

The Shoppers' Paradise Concept

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Springfield, Oregon in 1957 tried an experiment utilizing a shoppers' mall within the Central Business District. This experiment was for a short duration, as has been the case with other cities trying similar experiments. During the period of the experiment, sales promotion and advertising activities were stressed, and businesses extended their shopping hours to encourage residents to do their shopping in the CBD. A review of the evaluation of shoppers' comments indicates that shoppers generally favor the mall operation, however, reactions were not unanimous. Many unfavorable comments were indicated.

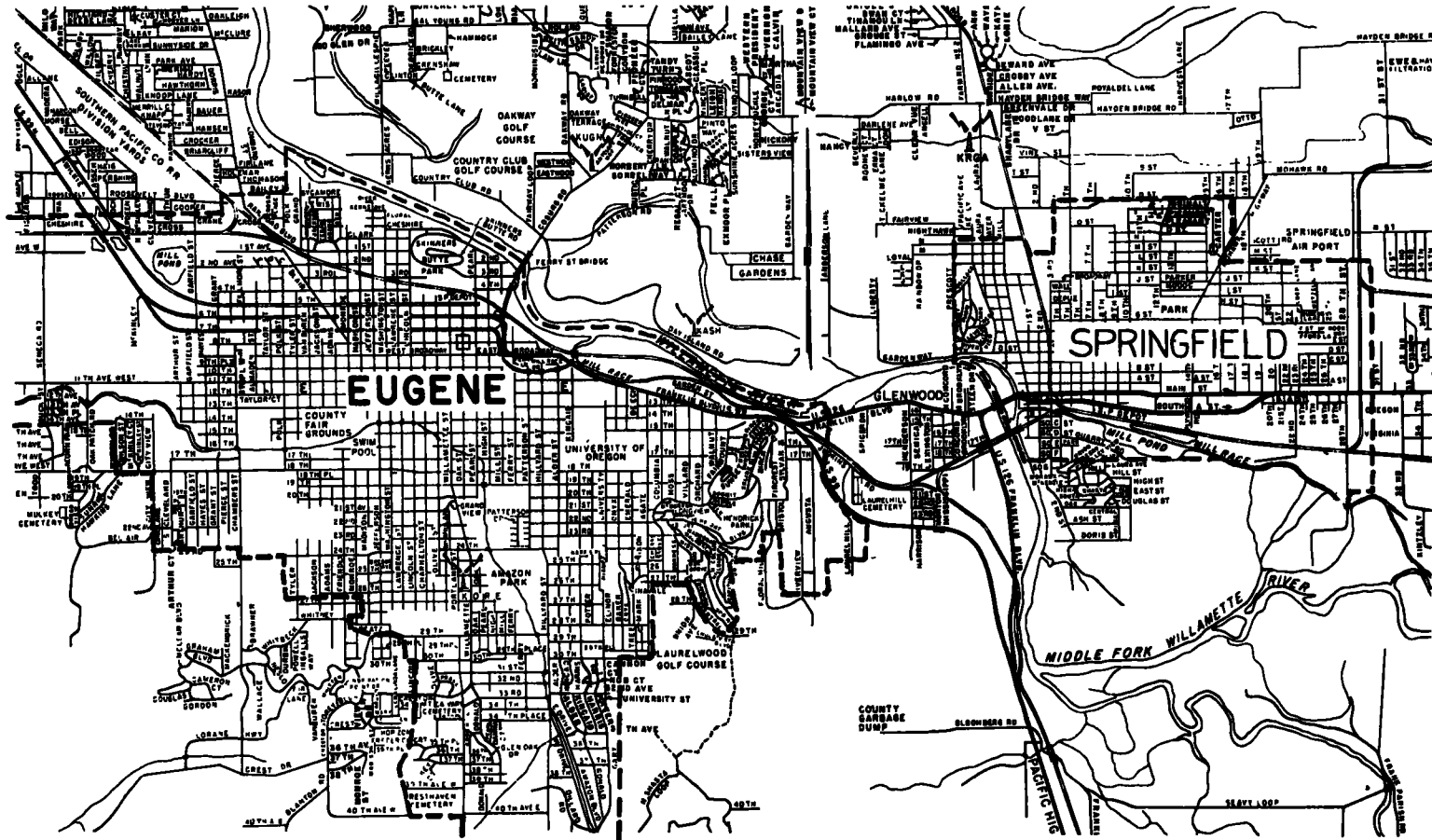
A review of similar experiments in other cities indicates that other cities who have tried the "Shoppers' Paradise" concept utilize almost the same pattern of inception, procedure and accomplishment. The name given to the experiment may be different and the results may vary to a slight degree; however, the analysis of one could almost be used as an analysis of all.

