agreed to in June 2001 would avoid them completely (with the minor exception of a "de minimus" taking to widen the West 11th / Beltline intersection, perhaps with a flyover ramp from eastbound 11th to northbound Beltline).



This map shows that most of the “new” route would still require destroying wetlands, although the areas shown in blue are considered expendable by the West Eugene Wetlands Plan. Red shows areas that are supposed to be protected (the WEP route in green had its wetlands changed from protect to “transportation corridor” in 2002). This shift in part of the route would require the City, which has an anti-WEP majority, to make major changes in the West Eugene Wetlands Plan.
The Army Corps of Engineers can only grant the wetlands destruction permit if the least damaging practicable alternative is selected - which would be the WETLANDS alternative, not the FHWA suggestion for an alignment shift.



This map shows the impacts on critical habitat for endangered species: red for Fender's Blue Butterfly, yellow for Willamette Daisy, and hatches (hard to see on this map) show Kincaid's Lupine. The FHWA alignment would impact Fender's Blue Butterfly habitat that would be avoided by the currently planned route (and vice versa). The FHWA route would also sever habitat for Willamette Daisy, causing more impact than the currently planned route. Any route through the heart of this nature preserve would cause havoc.

Proposed New Crossing of Amazon Creek

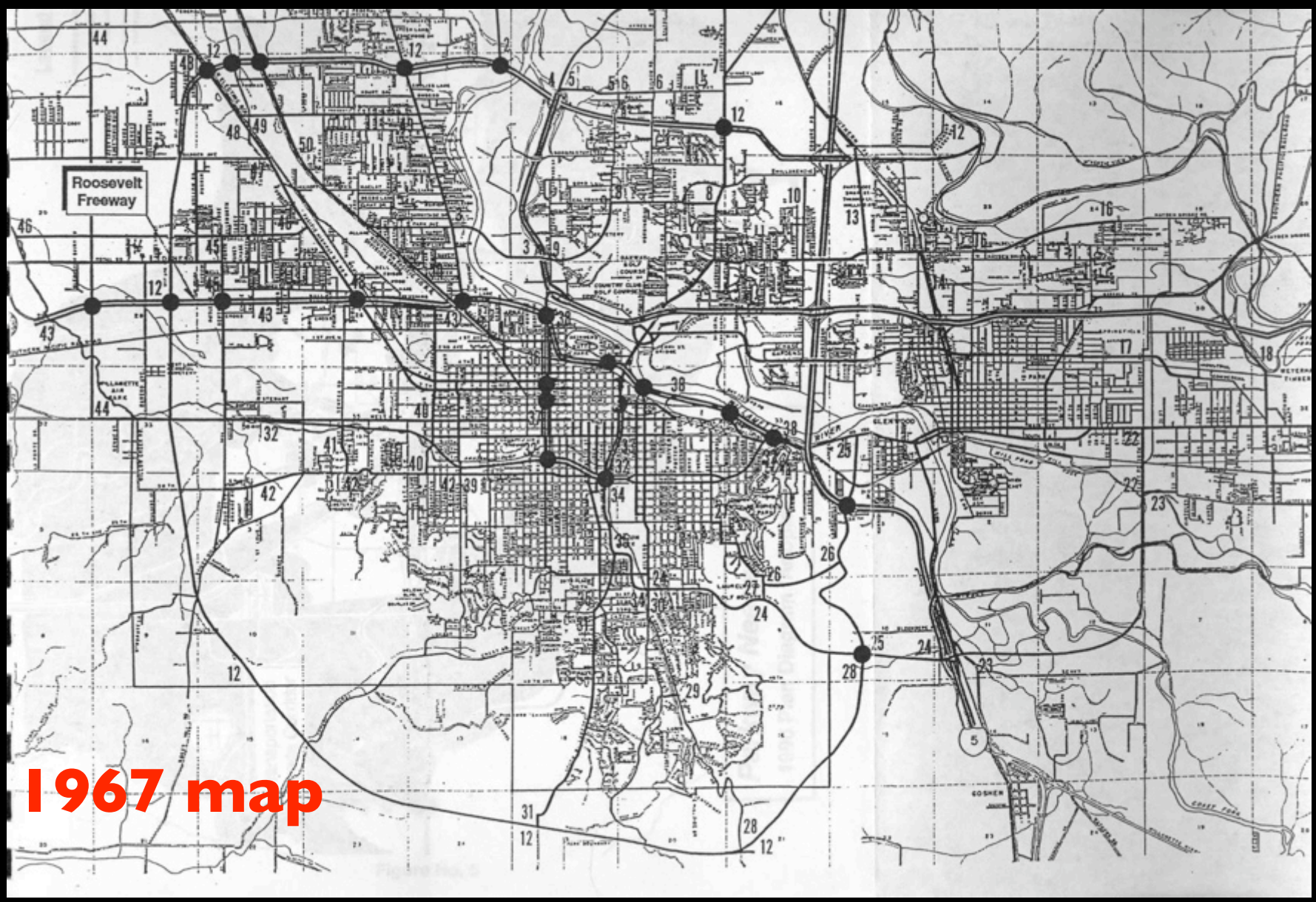
The FHWA route would cross the mainstem of Amazon Creek at this location (and would level the forest along the riverbank).

Blue Heron at FHWA proposed WEP crossing of Amazon Creek

HIDDEN HISTORY

The West Eugene Parkway is an idea whose time is past. But an accurate discussion of how the region got to the current impasse is difficult to get from the media or government publication. A deeper understanding of the hidden history is needed for sensible solutions to be adopted.

Roosevelt Freeway: 1951 to 1972



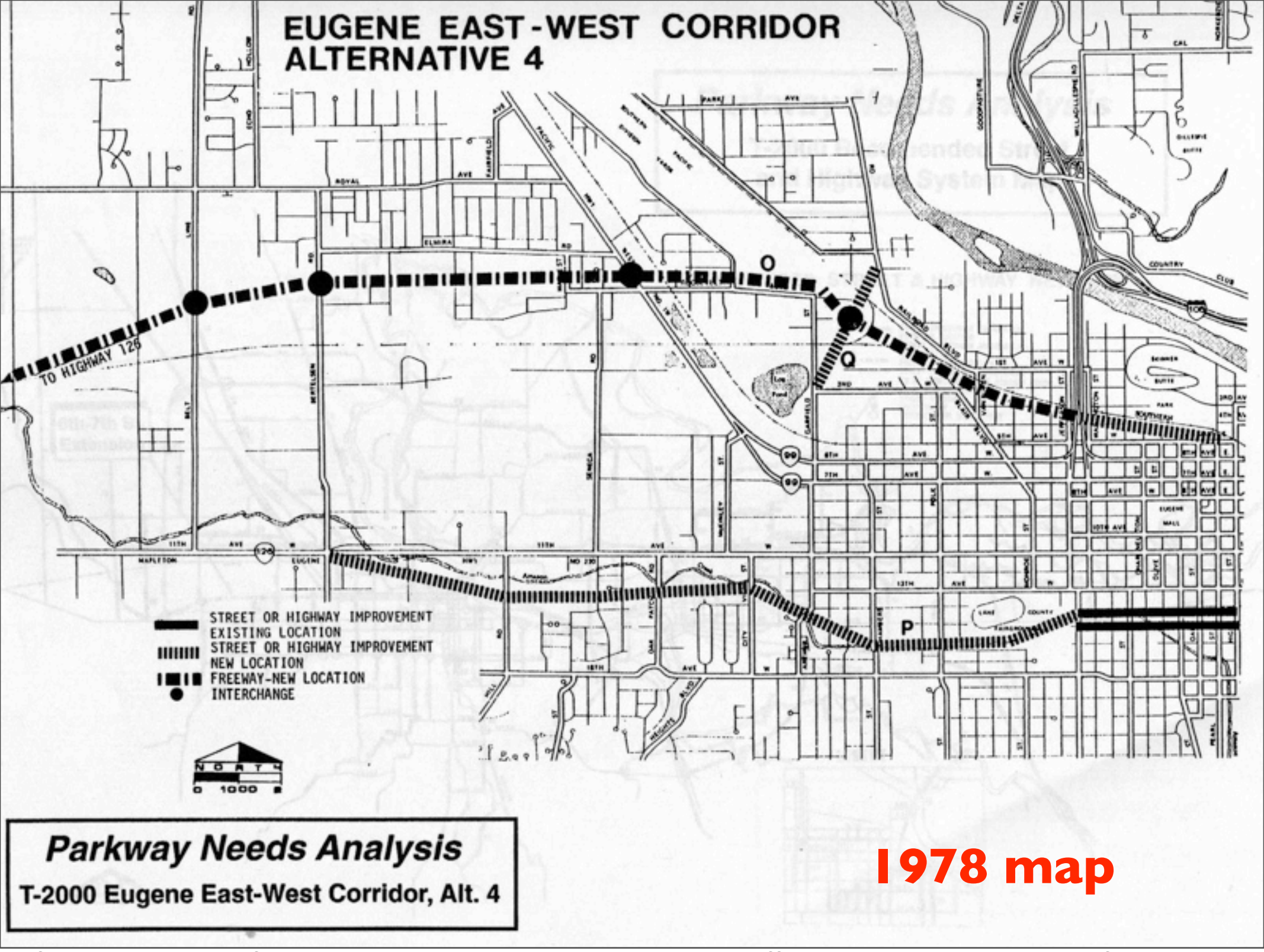
The idea for the WEP is more than a half century old, dating at least to 1951. This 1967 map from the peak of highway proposals shows the Roosevelt Freeway (the precursor of the WEP), the extension of Beltline through the South Hills to LCC, the I-105 extension through south Eugene, and other ideas that were not built.

Roosevelt Freeway interchange

The only part of the Roosevelt Freeway that was built is this overpass on I-105 just south of the Willamette River. In the 1960s, when the freeway was first built across the river, construction demolished several blocks of housing - provoking intense opposition from the community. For several years, I-105 terminated at First Street while public debate swirled around whether to allow the highway to continue into neighborhoods in south Eugene. When that extension was canceled, a compromise allowed a short extension to 6th and 7th (which make more sense than First as the terminus for this highway), and the extension was built on pylons instead of fill dirt to reduce community disruption. A few years ago, the last vestige of the Roosevelt interchange was removed when ODOT spent nearly a million dollars to extend the southbound merge lane from Delta Highway onto I-105. This would have been done during Roosevelt interchange construction, but since that was canceled, ODOT never fixed the dangerous merge zone that was left over. Fixing that problem is now complete, although this sort of repair is not as exciting for highway engineers as building a whole new road.

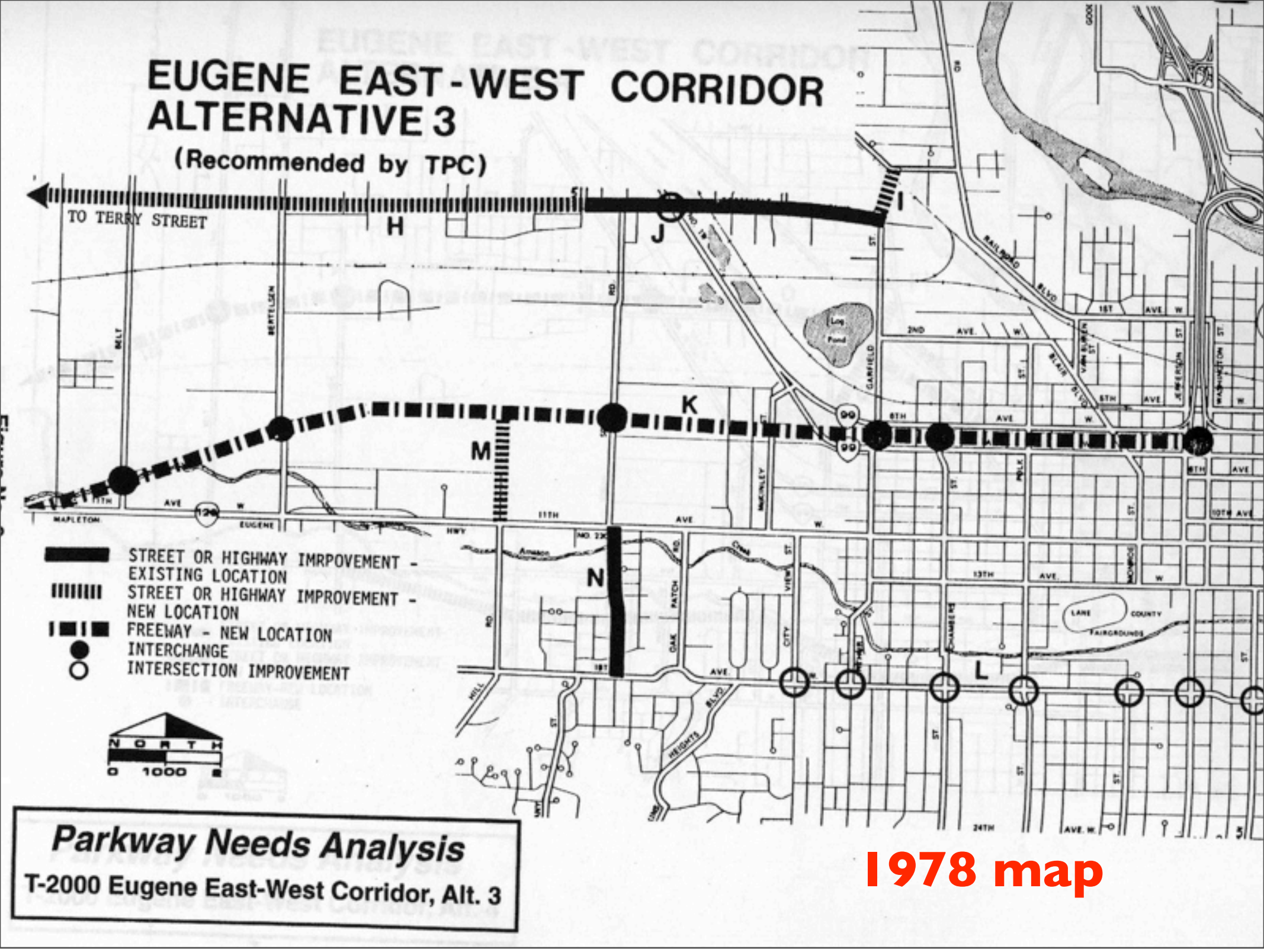
Portland - original highway plan

Portland had many proposed freeways which were never built. This map shows canceled roads in green. Perhaps the most notorious proposal was the Mount Hood Freeway, which would have devastated several residential neighborhoods in southeast Portland. When that Freeway was stopped in the late 1970s, the highway construction funds were transferred to the MAX light rail line between downtown and Gresham. One of the ODOT parcels bought for the road is now Piccolo ("small") park. It doesn't have rare species like the West Eugene Wetlands, but it does serve its neighborhood as a local park.



1978 map

After the debacle of the Roosevelt Freeway, there were new efforts to salvage a highway from the failed planning process, The T-2000 plan in 1978 examined several alternatives, including this proposal for a Whiteaker Bypass.



T-2000 also looked at a 6th / 7th Freeway alternative.

1990 FHWA approves WEP

1996 FHWA sued by Save Our ecoSystems, withdraws approval

In 1990, the original Environmental Impact Statement was approved by the FHWA in a Record of Decision. However, by that time, the rareness of the wet prairie was beginning to be recognized, and the BLM started buying parcels to create the West Eugene Wetlands project. Many years of bureaucratic objections from different agencies kept the project on hold. When it seemed likely that construction was imminent, Barbara Kelley of Save Our ecoSystems filed suit on June 19, 1996. Her lawsuit never had a hearing, since FHWA withdrew their approval (they knew that their proposal would probably lose in court).

1997
Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS)
last “public hearing”

The year after the lawsuit, FHWA issued a Supplement Draft EIS to examine a new alignment. This route moved the highway north of the railroad tracks on the west side of the Beltline, and added the flyover ramp from 6th Avenue on the east side of the project. This was the last (and only?) public hearing held by ODOT on the project – and now they claim that another public hearing is not going to be needed in 2006 or 2007 before they issue a new approval. The 2002 hearings at the Eugene City Council on the WEP were for the revisions to local planning documents (TransPlan, West Eugene Wetlands Plan, etc) and were not part of ODOT’s approval process.

1999 - most recent ODOT public (dis)information session (two sessions in 2005 ignored route changes)

2000, early 2001 - different options discussed by City, FHWA warns about laws

In October 1999, ODOT held a public information session at Willamette High School that was the last outreach effort that they held that actually described (sort of) what they plan to construct. In May 2005, ODOT held a meeting at Willamette High School on the WEP, but they did not describe the many changes to the design made in 2003, 2004 and 2005. In October 2005, an ODOT team spoke at the River Road Neighborhood Association monthly meeting, but they did not describe the new "Couplet Alternative" that was being proposed.