The experiments to date do not provide comprehensive evidence of the long-range effect which might be expected from a shoppers' mall. Therefore, there is a need for an experiment on a long-range basis, with adequate planning and procedures developed to provide realistic indications of the true effect of a shoppers' mall before valid conclusions can be drawn or operational criteria recommended.

●THE PROBLEMS confronting the CBD of urban centers with the advent and the increased promotion of shopping centers removed from the established downtown areas, have increased to a point where city officials as well as merchants are becoming alarmed. Psychology is having its day. The average merchant doing business in the established core of the city is pessimistic about the future, confused as to what can be done to alleviate the situation, and is either actively or passively looking for a site to relocate. The city officials are concerned because the CBD represents the economic base for the community, and as such must be preserved. Officials do not seem to be as pessimistic as the merchant, but are as equally uncertain as to what could be done.

Historically, the downtown area has been the hub of the community, and virtually all retail transactions were conducted within its well-defined limits. To "go to town" on Saturday night was synonymous with a pleasant social evening. People shopped for the sheer enjoyment of meeting and chatting with friends and neighbors, and as a utilitarian means of purchasing the requirements for the coming week. Shopping was an event looked forward to by young and old alike, the young to spread their nickel allowance as far as it would go, and the old to barter gossip and currency for goods. Everyone enjoyed this and was happy. Then came the war years with their industrial expansion. Communities grew into towns, towns grew into cities, and cities grew even larger. The post war years saw the greatest migration from farm to city that has ever been experienced.

The shift in the population from the farm to the city, along with the general increase in the economic standing of the general public has brought about the large increase in automobile ownership. The availability of the private motor vehicle and the desires of individuals to express their feeling for freedom of movement has reduced the emphasis in usage of mass transit for transportation to the use of the private automobile resulting in traffic volumes which are multiples of the pre-war traffic and which has congested the central portions of cities. The resulting congestion developed an attitude on the part of local residents of refusing to enter the congested zones except when absolutely necessary.



MAP OF EUGENE-SPRINGFIELD AREA

Figure 1. Map of Eugene-Springfield area.

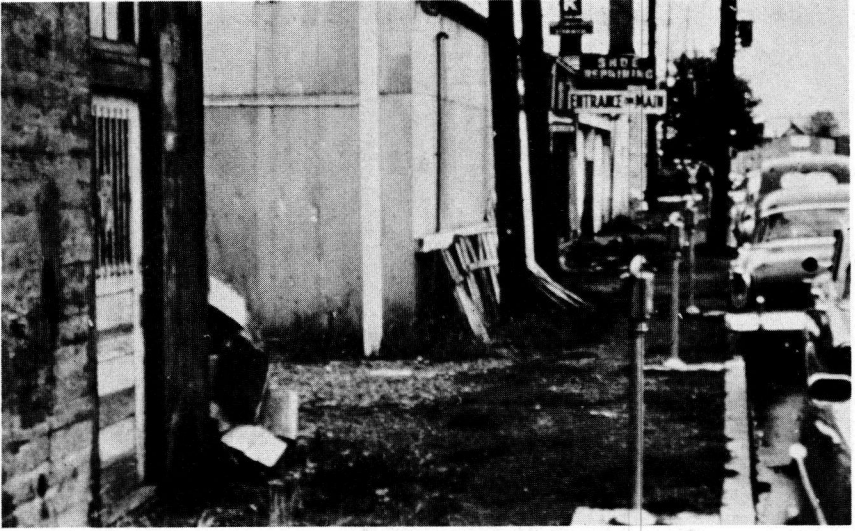


Figure 2. Scene in the CBD showing physical deterioration and vacant buildings.

Farsighted merchants speculating on the permanency of existing attitudes and conditions expanded their businesses to the heretofore restricted realm of the residential area. Shopping centers were formed, designed to serve an area rather than the city as a whole. Many located near new or anticipated residential areas where real estate values were correspondingly low and where the purchase of more land than currently needed would allow additional retail expansion and provide convenient parking areas. One of the primary criticisms of the shopper to the downtown area was the lack of parking facilities—these criticisms were answered by the shopping centers through their construction of expansive, free parking lots. Shoppers deserted the CBD. Shopping at the centers was convenient and merchandising was generally as good as that downtown. It was not long after that a hue and cry was heard from businesses still functioning in the CBD. Sales were down, overhead remained high, and the cream of the consumer dollar was being separated and funneled to the shopping centers. Wailing as such, however, did not alleviate the situation. It still existed, and no one knew how to attack the problem, much less solve it. Recently, however, perhaps through desperation, attempts have been made to seek a solution. Led by individuals generally youthful in age as well as in spirit, experiments have been spontaneously under-

taken in various cities throughout the country. One form of experimentation has been the establishment of shopping malls within the CBD such as the "shoppers' paradise."

EXPERIMENT IN OREGON

What constituted a "shoppers' paradise?" Is it something more than being able to park within one block of the destination? Is it well-displayed merchandise at lowest prices? Is it a pleasant atmosphere and a leisurely pace? Is it one, some, or all of these things that would cause a shopper to stop and sigh, "This is Paradise"?

In August of 1957 the City of Springfield, Oregon, tried an experiment using a shoppers' mall in the CBD. Springfield is a city of approximately 13,000 population located in Lane County near the south end of the Willamette River Valley. The primary industry of Springfield is wood and wood products.

The City of Eugene is located within a few miles of Springfield. Eugene, which has a population of approximately 45,000 people, is the major trading area for the metro-

TABLE 1
POPULATION AND RETAIL SALES FOR SELECTED OREGON CITIES

City	Population ¹			Retail Sales (\$1,000) ²		
	1950 Census	1957 Est.	% Increase	1954 Census	1956 Est.	% Increase
Albany	10,115	12,800	26	\$25,745	\$27,258	6
Astoria	12,331	12,331	-	20,732	21,589	4
Corvallis	16,207	18,500	14	23,963	25,657	7
Roseburg	8,390	13,000	55	35,197	40,255	14
Springfield	10,807	13,500	25	16,036	19,192	20
Eugene	35,879	46,480	30	98,253	108,631	11
Lane County	125,776	151,690	21	163,915	182,523	12

¹Source: 1950 Data, U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1950 Census of Population; 1957 Data, Official estimates by the Oregon State Board of Census.

²Source: 1954 Data, U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1954 Census of Business; 1956 Data, Estimates by Sales Management Magazine.

politan area which includes Springfield, Eugene, and the surrounding area and contains approximately 100,000 people. Figure 1 shows the relative location of the two cities and the suburban development within the metropolitan area.

During the past several years, the CBD of Springfield has experienced considerable physical deterioration. Buildings have been vacated and maintenance and upkeep of the establishments have been poor. Evidence of this physical deterioration and the vacation can be seen in Figure 2. During this same period of time the volume of retail trade in the CBD has shown some decrease. Comparative data as shown on Table 1 indicate that Springfield during the period from 1954 to 1956 has shown increases in retail sales. These increases, however, have been experienced primarily in shopping centers and not in the CBD. The loss of retail sales in the CBD has resulted in a low confidence in the future by the merchants in the area.

Late in 1956, the Springfield Chamber of Commerce and the City Planning Commission recognized these symptoms of physical deterioration and initiated a preliminary study to evaluate the functions of the CBD and to note its physical limitations. The following four points were concluded:

1. The McKenzie Highway, US 126, traversed the CBD over a one-way couplet and carried approximately 10,000 vehicles per day on each leg of the couplet. The relatively high traffic volume and the high percentage of log truck traffic in the traffic stream was causing congestion in the CBD.
2. Parking due to the congestion was difficult and hazardous.
3. Ribbon-like development of the business district discouraged pedestrian shopping.
4. The downtown area was physically unattractive and did not provide a pleasant shopping environment.