In late 2000, the FHWA warned the City that their proposal to only include the first part of the WEP on the region's long term "TransPlan" highway budget was illegal segmentation and they would not approve the highway until this was fixed. This led to the City examining several ideas: the whole WEP, building half of the WEP (which is more illegal than building the whole thing), etc. Mayor Torrey tried to blame the FHWA for changing the laws at the last minute, but the law prohibiting segmentation was signed by President Nixon, and the fiscal constraint law was enacted in 1991.

West Eugene Charette
June 18 - 19, 2001
"no build" consensus
City - County - ODOT - FHWA - BLM

ODOT

1. It cannot commit to keep the $17 Million allocated to the WEP Unit 1 in West Eugene or even in Lane County. It will need to reallocate this money by October, unless an acceptable project is developed for this area.

2. Proceed with preserving the function of West 11th Avenue (OR 126) as an expressway west of Beltline

3. Finish Beltline Phase 3 improvements to West 11th Avenue

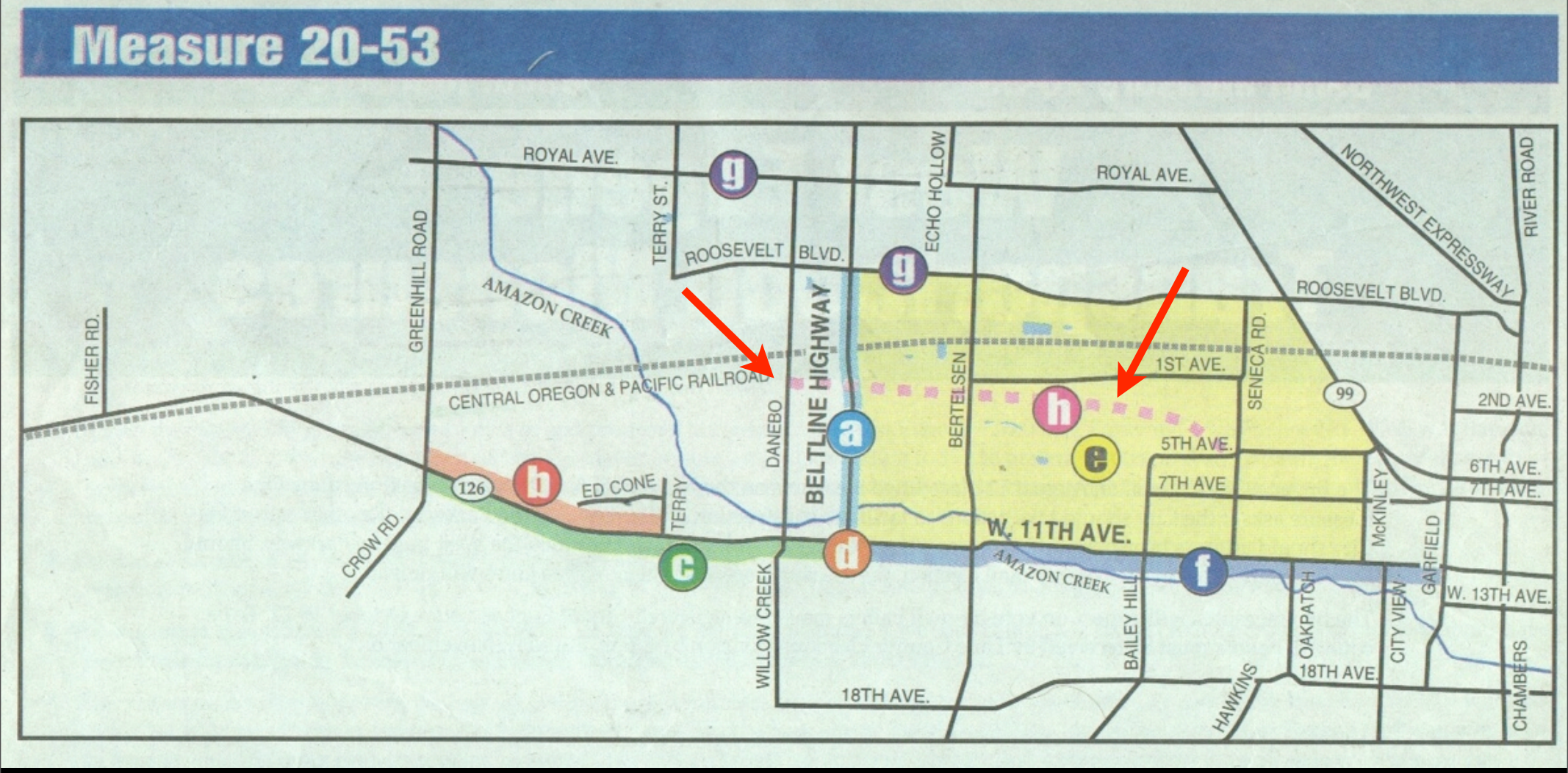
4. Close out West Eugene Parkway Environmental Impact Statement with "No-Build" as the preferred solution.

5. If it could see that there is agreement on an overall transportation solution in the area, ODOT would consider contributing funding to finalize this solution and assist in carrying it forward, in partnership with the city and county.

6. Get out the materials from Charrette to the participants

In June 2001, the City, County, State and Federal governments held a two day summit to look at the WEP. Most of the participants were pro-parkway, yet after this intensive discussion they agreed to cancel the highway and start the process of an alternative. The fact that they consensed to select "No Build" received very little media attention. This happened because they realized the WEP was not really a possibility. This consensus lasted less than two months ...

November 2001 election
fake alternative offered by City staff
included two-thirds of WEP
more illegal than full WEP



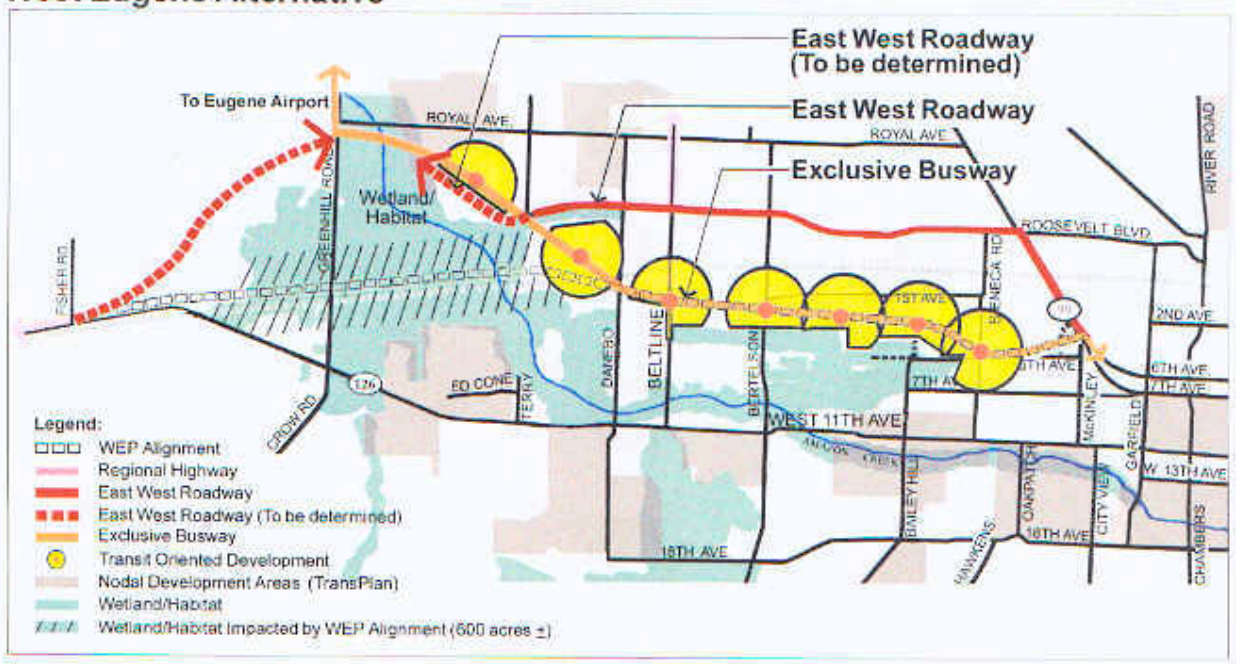
In August 2001, the City Council, at the urging of Councilor Pape and Mayor Torrey, moved to put the idea of the WEP on the November ballot (they held a SUNDAY meeting to push this forward). Perhaps the Pape clan and Torrey panicked and realized that unless they did this, the WEP was dead. Perhaps they realized the WEP was dead, but thought that if the voters passed a referendum promoting the porkway, they could then blame the liberal, environmental faction on the Council for disregarding the “will of the voters.” However, Pape and Torrey clearly knew that the decision to build or cancel the WEP would be made by the federal government – it is not a City decision. During the election campaign, the City crafted a strawman alternative that included building two thirds of the WEP (east of Danebo road), which would be more illegal (segmentation) than building the whole WEP.

2002 Crandall Arambula

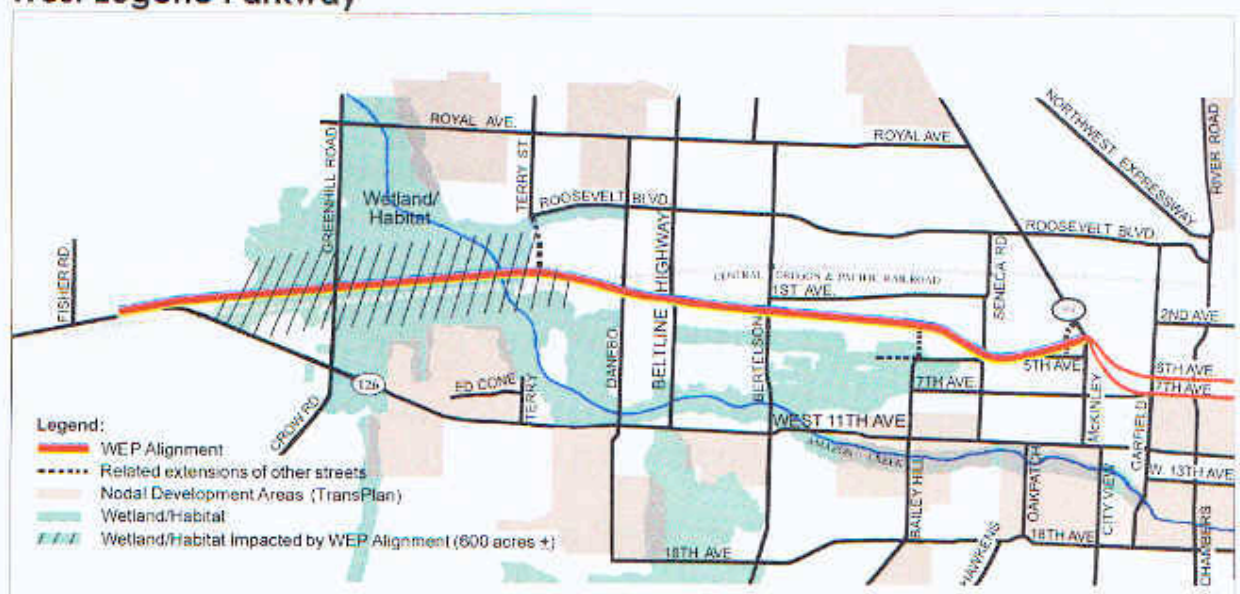
a fake alternative worse than ODOT's version

Alternatives
West Eugene Parkway Review

West Eugene Alternative



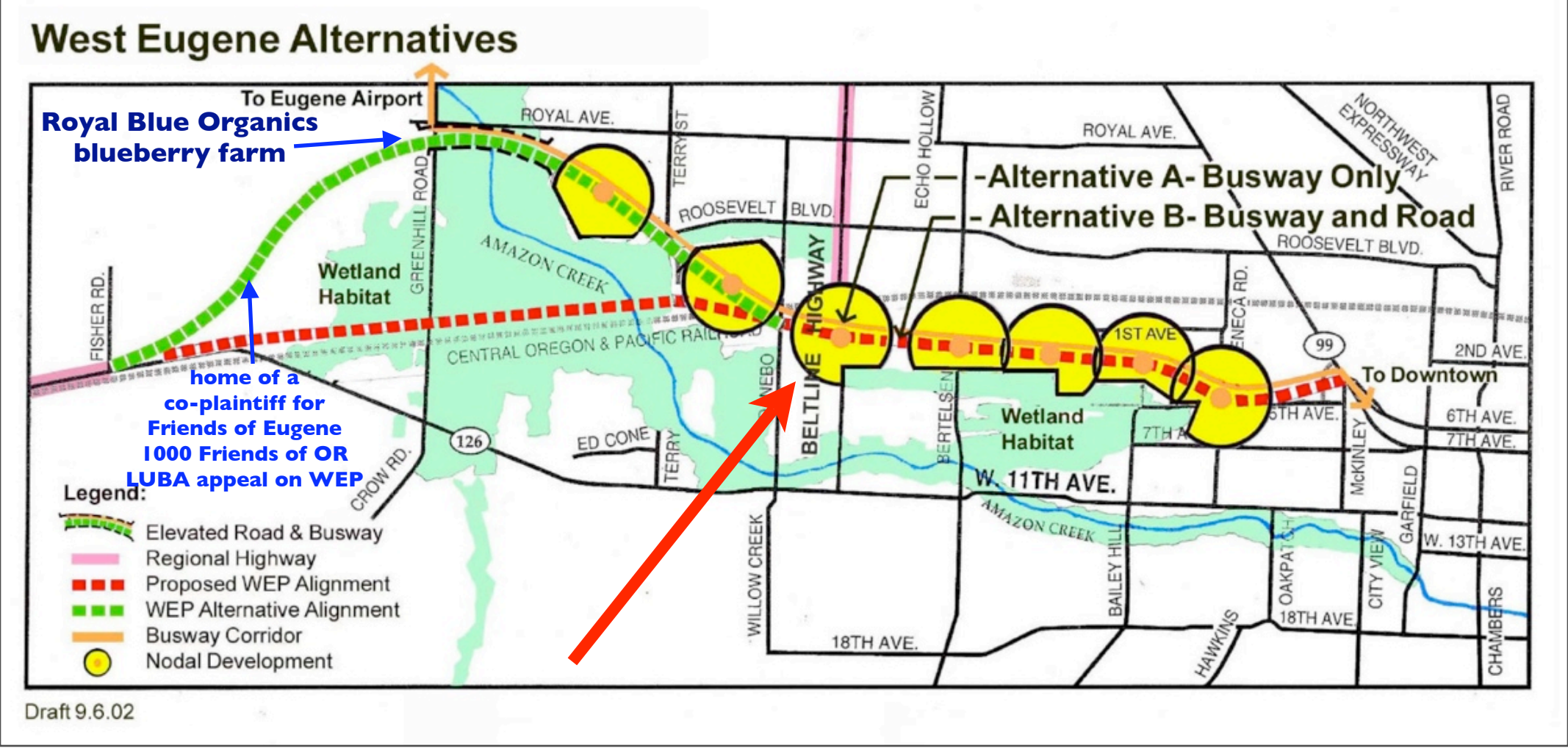
West Eugene Parkway



In the summer of 2002, a Portland architecture firm called Crandall-Arambula was imported briefly into the WEP debate by Mary O'Brien and Rob Zako. Crandall and Arambula were given intensive briefings on the issues and taken on a tour of the area - and then proceeded to ignore virtually every input that was provided. Their proposal would have caused more environmental damage, destroyed more wetlands, clearcut more forests, cost more and destroyed more homes than ODOT's proposed route. It also proposed a bus-only expressway from the wetlands to the Eugene Airport, which is as ridiculous as their idea of building the WEP but only for express buses. The transportation agencies involved with WEP privately expressed amazement at this incompetence, if that's what it was.

2002 Crandall Arambula

the one change before publication
removal of “nodal development” proposal
for West Lawn Memorial Cemetery
this pseudo-alternative was drafted by architects also working to “greenwash” the Peace Health relocation



The only input that grassroots WEP opponents were allowed to have to their proposal was the removal of a proposed “nodal development” along their “bus only” WEP route that would have paved over the West Lane Memorial Cemetary (evidence that they and their supporters did not look at a map before making this idea public). An almost final draft was leaked and while their supporters were angry that it was revealed, the input in the final days before publication did result in removing the proposal to pave the cemetery, which would have caused even greater embarrassment to its sponsors.