Figure 3 shows the congestion on Main Street prior to the establishment of the shoppers' mall.

Upon completion of the initial analysis, the suggestion that a shoppers' paradise ex-

periment be conducted was advanced and agreed upon. The purpose of the experiment was initially aimed at the restoration of confidence in the downtown business community.

Permission was sought and granted from the City of Springfield and the Oregon State Highway Commission to initiate the experiment. The City Council passed the necessary ordinance, and the Highway Commission agreed to reroute the westbound leg of the US 126 one-way couplet one block north of the CBD.

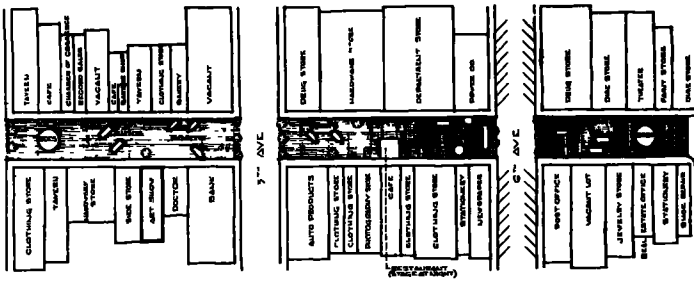
It was decided by the working committee to conduct the experiment in conjunction with a retail promotion in an attempt to attract as many shoppers as possible.

The experiment in downtown revitalization was conducted between August 15-26, 1957. Three blocks in the CBD had traffic taken off to form a mall. Figure 4 shows details of the shoppers' mall and its relation to the CBD. The area took on a carnival atmosphere. The street was landscaped by bringing in small trees, rides for the children, and various exhibits were interspersed throughout the area, benches were provided for leisure, and music was piped in during the day and live entertainment was featured in the evenings. Figure 5 shows street scenes within the mall area during shoppers' paradise.

The rerouting of the McKenzie Highway, US 126, around the CBD during shoppers' paradise for the establishment of a pedestrian haven by the elimination of vehicles also eliminated the parking facilities located within the mall. Prior to the experiment, parallel parking was permitted along both sides of Main Street. During shoppers' paradise, additional parking facilities were provided by using one block of Main Street at either extremity of the mall and converting parking from parallel to diagonal. In addition to these two blocks of Main Street changed to diagonal parking, three of the four north-south cross-streets traversing through the mall area were changed to diagonal parking for one block on each side of Main Street. The additional parking provided from the change from parallel to diagonal parking compensated for the parking spaces lost due to the creation of the mall. On those streets for which diagonal parking was



Figure 3. Congestion on Main Street prior to the shoppers' mall.



The Mall In Detail

RESIDENTIAL AREA

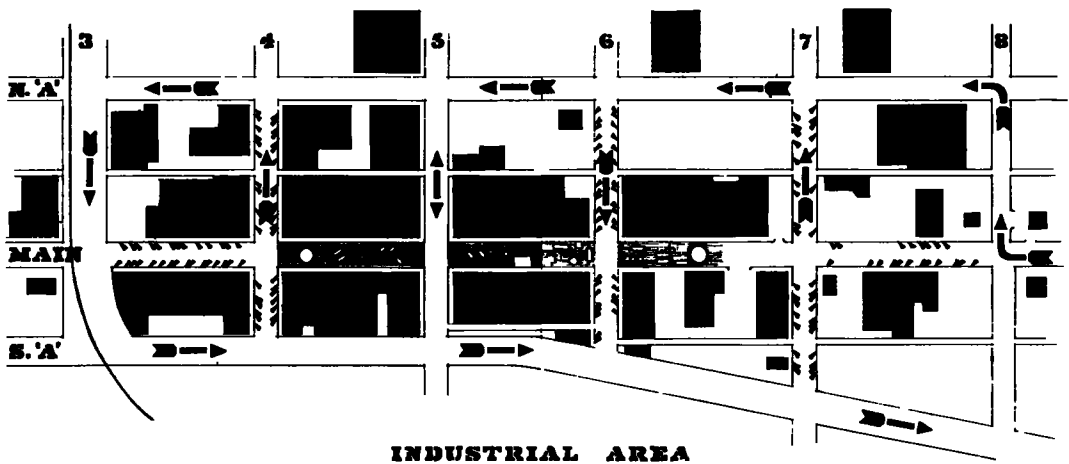


Figure 4. Map of downtown Springfield—Shoppers' Paradise.