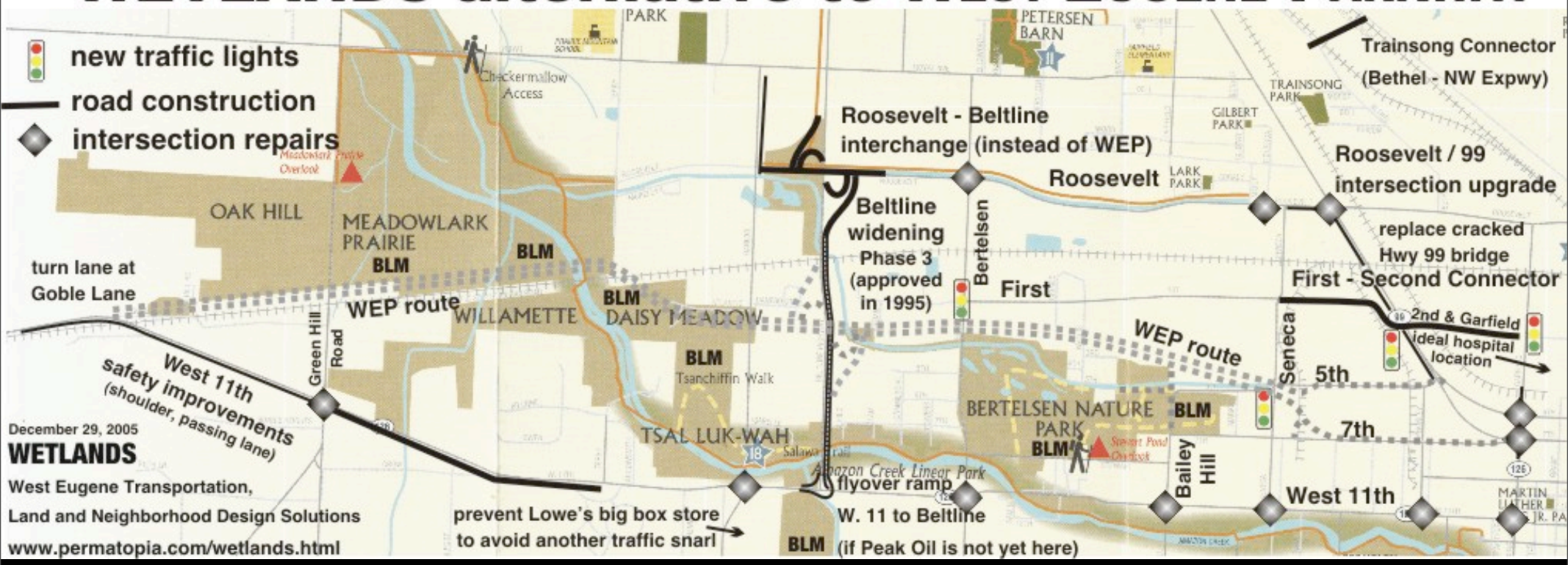
This pseudo-alternative would have nullified nearly every legal objection to the WEP if used in federal court as part of arguments against the highway.

Crandall Arambula was also working to “greenwash” the Peace Health hospital relocation while they crafted this pseudo-alternative, a fact not known to grassroots WEP opponents before their “alternative” was published.

Here is the cemetery that Crandall Arambula proposed for paving with “nodal development.” The Beltline / WEP interchange would blot out this view of the Coburg hills (it would be built where the power line is in the background. Rest in Peace or Rest in Parkway?

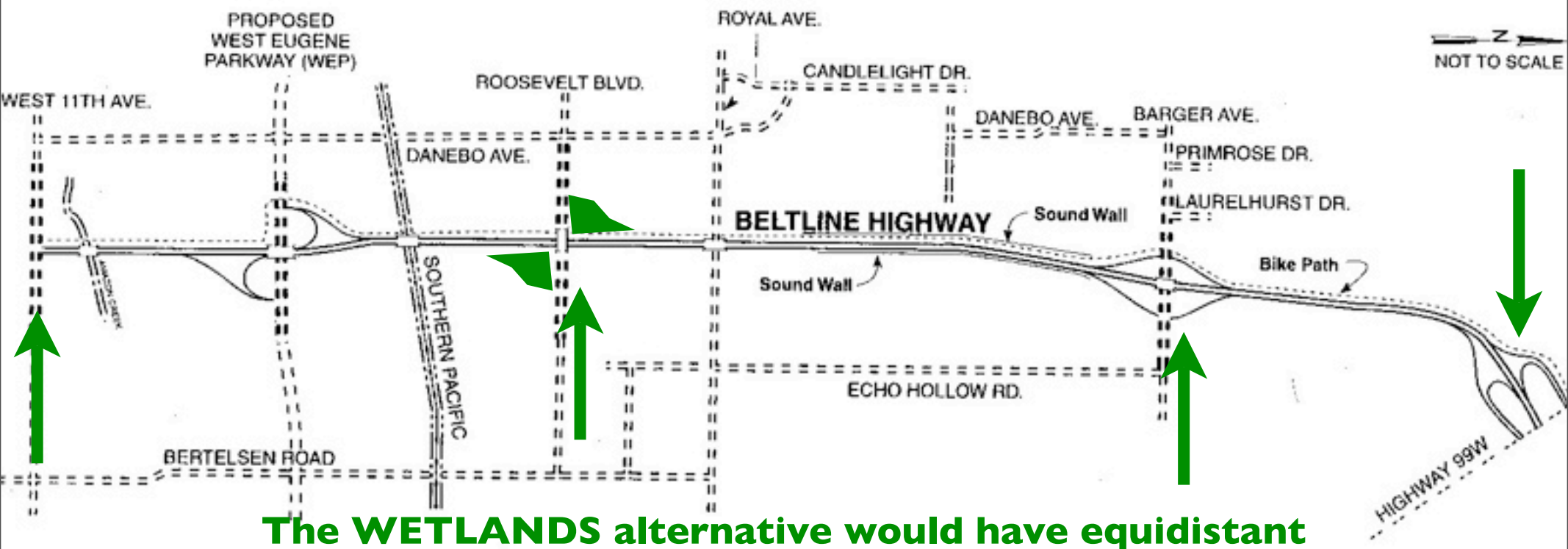
WETLANDS
Alternative

WETLANDS alternative to West Eugene Parkway



Perhaps the two most important facts about the WETLANDS alternative are:
- it is not a “new route” for the highway, but an alternative to the highway
- it incorporates the ideas agreed to at the inter-governmental West Eugene Charette

The WETLANDS alternative is similar to the Land Use, Transportation and Air Quality alternative to the proposed Western Bypass of Portland, which found that better transit, some connector links and land use shifts were more effective at reducing congestion and smog than a new freeway (LUTRAQ was adopted instead of the highway). WETLANDS has had private input from bureaucrats and elected officials involved in the WEP issues, but none of them are willing to acknowledge it publicly.



The WETLANDS alternative would have equidistant spacing of access to Beltline - and would allow an upgrade to Interstate 605.

Stages 2 and 3 Construction — Stage 1 Construction

The WEP would build an interchange farther from trip generators and would keep the traffic light at-grade Roosevelt / Beltline intersection.

1995 Beltline Environmental Assessment

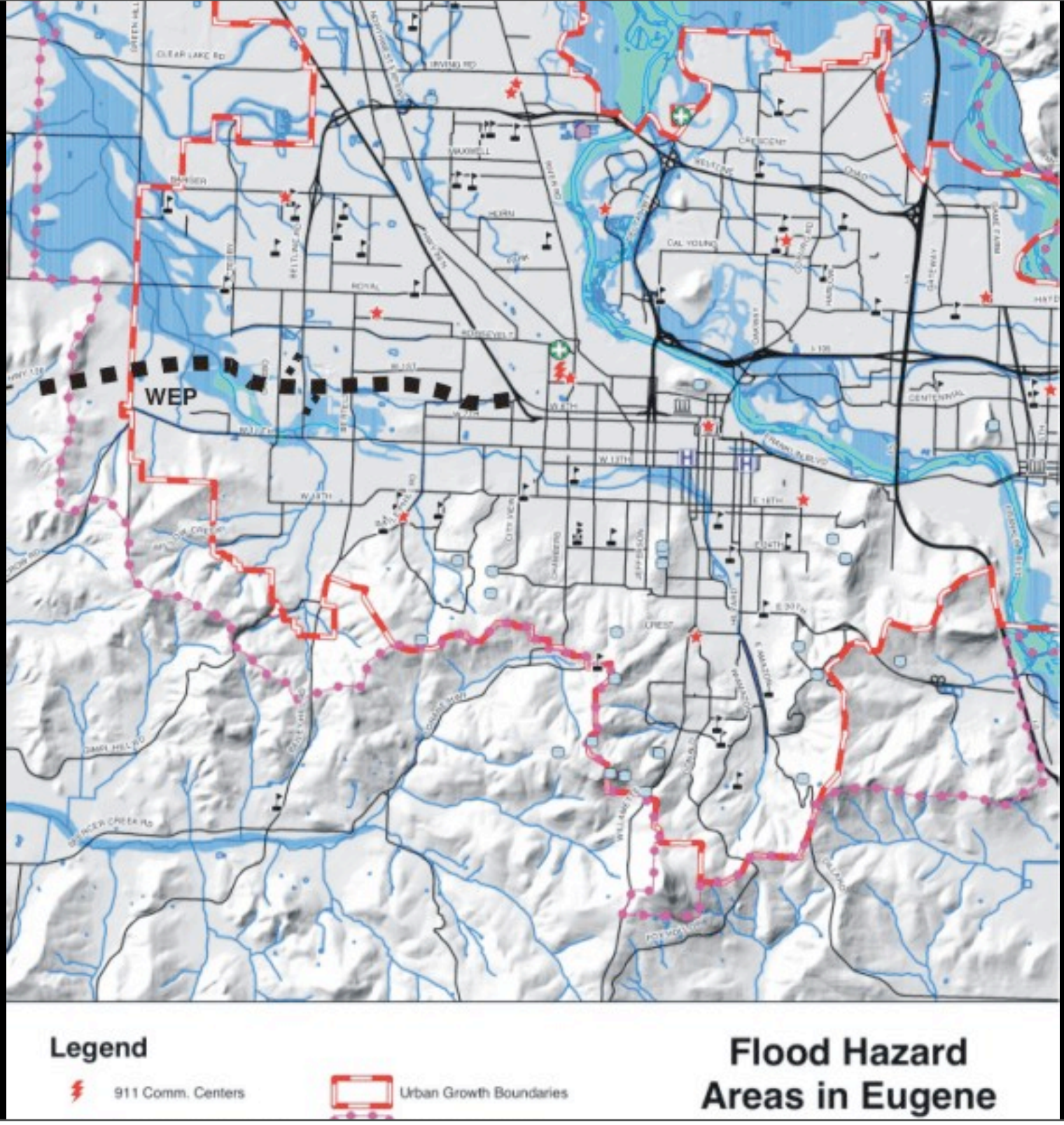
Figure 2
SELECTED ALTERNATIVE MAP AND ROADWAY PROFILE
West 11th Avenue – North City Limits (Euge
Beltline Highway

One of the alleged purposes of the WEP is a direct connection between Oregon 126 and I-5. Since it is unlikely there will be enough money to build WEP and finish Beltline, Eugene has to choose which is more important. Beltline has twice the traffic of West 11th, and the Beltline bridge over the river is the busiest road in the metropolitan area.

The WETLANDS alternative would allow Beltline to be upgraded to Interstate Highway designation - perhaps I-605 would be the appropriate number.

The WEP would not allow this, because it would maintain the traffic light intersection at Roosevelt.

The approved design for the I-5 / Beltline spaghetti bowl reconstruction also adds a traffic light on Beltline just before crossing over I-5. WETLANDS proposed merely building the planed southbound Collector Distributor lane (similar to the existing C-D lane on I-5 northbound) to separate slow interchange traffic from full speed traffic, but this sensible solution was ignored by ODOT. If this alternative for the spaghetti bowl and the WETLANDS alternative to the WEP were selected, the Beltline could be renamed Interstate 605. (The southbound C-D lane is proposed as part of the early stage of I-5 / Beltline reconstruction, but would be later ripped out and larger ramps built instead. Details are on the WETLANDS website.)

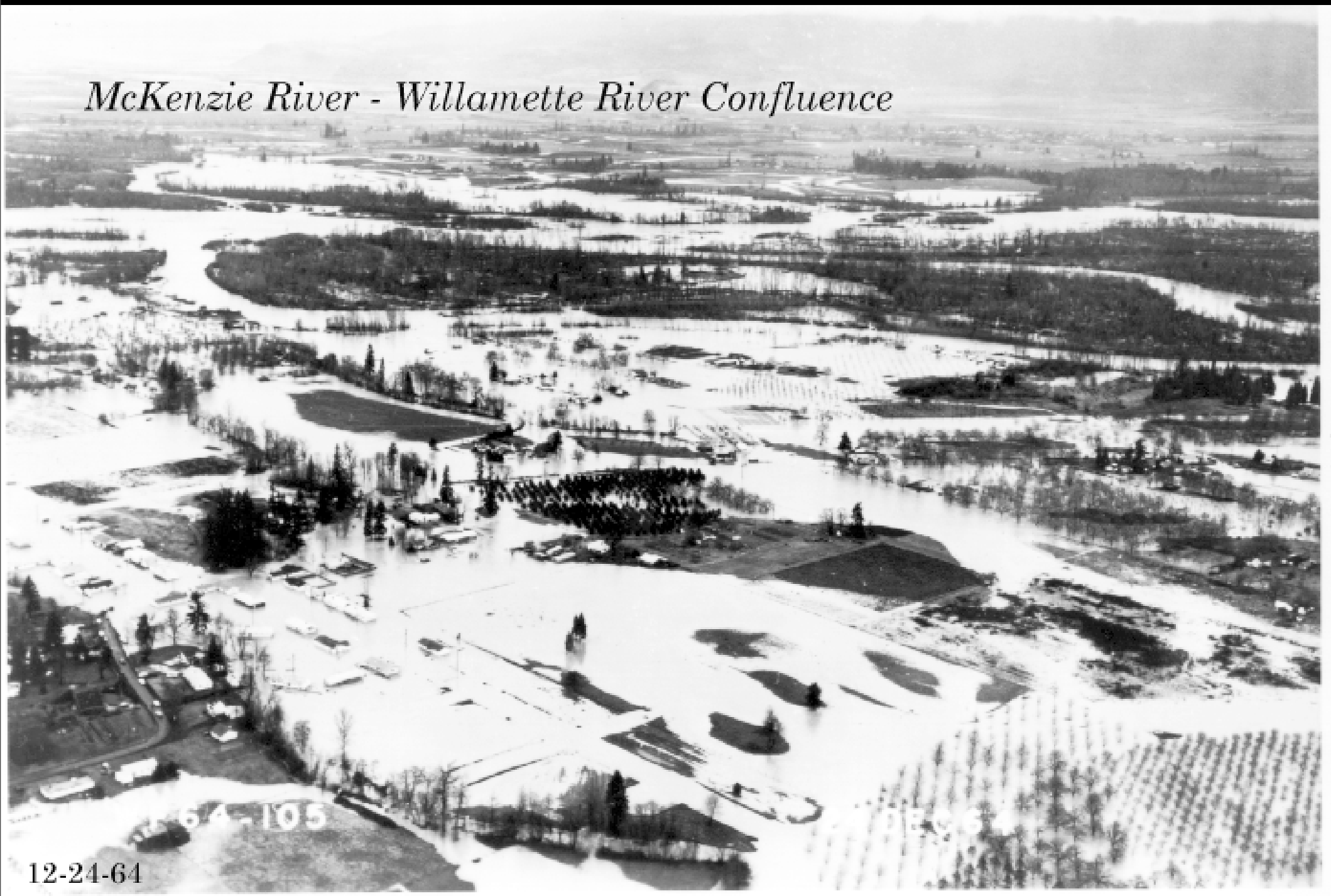


The WEP – whether on the 1997 route or the 2006 FHWA route – would cut across a large flood plain area west of Beltline. The WEP / Beltline interchange would also fill in an important floodplain that is even more critical now due to the filling in of floodplain for the Target megastore at 11th and Beltline.

This map shows why West 11th was built where it is -- it has much less direct impact on the floodplain than the proposed parkway route.

This is why building in floodplains is a dumb idea.

McKenzie River - Willamette River Confluence



Roosevelt and 99 still fails with WEP

The 2004 “Re-Evaluation” of the WEP EIS admitted that the Roosevelt / 99 intersection would still “fail.” An important part of the WETLANDS alternative would be to make needed fixes, perhaps a second left turn lane from northbound 99 to westbound Roosevelt. This left turn lane was lengthened a few years ago, but a double left turn is probably needed. This intersection is one of the most dangerous in the Eugene area, but highway engineers have expertise to fix deficient road geometry and make pedestrian crossings safer, if they are directed to do so. The Highway 99 bridge over the railroad tracks is cracked and needs replacement, but funds for that are not in any transportation budget.

Roosevelt expressway (at rush hour) east of Beltline across from future EWEB site (wetlands that are planned to become a utility maintenance yard)

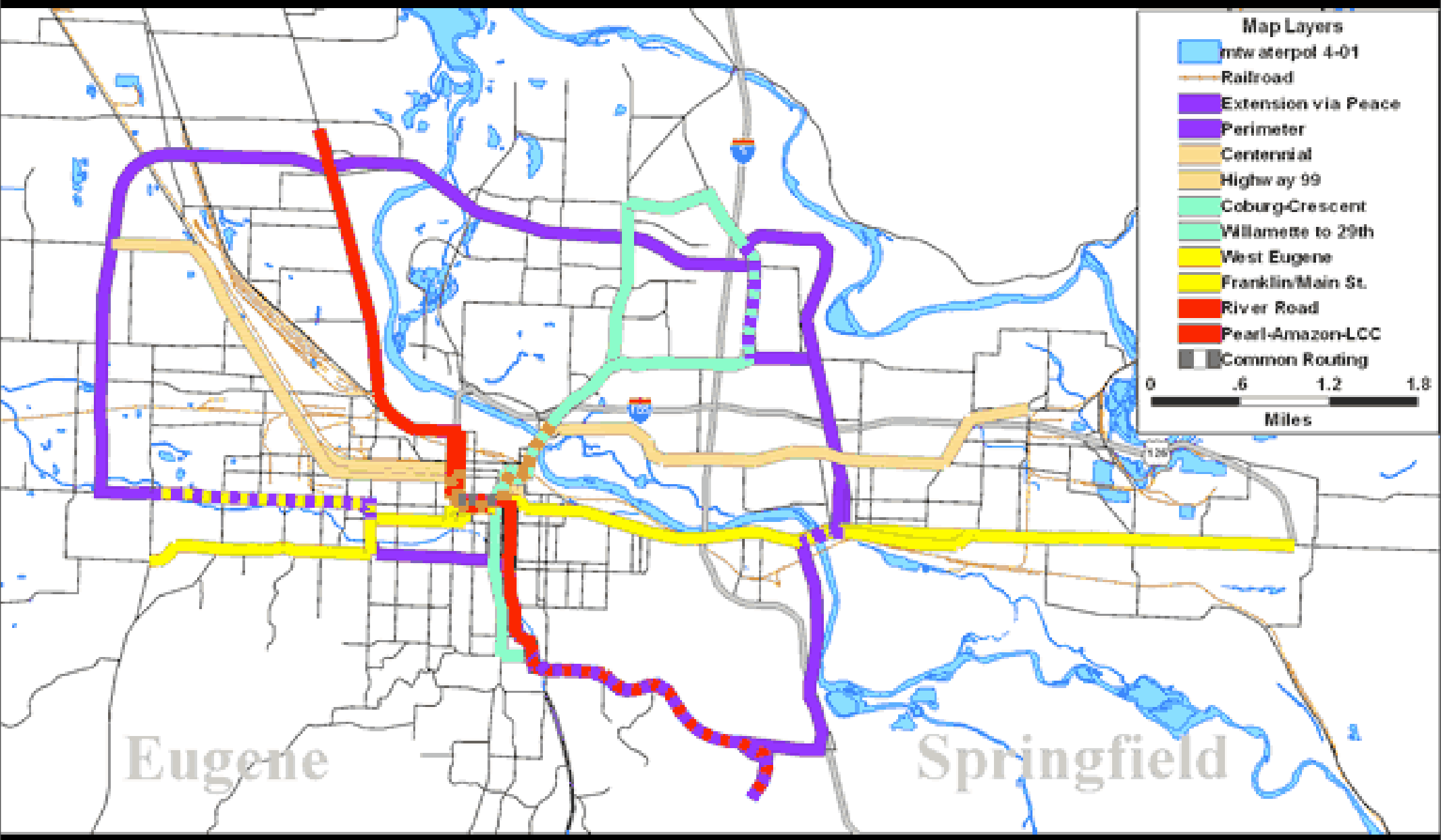
Roosevelt Boulevard is practically an expressway as it nears Beltline, and is never congested. While Roosevelt is a City road, the main intersections with Highway 99 and Beltline are State responsibilities -- and would qualify for ODOT Modernization funds as part of any adopted alternative to the WEP. In July 2001, then City Councilor Pat Farr said that in the wake of the West Eugene Charette's "No Build" alternative, a potential solution was to route traffic off West 11th Avenue to Belt Line to Roosevelt Boulevard out to Highway 99, but that would require reconstruction of several intersections. The City and ODOT have dragged their collective feet on implementing the upgrade of these intersections, which would be needed even if the WEP were built (but the WEP would drain money needed for the many fixes to existing roads around the metro region).

West 11th
Bailey Hill

The West 11th / Bailey Hill intersection shows how simple solutions could make for better traffic flow. Northbound traffic on Bailey Hill lacks a right turn lane to access West 11th. This intersection often clogs up due to this omission. Adding a right turn lane would be simple and cheap - it would not displace the building on the left of this photo, but it would displace the drive through window that serves cigarette sales (other purchased must be made inside the store). While it would be a good thing for public health to require smokers to walk a few feet to buy their smokes, the store would have a credible claim for small compensation for loss of the drive through. Adding a right turn lane would also require a slight relocation of the traffic light.
There is also a right of way for a large right turn lane from eastbound 11th to southbound Bailey Hill.

A few years ago, the City permitted this coffee franchise at the corner of west 11th and Chambers. Northbound traffic on Chambers has a through lane and a left turn lane, but southbound Chambers traffic only has one lane which serves through and right turning traffic. Traffic would flow better if a right turn lane was added for this movement. This would be needed even if WEP is built. It has been estimated privately by transportation officials that fixing the intersections on West 11th from Chambers to Beltline could cost two million dollars – about the same amount being spent to finish the WEP Environmental Impact Statement.

Bus Rapid Transit network for Eugene - Springfield



This map, taken from LTD's website, shows the long term ultimate plan for Bus Rapid Transit in the Eugene / Springfield area. If BRT works well between downtown Eugene and Springfield, then a regional network that gave priorities to buses at traffic chokepoints could improve transit service. This would also require quality service on local routes that serve neighborhoods – some routes have extremely limited service that make using transit difficult. BRT routes along River Road, 18th Street and Highway 99 could mitigate some of the traffic demand as part of the alternative to the WEP. West 11th between Seneca and Garfield does not have right of way for adding BRT (unless businesses were demolished), but west of Bailey Hill there is sufficient room. LTD has looked at the possibility of routing a BRT line north of 11th through the industrial area, but a BRT line that primarily served a commercial (instead of a commuter) route would be difficult. Land use changes would need to be adopted as part of the transportation shift – one proposal offered at the start of the WETLANDS alternative was to rezone the 11 acre parking lot behind Fred Meyer to residential and use a potential Seneca Station BRT stop to start the process of a LUTRAQ style alternative. Of course, while some private comments from governmental planners were supportive, the City ignored the idea and now there is a Home Depot mega chain store that is completely impossible to support with transit.

One of the main dysfunctions of West Eugene traffic is the City is allowing giant chain stores to be built that are auto-centric and nearly impossible to support with transit.
Many communities around the country have restricted or banned building more big box stores. Here in Oregon, the city of Hood River passed a law to block very large stores - they were trying to stop a Wal-Mart expansion. The corporation sued, and the case went all the way to the Oregon Supreme Court -- which ruled for the City and declared their law was constitutional.
Privately, FHWA and ODOT were amazed that the City would allow two very large big boxes to be built at the 11th / Beltline intersection. This decision was either gross incompetence or a desire to cause the intersection to fail so the people would clamor for the WEP.
When Torrey was Mayor, the City Council voted 5 to 3 against a proposal to adopt a Hood River style law to stop the metastasization of more big boxes. If Mayor Piercy took the initiative to revive this proposal, and Councilor Ortiz joined her, then the vote would be 4-4 (assuming that Pryor voted no) and the Mayor would break the tie. Will there be the leadership to stop the onslaught before the community is just a collection of big box transnational chain stores connected by expressways?

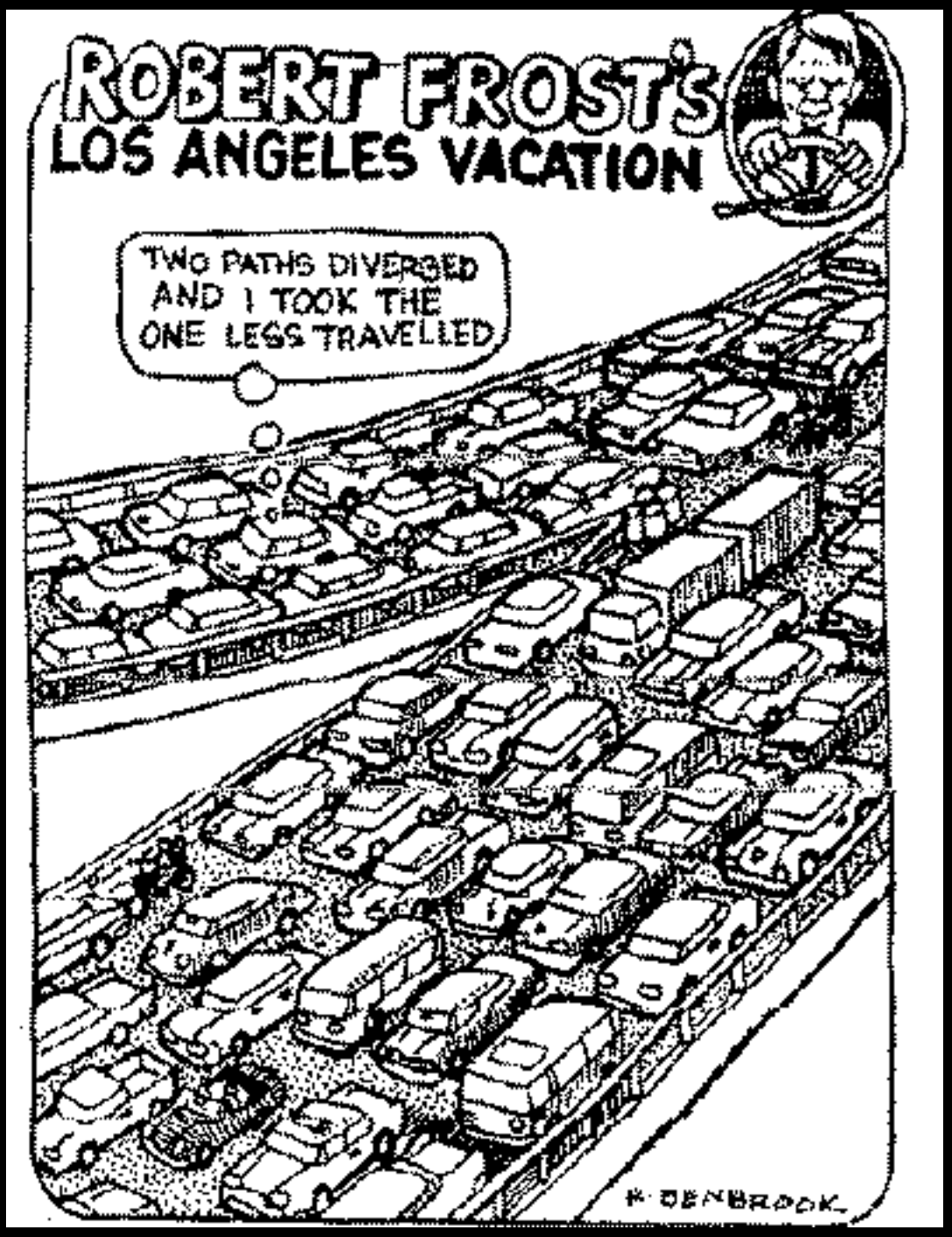
SAY, ISN'T THERE A **WILDERNESS AREA** AROUND HERE SOMEWHERE?

CAN'T MISS IT! TAKE THE EXIT FOR MOTEL ALLEY, AND IT'S RIGHT AFTER THE FIRST 30 FRANCHISES!

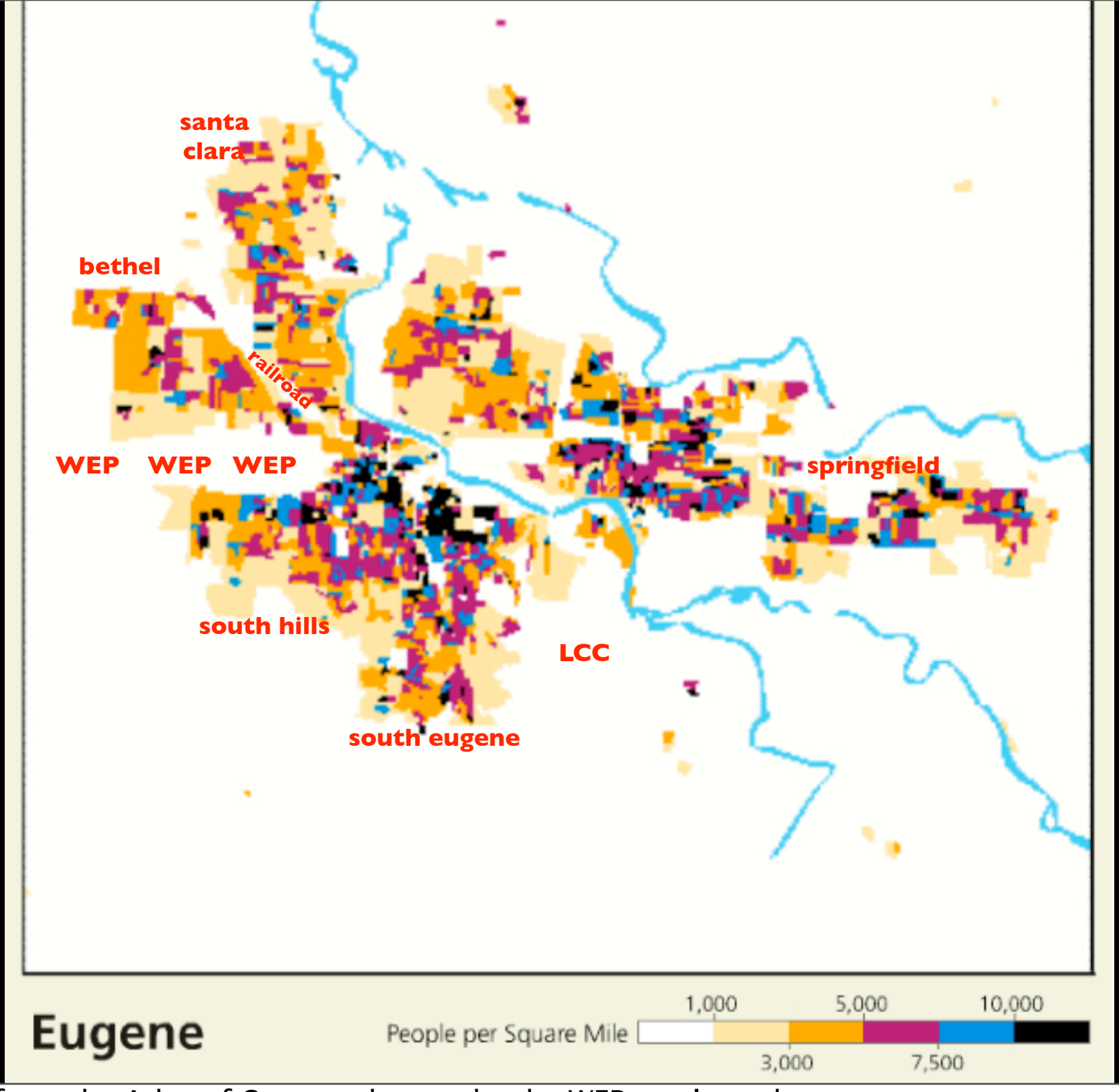
The town of Arcata, California passed a law even stronger than Hood River's – they prohibited franchise stores, not merely stores that are too large. Arcata planners divided the city into sections and imposed a limit on franchise chain stores in each part. They did not require removal of existing fast food chains, but they want to keep the town from looking like everywhere else. This photo could be anywhere in the US (it is along I-80 in the suburbs of the San Francisco bay area). Franchise stores such as these are well documented financial drains to communities since few buy local products and profits are exported back to corporate headquarters.