allowed, one-way traffic was established. These changes resulted in the elimination of congestion in the parking areas by eliminating the conflict with fast moving traffic and by bringing the shopper to the edge of the shopping area and not into it. Figure 6 is an aerial photograph of the mall area and indicates the extent of the mall area and the parking available adjacent to the mall area.

Within the limits of the mall pedestrians were given complete freedom of movement between establishments. There were two cross-streets traversing through the mall which were left open to vehicular traffic, however, traffic volumes were relatively light and the conflict with vehicles and pedestrians was not serious. Landscaping, exhibits, and other attractions made walking a more enjoyable experience. Benches were erected for shopper use and traffic noise was replaced by relaxing music. Stores remained open until 9:00 p. m. for shopper convenience and business establishments outside the mall were invited to participate with street displays. The shoppers' paradise was continued for 10 days during and after which shoppers were interviewed to determine their opinions on different aspects of the experiment.

OTHER EXPERIMENTS

Springfield, Oregon, was not alone in its concern about revitalizing the CBD. Over the past several years other cities have made an attempt along similar lines. These include such cities as Stockton and Pomona, California; Waco, Texas; and Grand Haven, Michigan, to name a few. Meanwhile, the list of cities making plans for shoppers' malls continues to grow.



Figure 5. Street scenes within the shoppers' mall.

In reviewing accounts of other attempts along the "shoppers' paradise" concept, it is amazing how regular the pattern of inception, procedure, and accomplishments become. The name given to the experiment may be different. In Stockton, California it was "Vacation Playtime," in Pomona it was used in conjunction with the Christmas season, and in Waco, Texas, it was "The Cotton Mall" but the presentation and the effect are virtually identical.

A review of information available of other experiments indicated that some cities are more adaptable because of their physical layout, and that in general, most studies have been conducted over a short period of time.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In evaluating the shoppers' statements from the Springfield experiment, the following conclusions were derived:

Favorable to shoppers' paradise—

1. Truck traffic was detrimental to the CBD.
2. Elimination of traffic noises impressed more people than any other single aspect of the experiment.
3. Traffic moved through Springfield 3 to 5 minutes faster than normal.
4. Parking was more convenient.
5. Elimination of parking meter fees during the experiment though stressed by few shoppers was credited by many merchants as a factor in the success of the experiment.
6. Shoppers appreciated the ease of movement between establishments.



Figure 6. Aerial photograph of CBD and shoppers' mall.

7. More "family" shopping was noted.
8. One-fourth of shopper comments related to the enjoyable shopping atmosphere.

Unfavorable to shoppers' paradise—

1. Changed traffic pattern was confusing and appeared to affect some businesses.
2. Merchants were unable to accept the elimination of vehicular traffic as well as parking facilities in front of their establishments.
3. Parking facilities were too few and some shoppers complained of the distance between parking and shopping.
4. Some businesses in the mall do not benefit from exclusively pedestrian traffic.
5. Businesses outside the mall either lost business or failed to profit from the increased number of shoppers in town.
6. Exhibits were well-patronized, but failed to pull shoppers into low pedestrian count areas as anticipated.
7. Entertainment may draw crowds but does not necessarily promote sales.
8. The carnival approach would not lend itself well to a long term program.

Table 2 summarizes the shoppers' opinions in cities of Springfield, Oregon, Grand Haven, Michigan, and Waco, Texas.

TABLE 2
SHOPPERS' OPINIONS OF SHOPPER MALL

Shoppers	Liked or Thought Mall Should Be Continued (%)	Did Not Like Or Thought Mall Should Not Be Continued (%)
Springfield, Oregon	77	23
Grand Haven, Michigan	63	37
Waco, Texas	76	24

A study of gross retail income indicates that the mall did not confer equal or equivalent benefits on all the retail merchants involved. During the ten days the merchants on the mall reported a 14 percent increase while those off the mall reported a 5 percent decrease compared to any 10-day period of the previous August.