TRAFFIC ANALYSIS

One of the sneakiest claims made by WEP proponents is the implication that the WEP issue is a debate between protecting wetlands and solving traffic problems. In reality, the WEP would destroy wetlands AND make many traffic snarls even worse!



Two paths diverged, and I took the one less travelled.



This map from the Atlas of Oregon shows why the WEP won't work.
West Eugene has three residential areas – River Road, Bethel and the South Hills – and the WEP would go as far as possible from all three. Better traffic flow between these areas would not be facilitated by the WEP.

map by Mark Robinowitz

WEP Induced Congestion • "Levels of Service"
adapted from 1997 Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement

V/C -- Volume to Capacity ratio
Levels of Service are rated from A (free flowing traffic) to F (total gridlock)

? – no traffic data provided in SDEIS for these west Eugene intersections

"Intersections in the project area that in Year 2015 would have unsatisfactory levels of service (LOS D-E to F) under both alternative scenarios include:
Beltline and WEP Beltline and West 11th
Bertelsen and West 11th Seneca and West 11th
Bailey Hill and West 11th" (SDEIS p. 4-14)

Beltline at WEP would be the most congested point in West Eugene if the TransPlan amendments are adopted and implemented-- much worse than any existing problems. The unacceptable LOS at West 11th intersections with north-south WEP feeder routes invalidates the claim that the WEP would reduce congestion on West 11th Street.

The 1990 "Approved Design" (without Hwy 99/WEP flyover ramp) would have LOS F at 7th and Garfield (v/c 1.13) that alternative would not include widening of eastbound 7th at Garfield (turn lanes)

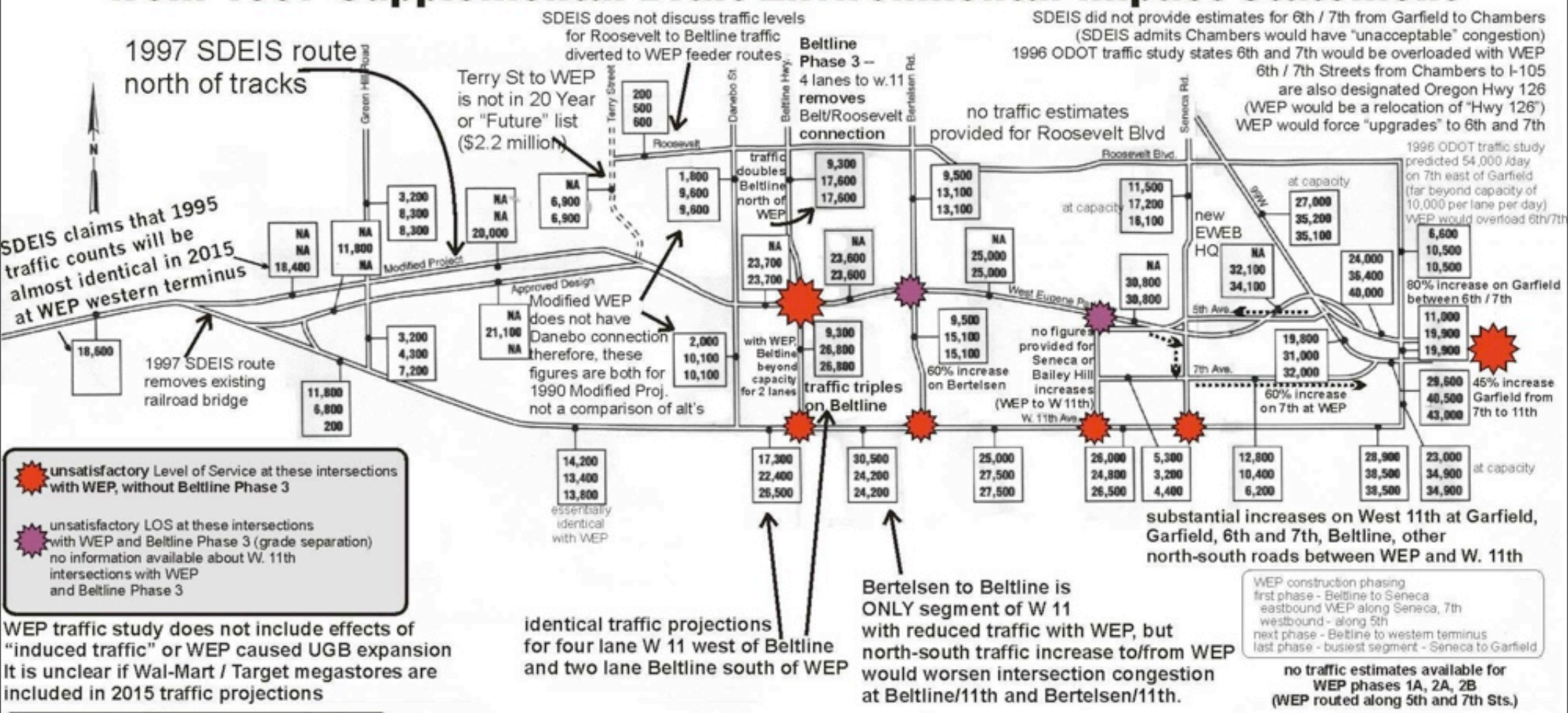
the SDEIS predicts that at Chambers Street, **"future traffic conditions are predicted to be unsatisfactory."** (SDEIS p. 4-20) There is almost no room to widen the 6th / 7th / Chambers intersections without taking private property. The WEP would probably revive the 1970s plan to convert 6th/7th into expressways

The 1997 Supplemental Draft EIS showed some fatal flaws with WEP. The base map and statistics are from ODOT (although the commentary and highlighting are not). In summary, the north south connector roads between WEP and West 11th would suffer from a doubling of traffic flow (people would still want to get to West 11th businesses) and this additional north-south traffic would clog up the West 11th intersections.

map by Mark Robinowitz

WEP Traffic Projections for Year 2015

from 1997 Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement



unsatisfactory Level of Service at these intersections **with WEP, without Beltline Phase 3**

unsatisfactory LOS at these intersections with WEP and Beltline Phase 3 (grade separation)
no information available about W. 11th intersections with WEP and Beltline Phase 3

WEP traffic study does not include effects of "induced traffic" or WEP caused UGB expansion
It is unclear if Wal-Mart / Target megastores are included in 2015 traffic projections

identical traffic projections for four lane W 11 west of Beltline and two lane Beltline south of WEP

Bertelsen to Beltline is ONLY segment of W 11 with reduced traffic with WEP, but north-south traffic increase to/from WEP would worsen intersection congestion at Beltline/11th and Bertelsen/11th.

WEP construction phasing
first phase - Beltline to Seneca
eastbound WEP along Seneca, 7th
westbound - along 5th
next phase - Beltline to western terminus
last phase - busiest segment - Seneca to Garfield

no traffic estimates available for WEP phases 1A, 2A, 2B (WEP routed along 5th and 7th Sts.)

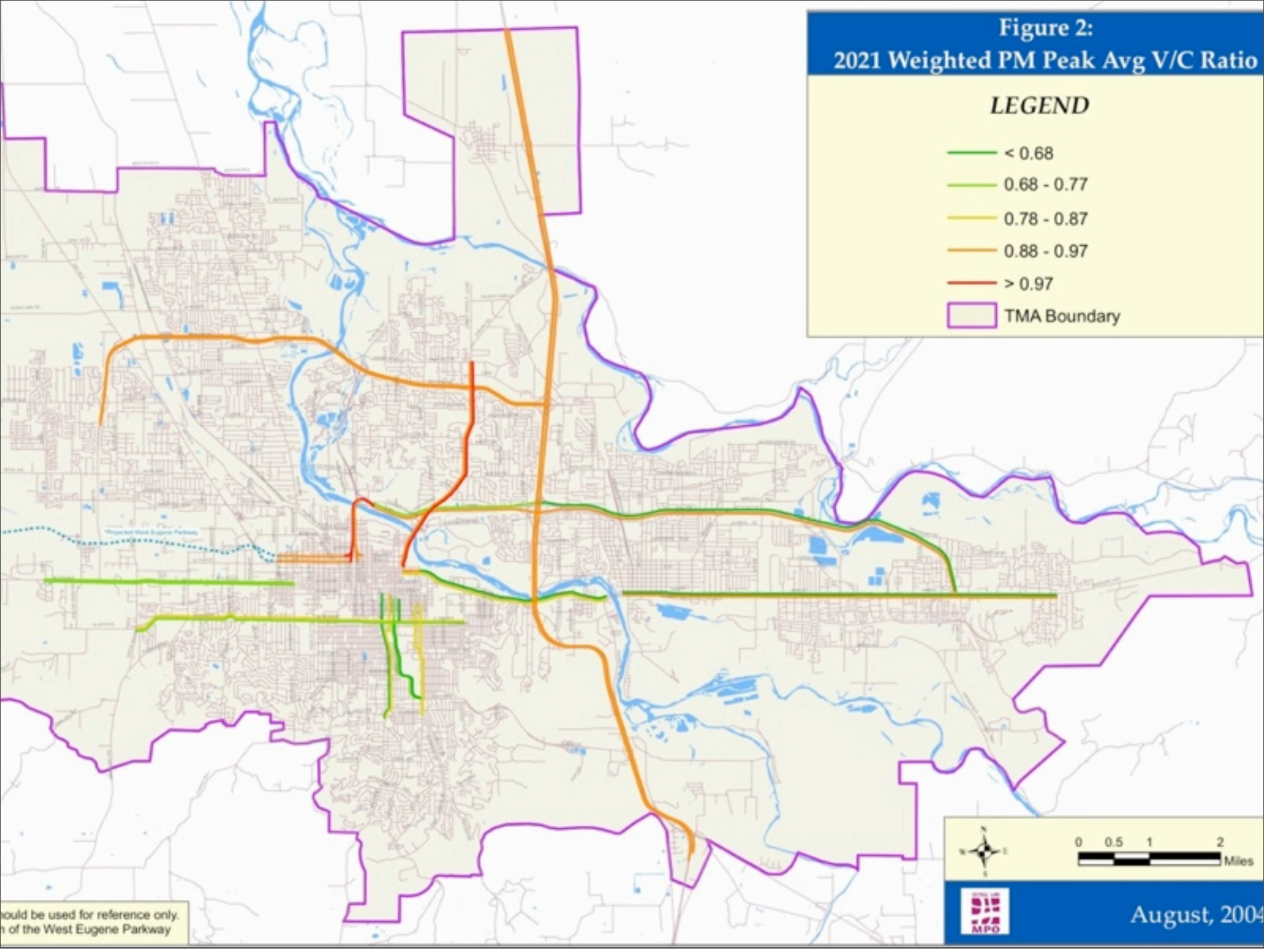
LEGEND

11,800	= Existing (1995)
6,800	= Approved Design (2015) south of railroad tracks
200	= Modified Project (2015) north of railroad tracks

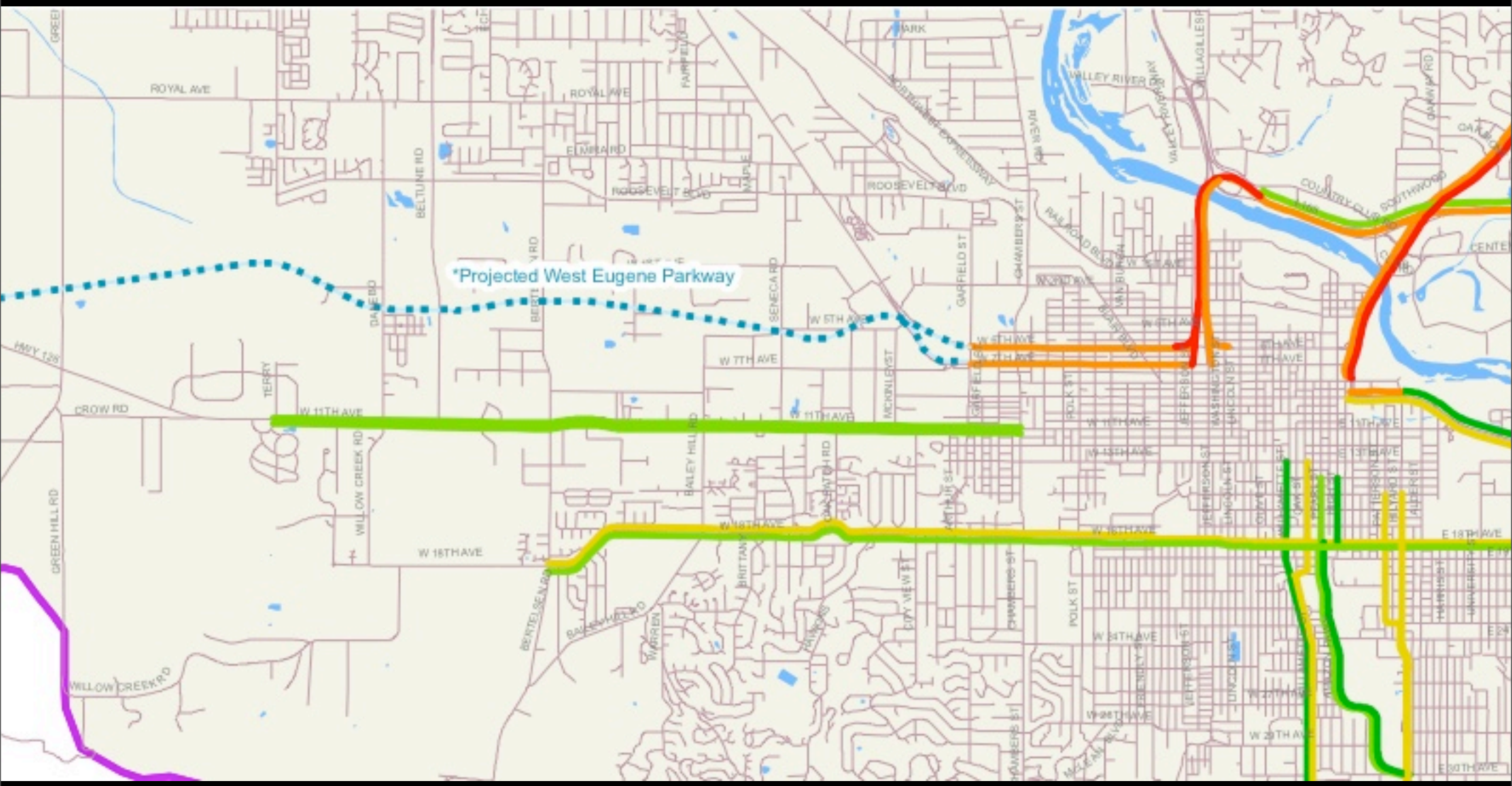
NA = Not Applicable

The SDEIS did NOT compare WEP traffic projections in 2015 to a "No Build" or "LUTRAQ" alternative.
2015 is now out-of-date as a target year, since the baseline data is 1995
(2025 is the year the June 2001 West Eugene Charette suggested as a design year - well after the peak of world oil extraction)
I-5 / Beltline "Gateway Spaghetti Bowl" Environmental Assessment uses 2025 as design year

Figure 3-2
Average Daily Traffic Volumes
WEST EUGENE PARKWAY
West 11th Avenue-Garfield Street
Florence-Eugene Highway



This map from the Lane Council of Governments estimates traffic congestion in the Year 2021 (assuming that oil supplies remain constant and cheap). It shows that with the WEP, 6th and 7th would become clogged, and I-105 would be even worse. It did not make an effort to look at congestion without the WEP, but a serious effort to do that would require more than merely removing the WEP from the traffic model - it would require a LUTRAQ type approach, plus an examination of Beltline for through traffic and of course the issues of "Peak Traffic" caused by Peak Oil.



A closeup of LCOG's traffic projections shows the WEP / 6-7 / 105 route from 126 to I-5 would be very busy.

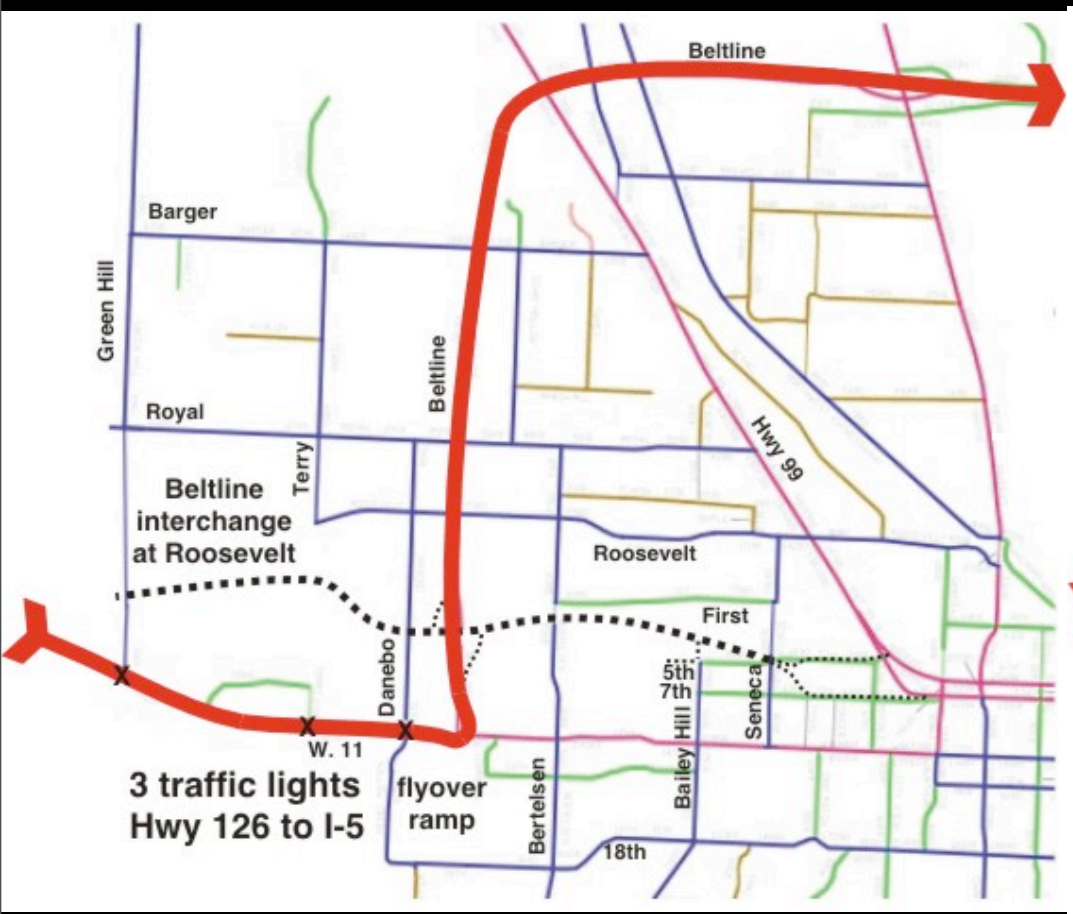
The 1997 Supplemental Draft EIS admitted the WEP would cause overloaded roads at 6th and 7th at Chambers. A 1996 ODOT traffic report also admitted this. An alternative approach (assuming Peak Oil won't reduce travel demands) will not be easy to implement, but land use shifts, Bus Rapid Transit (Highway 99 and River Road) and other fixes are part of the solution.

7th already congested

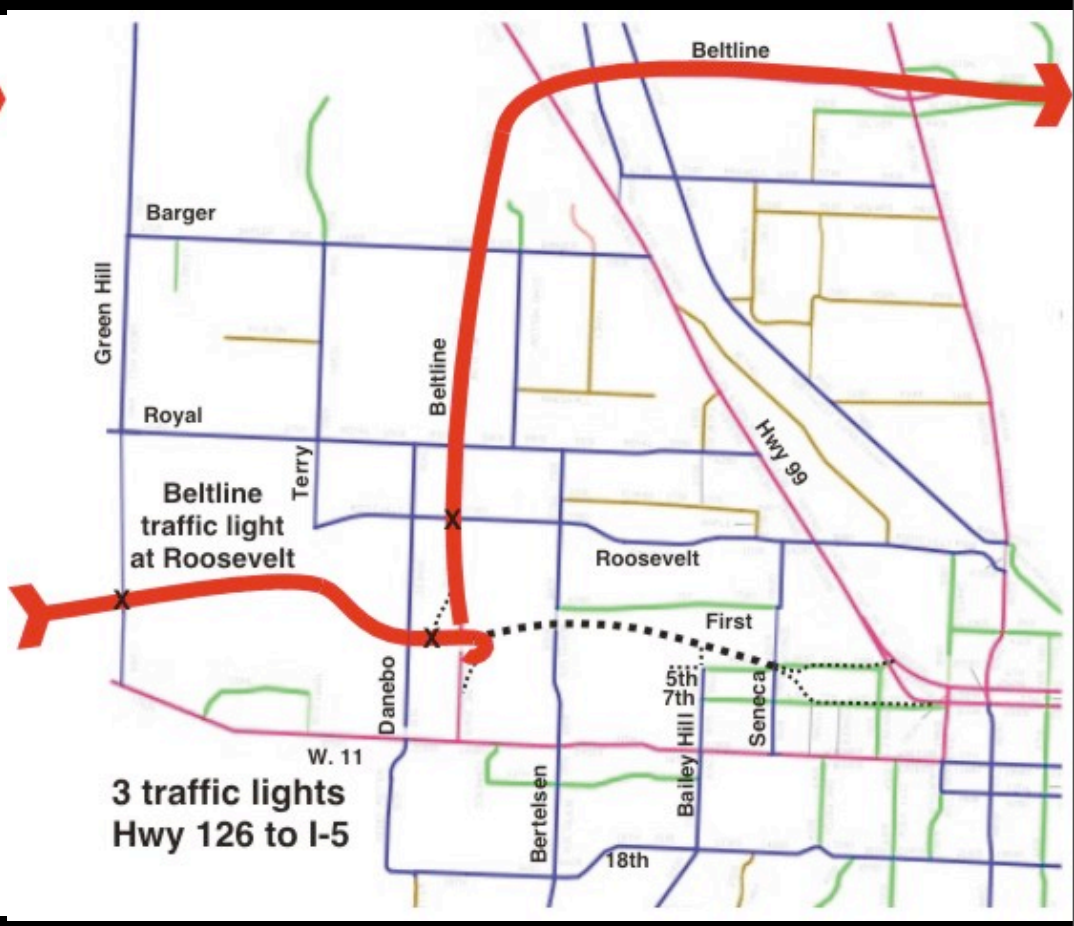
7th Avenue is already congested on most weekdays at rush hour. Building a new freeway to connect to 7th would make a bad situation worse

rush hour traffic
waiting to get on
Washington Jefferson bridge

WETLANDS alternative



West Eugene Parkway

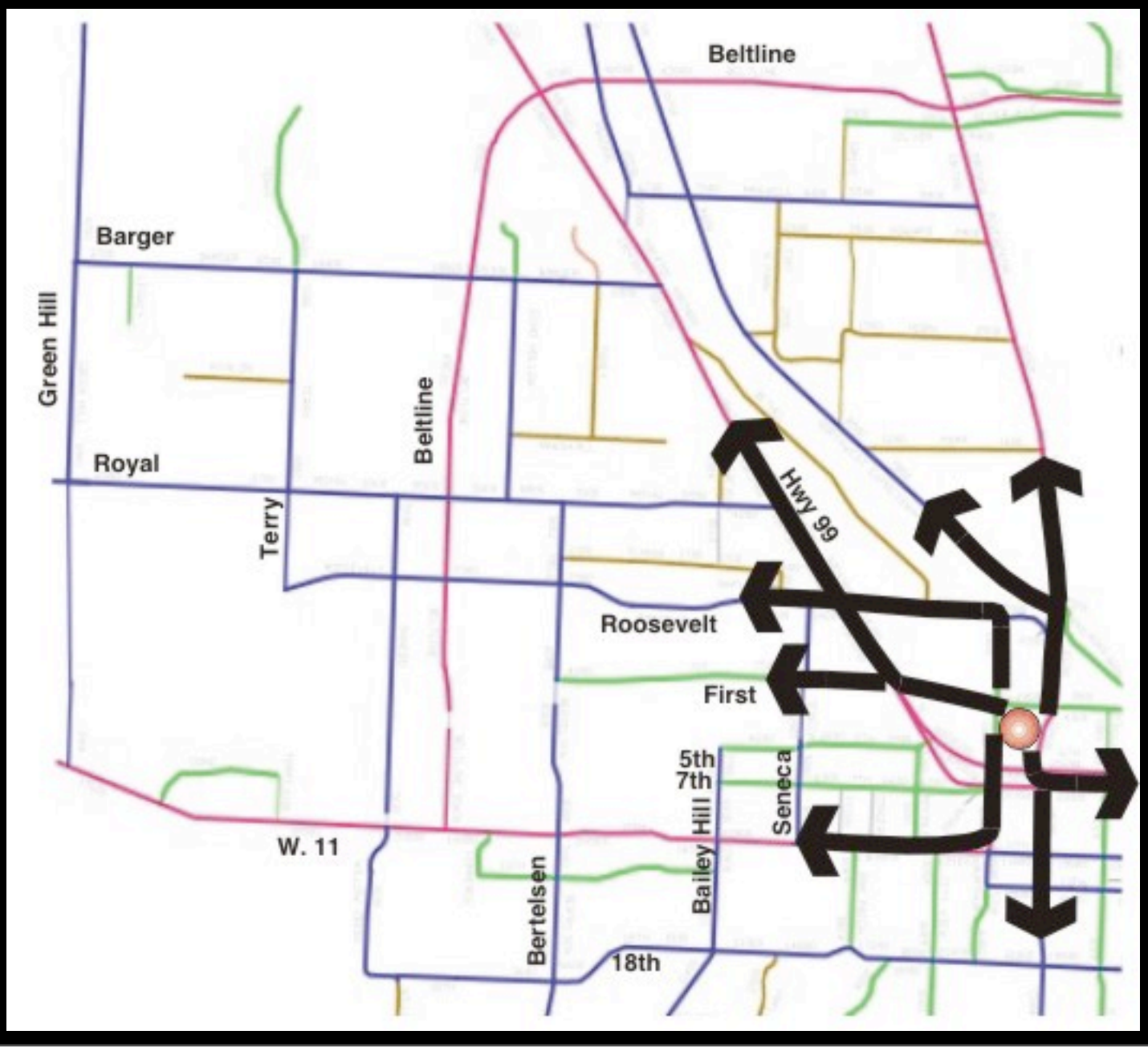


Beltline - Interstate 605

Beltline - traffic light at Roosevelt Blvd.

It is difficult to find any travel route that the WEP would benefit. A comparison of the WEP to the WETLANDS alternative cannot find options where the WEP would facilitate traffic in west Eugene, and the WEP would have travel options with more traffic lights than the WETLANDS alternative! Traffic going from 126 to I-5 via Beltline would have three traffic lights on WEP and three traffic lights with the WETLANDS alternative.

better location for McKenzie Willamette Triad hospital



The Beltline connection between 126 and I-5 is most threatened by the proposal to relocate McKenzie Willamette hospital to the end of Delta Highway, which would funnel lots more traffic through the Delta / Beltline interchange and relocate numerous medical offices to what is now a golf course at the end of a two lane road.

There are better locations available for the hospital. Of course, the best locations for the region's hospitals are their existing locations, but that sensible, obvious solution has been ignored by undemocratic planning by the corporations involved. Next best option would be to build McKenzie Willamette in downtown Eugene, perhaps using part of the properties abandoned by the Connor Wooley company. Another option would be the abandoned industrial area at Second and Garfield, which would be a central location for most of Eugene and have good access in all directions. (The WETLANDS alternative includes a new road - the Second / First connector - which would improve access to that location without the need for the WEP.)

WETLANDS alternative

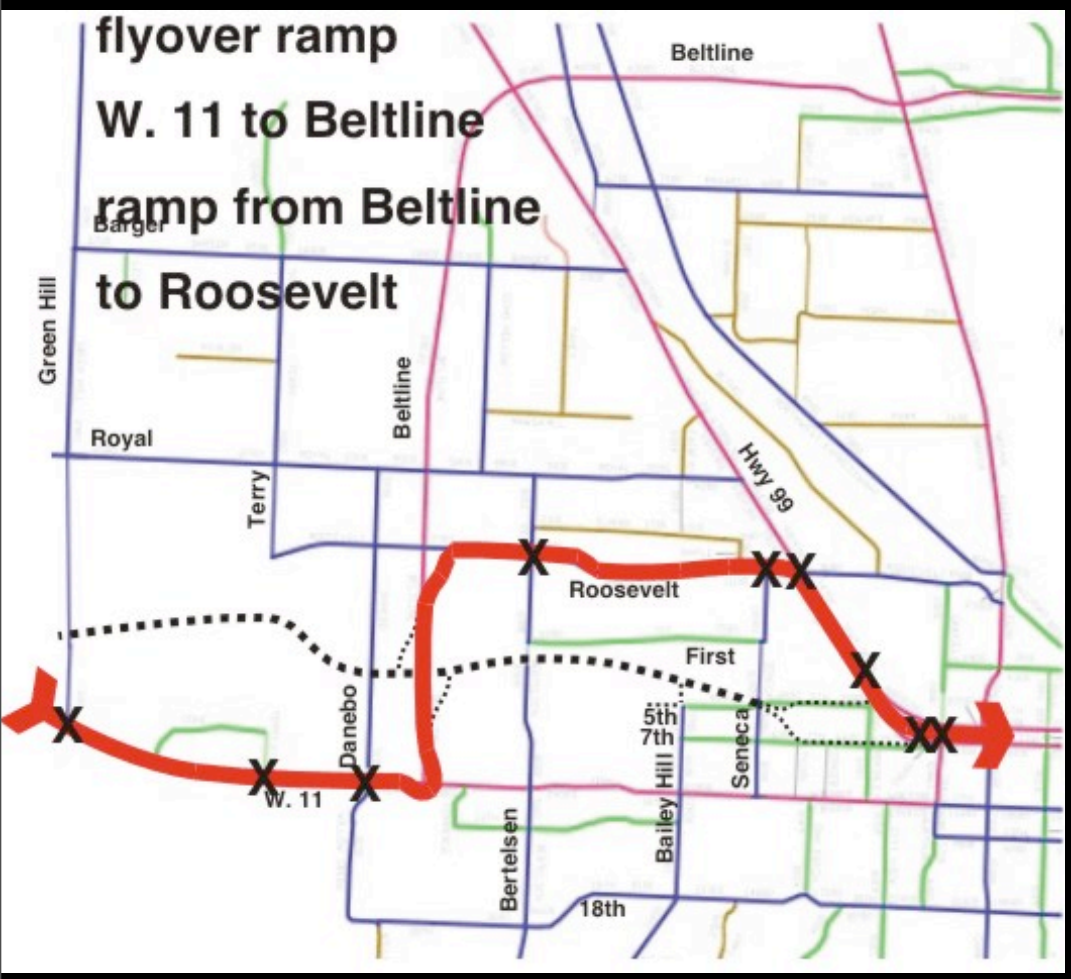
West Eugene Parkway

Bi-Mart store to Bi-Mart warehouse

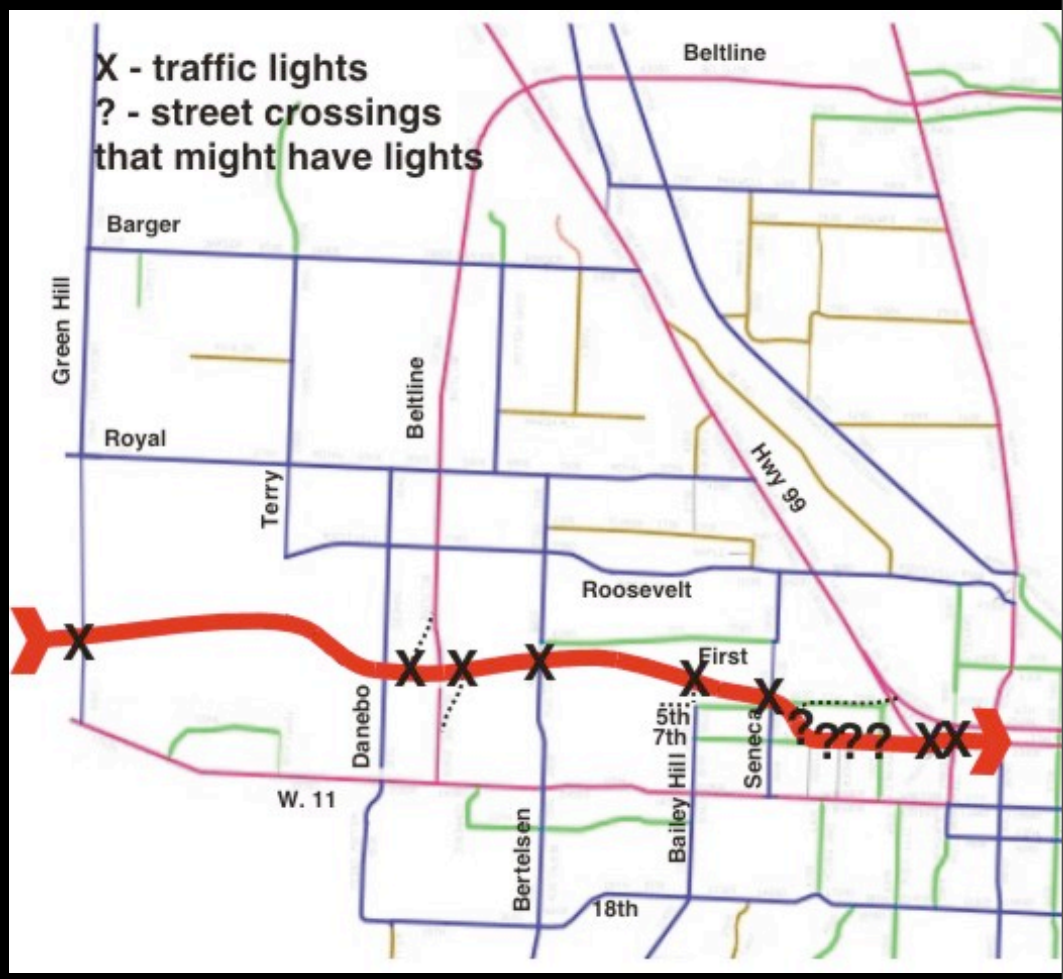
WEP is a more contorted route

If Bi-Mart wants to use the WEP to travel from its store at Danebo and Terry to its warehouse at First and Seneca, they would have a longer and more contorted route.