Accompanying the experiment was a sales promotion and advertising program which was not conducted during the previous August. The results of the comparison in retail income, therefore, becomes somewhat questionable, inasmuch as the entire change could have resulted from sales promotion and advertising activities.

From the viewpoint of moving traffic on US 126, the program in Springfield was successful. During the 10-day period there was but one accident involving the rerouted westbound traffic. Traffic flowed much more smoothly than it had on Main Street. Although the four right angle turns slowed traffic some, there was neither the conflict with pedestrians at unsignalized intersections nor with vehicles engaged in parking and un-parking, with a resultant over-all decrease in time necessary to travel around the CBD. Before becoming too enthusiastic about a shoppers' mall, however, it would be well to review the peculiar physical characteristics of Springfield. The shift of traffic from Main Street to North "A" Street had, with the exception of introducing right angle turns, no effect on traffic other than the lengthening of the distance between a pair of one-way streets from one to two blocks. Springfield has very little north-south traffic, so the angle parking on the cross-streets did not interfere with the normal flow of traffic, particularly so with diagonal parking on one-way streets. Furthermore, the business district of Springfield does not have a square pattern as found in most cities, but tends to stretch ribbon-like along Main Street. The ribbon development made it very easy to route traffic on the one-way couplet one block north around the CBD. Many cities would find this adjustment in traffic routing quite difficult. Heavier cross traffic through the mall area might not allow angle parking which in turn might eliminate the

possibility of replacing the parking area lost within the mall area. In some cities the loss of parking area would be enough to defeat an experiment of this type.

The results of the experiment in other cities though varying to a slight degree, form such a standard pattern that the analysis of one could almost be used for an analysis of another. Findings as set forth for Springfield serve all cities studied, and City Officials evaluating the experiments agree that the mall even though tending to revitalize business over a short period of time presents four major problems.

1. Parking—amount and quality.
2. Some businesses are not compatible with exclusive shopper mall type operation.
3. Large investments are needed to adapt buildings and adjust traffic routings to the mall layout.
4. The lack of information as to the success which could be anticipated on a long-term mall project when applied to an existing CBD.

SUMMARY

In reviewing all available reports, it appears that the problems found in Springfield were problems elsewhere. Some cities are more adaptable because of their physical layout to the mall operation. There is no indication that success over a short period of time is assurance that this is the answer to the question of revitalizing the heart of the city. The mall may be the answer, but as of now it has failed to achieve complete success even over a short period of time. The Springfield experiment suggests that formidable difficulty stands in the way of the implementation of such a change as the creation of a mall out of the existing business district. A spirit of cooperation is essential between all merchants for the voluntary achievement of such a project and such spirit generally does not exist.

A straightforward answer as to whether the mall arrangements have been successful or unsuccessful cannot be made since so much depends upon individual point of view. A review of the data available indicates that considerable effort remains before an answer can be found with respect to the value of a shoppers' mall. Most cities have entered into the experiment over a short period of time and have not made a comprehensive analysis of the effect of the mall.

Additional research and study is required which must include a long-range operation of a shoppers' mall in the CBD with more adequate planning and research to evaluate the effect of the mall. Some of the items which must be considered in this evaluation would be:

1. The effect on traffic routing.
2. Parking—supply, demand, and usage, and parking-control.
3. Motor vehicle accidents.
4. Use of mass transit.
5. Attitude of shoppers.
6. Attitude of merchants.
7. Adaptability of various types of physical areas.
8. Adaptability of various types of businesses.
9. Gross retail sales.

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Information on the shoppers' malls in other cities was obtained from Harvey Terrill, City Manager, Grand Haven, Michigan; Glen A. Crawford, City Engineer, Pomona, California; W. R. Shroeder, Traffic Engineer, Stockton, California; and R. T. Gregory, Director of Planning and Traffic, Waco, Texas.

William D. Albright, Economic Investigation Engineer, Planning Survey Section, Traffic Engineering Division, Oregon State Highway Department, was responsible for the coordinated review of all available reports, and assisted in the preparation of much of this report.

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