WETLANDS alternative



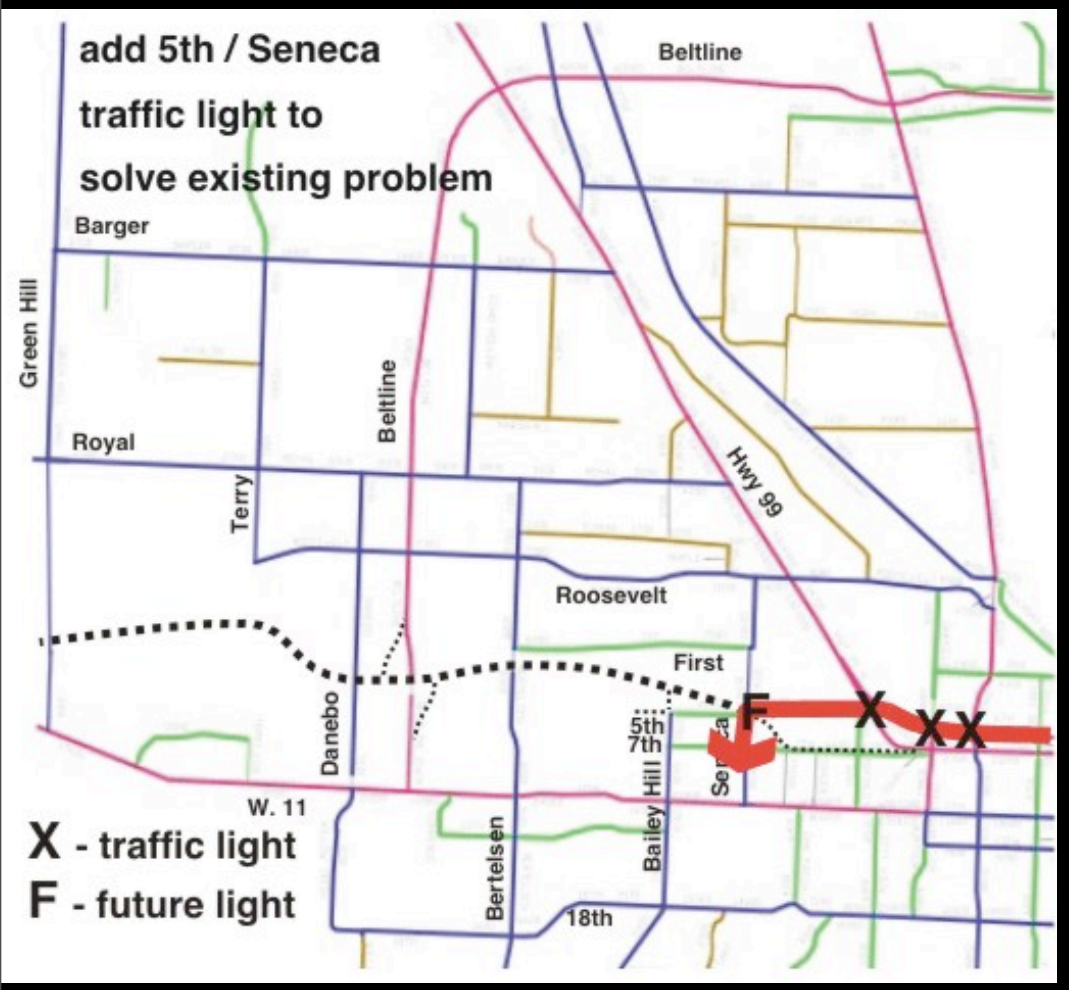
West Eugene Parkway



WETLANDS would have less traffic lights

A drive along the full length of the WEP would have more traffic lights than the 11 – Beltline – Roosevelt – 99 route.
However, most of the WEP traffic would be in the easternmost segment (east of Seneca!), few trips would be from Veneta all the way to downtown Eugene. Most trip generation in west Eugene involves one of the three residential regions (River Road, Bethel, south hills) described previously.

WETLANDS alternative



West Eugene Parkway

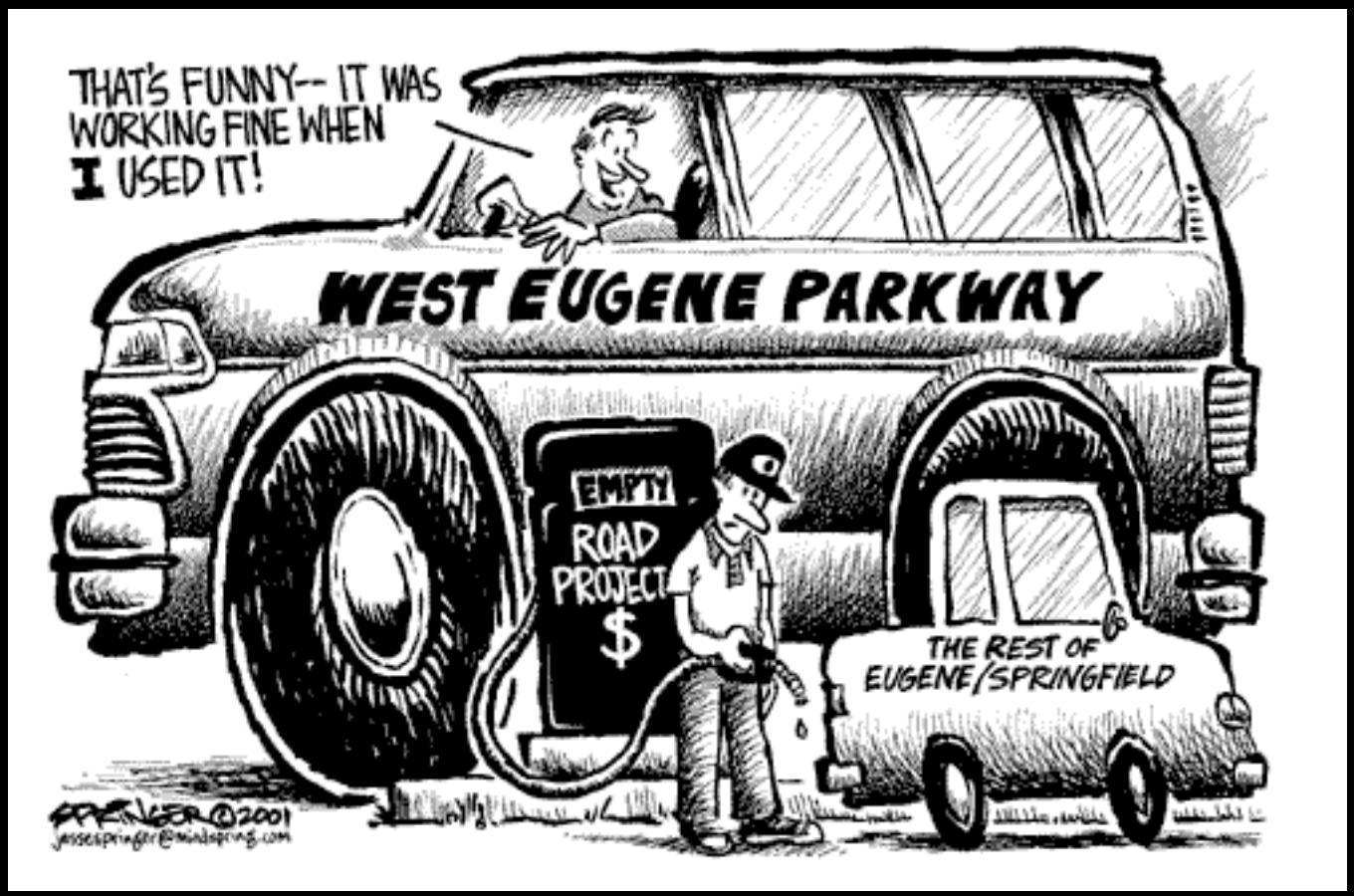
WETLANDS is direct route to Home Depot

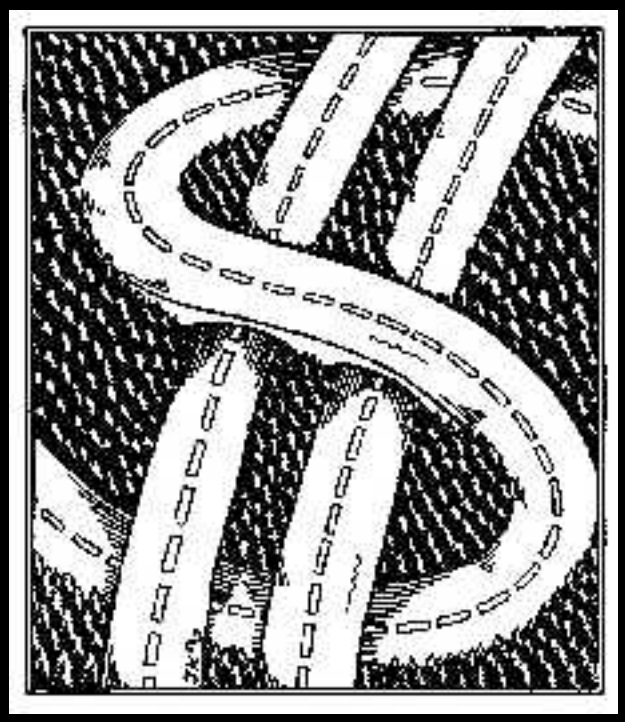
WEP would not have left turns at Seneca

Since the WEP would not permit left turn lanes from WEP to Seneca, a driver from downtown Eugene traveling to the new Home Depot chain store would have a more contorted route with the WEP than without it.

OTHER PEOPLES MONEY

$17 million - $88 million - $169 million





"Legislative, county and local leaders support this project. Gas tax dollars will be used to build it."
Robert Ackerman, State Representative

"The state is committed to building the Parkway. If we turn this project down, the money will go to another city."
Jim Torrey, Eugene Mayor

"This is a state project. $17 million has already been earmarked for the first phase and the state is committed to all phases."
Bobby Green, Lane County Board of Commissioners

"The state has done everything it can to get this project ready for construction. Passing 20-54 gives the go-ahead to begin building the West Eugene Parkway."
Randy Papé, Oregon Transportation

Move the Parkway Forward Now!

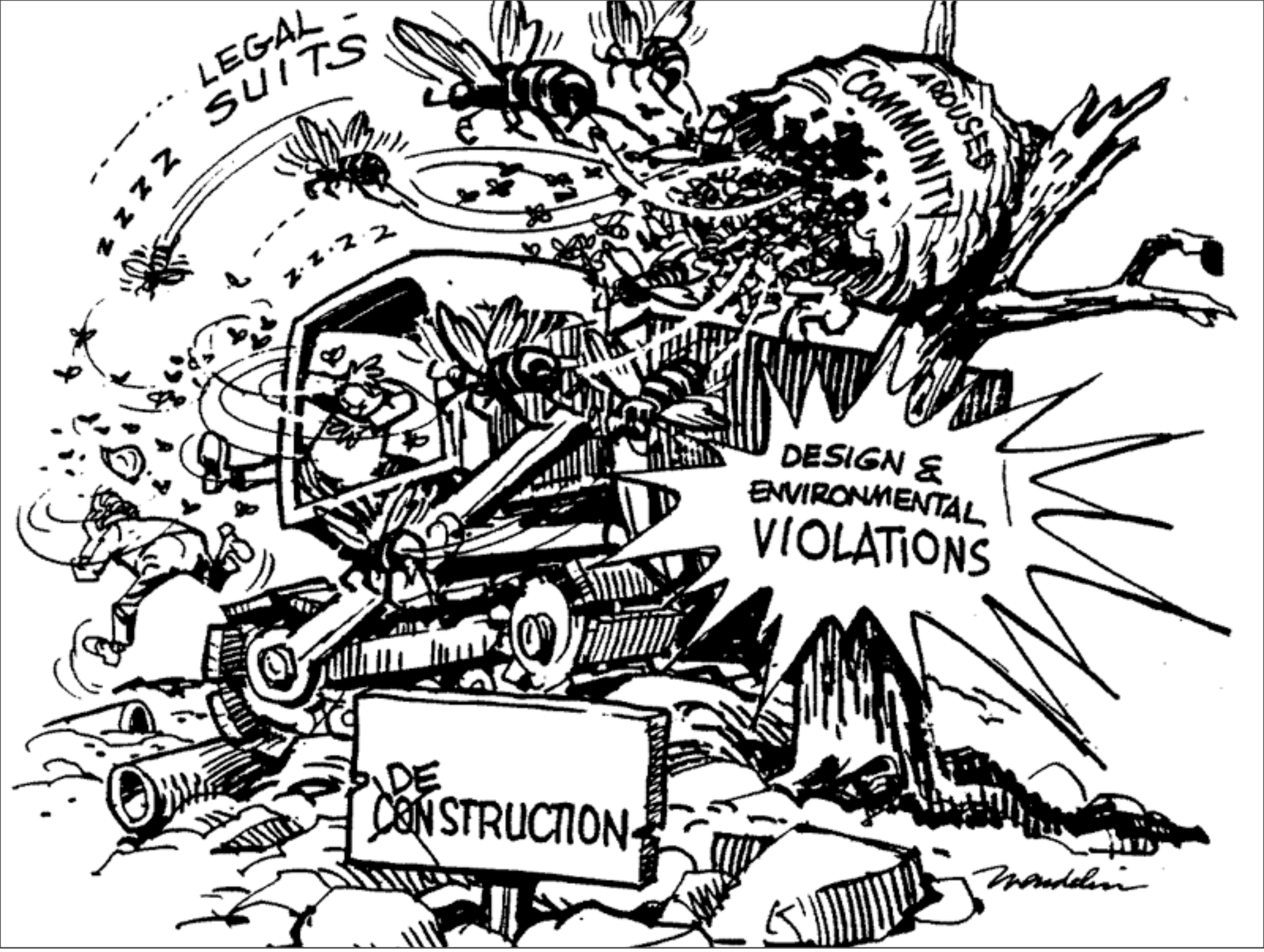
Parkway YES!

VOTE FOR 54

It's needed.
It's the best route.
The money is there.

The political patrons of the parkway promised the public in 2001 that "the money is there" even though they knew this was not really true. Every statement in this political pamphlet was not true. The $17 million appropriated for the WEP could easily be transfered to finish Beltline. The State has never "committed" to all phases (since the EIS is not approved) and in 2001 the need for the interchange with Beltline was kept out of public discussion by the supporters. Passing this local referendum did not give the "go-ahead" to build WEP, since that would be a federal decision requiring the approval of the Final EIS and Record of Decision - something that Randy Pape clearly knows. Furthermore, the $17 million for the initial phase is not the full cost of that initial phase, but no revised, real construction cost estimate has been made public.

LAWS


LEGAL SUITS
NZZZ
ZZZZ
ABOUSED COMMUNITY
DESIGN & ENVIRONMENTAL VIOLATIONS
DE CONSTRUCTION

WETLANDS vs.
Federal Highway Administration

- National Environmental Policy Act
- cooperating agencies not involved
- failure to meet purpose and need
- Peak Oil and Peak Traffic - Year 2025
- Endangered Species Act
- Clean Water Act - section 404
- Environmental Justice
- Section 4(f)
- Land and Water Conservation Fund
- segmentation, independent utility and logical termini (Veneta and I-105)

A detailed discussion of the legal obstacles to the WEP is on the WETLANDS website - click on “laws.”

The project manager at ODOT admitted in June that he had not read the National Environmental Policy Act, the law that governs Environmental Impact Statements. NEPA is not a large law - it does not take a long time to read, although interpreting it through 35 years of court opinions and precedent can take years.

The BLM and the Army Corps of Engineers are “Cooperating Agencies” for the Final EIS, they plan to use the EIS as the basis for their decisions to allow the WEP to cross the BLM lands and to destroy wetlands. But NEPA requires that Cooperating Agencies be part of the scoping of alternatives and the draft phase of the EIS - which neither BLM nor Army Corps were part of.

The WETLANDS website shows how the alternative meets the “purpose and need” in the EIS better than the WEP.

The WEP is designed for traffic in the year 2025, after Peak Oil. The EIS needs to be revised to include the end of cheap oil.

The WEP would require a license to kill endangered species, whereas the WETLANDS alternative would avoid this problem.

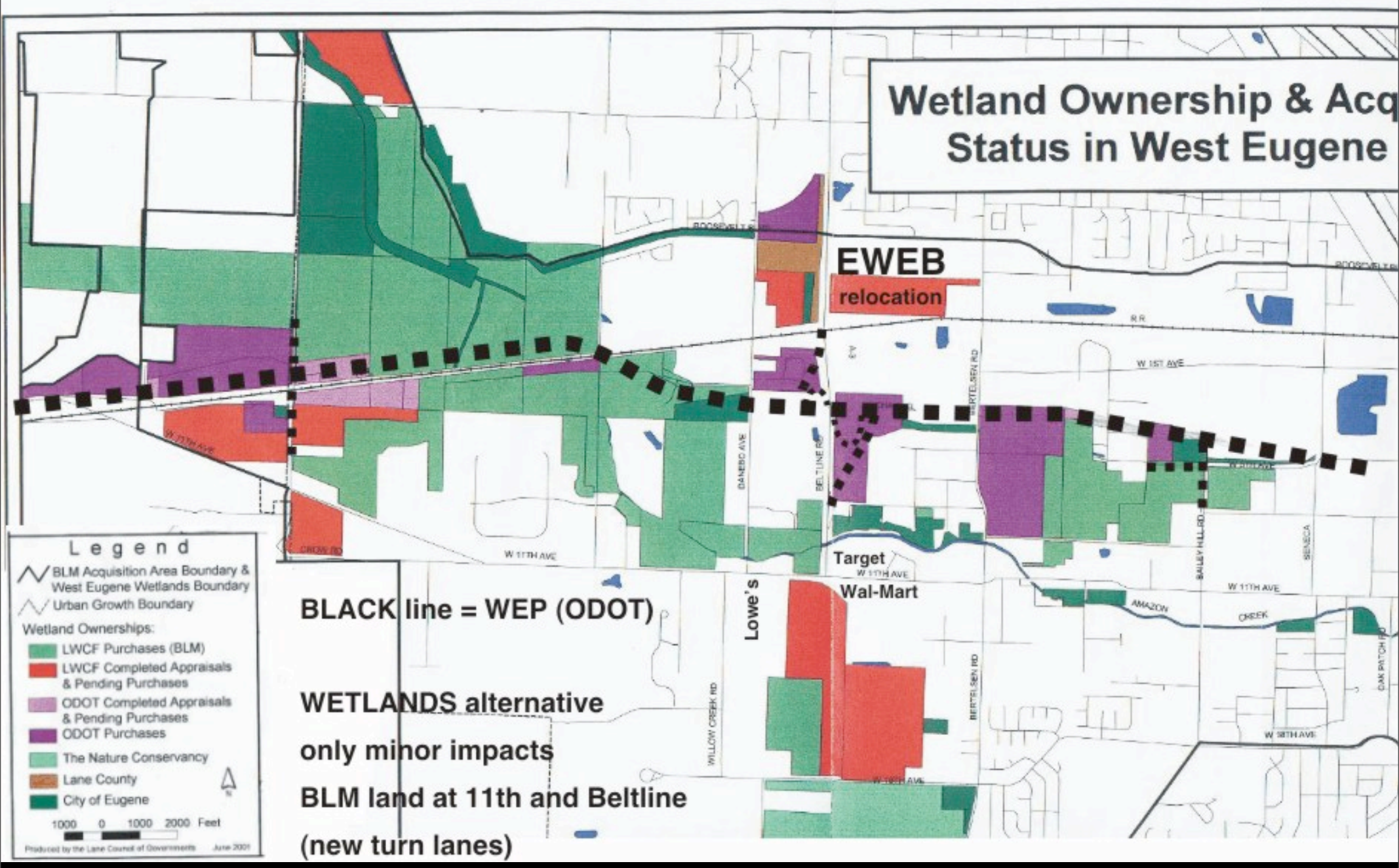
The WEP would require a permit to fill wetlands and floodplains, whereas the WETLANDS alternative would have minimal impacts.

The WEP would worsen the traffic, noise and air pollution problems in Whiteaker, the poorest and most minority part of Eugene. Federal law requires examination of these “environmental injustice” impacts.

Section 4(f) of the Transportation Act prohibits federal funds for roads through parks if there is a prudent and feasible alternative (such as the WETLANDS alternative).

Nature preserves purchased with Land and Water Conservation Funds cannot be used for other purposes such as road construction.

The issues of segmentation, independent utility and logical termini prevent piecemealing the parkway and also require examination of the full impact of the project from Veneta to I-105.



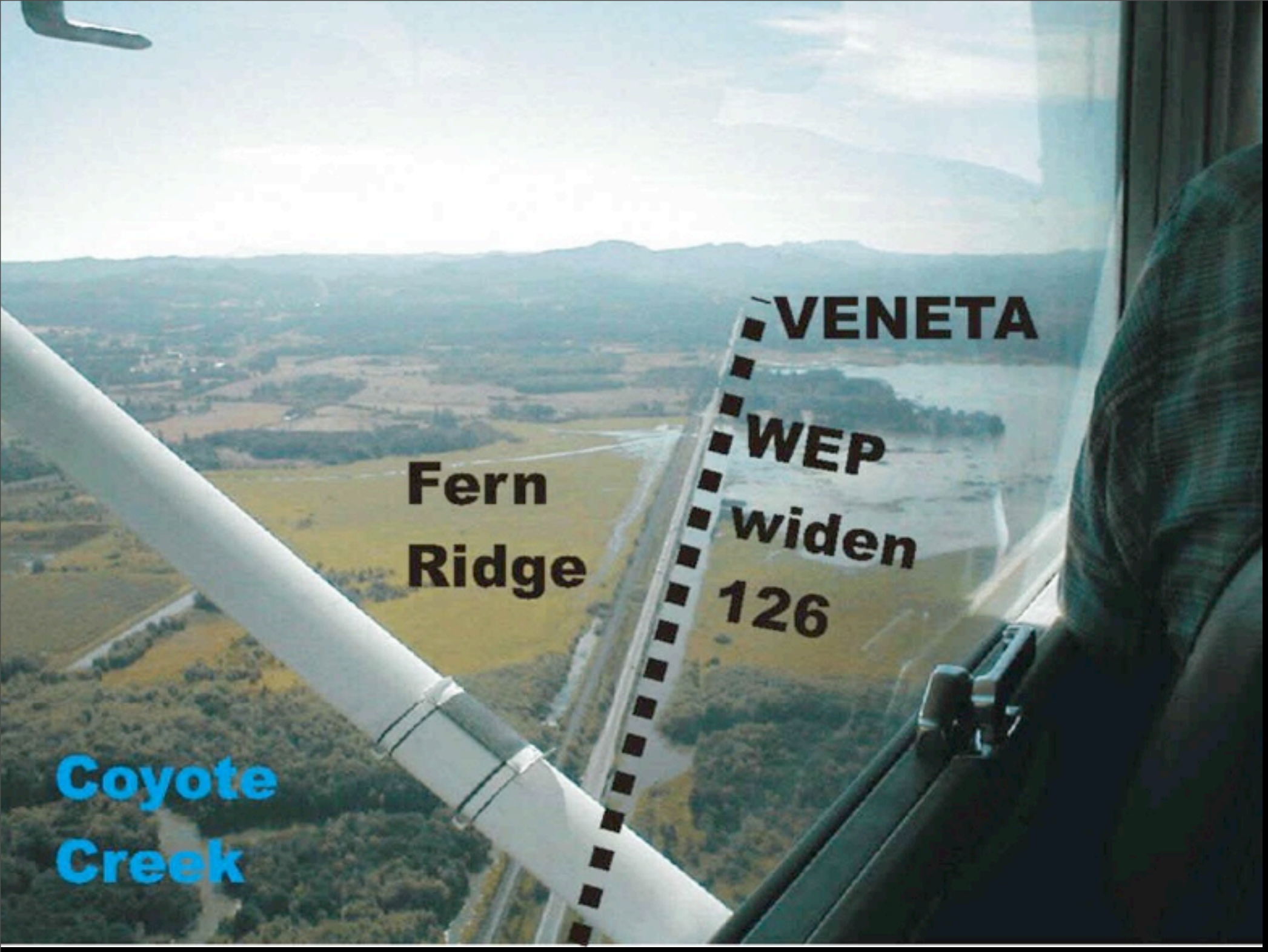
This map from Lane Council of Governments shows who owns what. The BLM lands are in light green and were bought with Land and Water Conservation Funds. The 1997 Supplemental Draft EIS admitted these properties are also subject to Section 4(f) protection, but since then ODOT and FHWA have tried to claim that they aren't covered (since the highway would be virtually impossible if 4(f) had to be included in the analysis.) City land is in dark green (note the two parcels in the path). ODOT land is in purple. Red shows land that BLM wants to buy (they have bought the parcel south and west of Wal-Mart). Brown is County. Very light green is Nature Conservancy.

“Protected Natural Area” or WEP wrong-of-way?

This shows the proposed WEP crossing of Amazon – is it a protected natural area, or the wrong of way for a highway?

Bertelsen Slough public land owned by ODOT that could become a park

Ground Zero “closed area” no vehicles allowed?

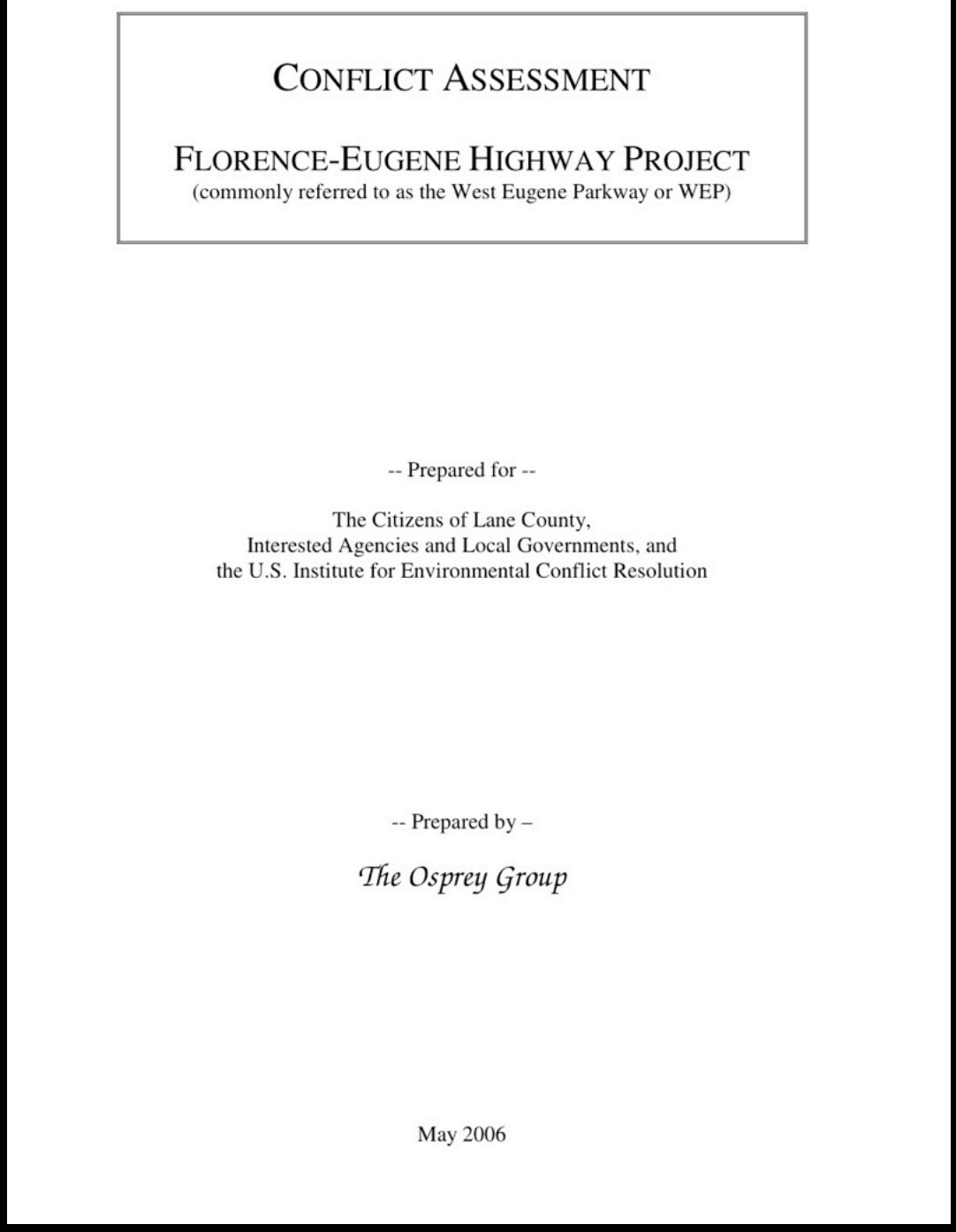


Ultimately, the WEP would force a widening of 126 across Fern Ridge to Veneta. The western terminus of the highway is about five miles from Veneta – it would not do anything to fix the dangerous road condition on the causeways across the lake. If there really is enough money to build the full WEP, then some of the money should be diverted from WEP to add a shoulder for safety to this narrow road, and possibly a passing lane (on the dry parts of the road, not on the lake).

West 11th
west of Green Hill

about one mile from the WEP's western terminus

Some WEP proponents imply the highway is needed to get to the coast faster, even though the WEP's western terminus would be 52 miles from Highway 101 in Florence!



CONFLICT ASSESSMENT

FLORENCE-EUGENE HIGHWAY PROJECT
(commonly referred to as the West Eugene Parkway or WEP)

-- Prepared for --

The Citizens of Lane County,
Interested Agencies and Local Governments, and
the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution

-- Prepared by –

The Osprey Group

May 2006

Osprey Group collaboration proposal ignores June 2001 consensus of City, County, State & Feds no mention of WETLANDS alternative

The “Osprey Group” consultants hired by the City and FHWA published a report in May 2001 that pretended to be neutral but was very biased. The title page’s naming of the WEP as the “Florence Eugene Highway” shows a subtle effort to promote the parkway (yes, the name is technically correct since that is the official name for Oregon Route 126, but it’s very misleading about what the WEP really is).

The Osprey Group ignored the implications of the sabotage of the June 2001 West Eugene Charette “No Build” consensus.

The Osprey Group’s John Huyler privately stated that he thought the WETLANDS alternative was well described, but their report did not even hint that there is already a prudent and feasible option in the public domain. It’s worth noting that WEP opponents who publicly opposed the Crandall Arambula fake alternative were excluded from their interviews until there were public criticisms of the secrecy involved in selecting the guest lists of interviewees.

It is strange that this report examines whether collaboration on an alternative is possible while ignoring what happened in 2001 when all levels of government agreed to cancel the project? The Osprey Group now proposes to spend a year and a half to have an extended collaboration, even though in 18 hours WEP proponents were able to agree to cancel it in June 2001. And the report implies that the only substantive objection to the WEP from opponents is protection of wetlands and rare species when in reality this is one of many problems with the Porkway.