

## Archived Story

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Joe Squire, center, consultant project manager from the Oregon Department of Transportation, describes the progress and changes made to the U.S. Highway 20 Pioneer Mountain to Eddyville project during a Tuesday morning tour with local officials. The group included, among others, Alan Brown, a member of the Oregon Transportation Commission; Onno Husing, Oregon Coastal Zone Management Association director; and Tom Picciano, communications manager for the Georgia-Pacific mill in Toledo. The project is on target for completion in 2011. (Courtesy photo)

### Highway 20 project on road to recovery

By Terry Dillman Of the News-Times

A lot of things are happening on the Pioneer Mountain to Eddyville Project that travelers on U.S. Highway 20 can't see from their limited viewpoint.

So said Joe Squire, consultant project manager for the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) during a Feb. 18 presentation to Toledo City Council. Squire and Joe LeRoy Best, senior estimator for project contractor Yaquina River Constructors, talked about the major problems that shut down the project prior to their joining it, and how things have progressed since work began anew.

"There are two types of rock - the stuff that moves, and the stuff that doesn't," Squire said during his Toledo presentation.

The project calls for moving 4 million cubic yards of that "stuff," only about a third of it moveable by conventional excavation means. "The rest we have to blast," he noted, showing them a clip - complete with sound effects - of one of those blasting efforts.

Squire talked about the challenges project managers encountered, both the expected and the unexpected (ancient landslides as much as 120 to 150 feet deep), which brought the work to a standstill for a few months, and threatened to shut the project down altogether. As proof of the landslides' age, he showed a photo of a red cedar found at the edge of a debris flow from a canyon when they cut into the mountain. Carbon dating set its age at 40,000 years.

"We had a design-build contract, and ODOT was unwilling to take over the project and release the contractor," he said, noting that in the end, they opted to "not go bankrupt and destroy credibility." In negotiations, both sides were motivated by avoiding the risk of being held entirely responsible for the mistakes that brought things to a screeching halt.

A change order of \$54.8 million included a permanent agreement not to pursue or assert allegations or claims against each other pertaining to pre-work suspension issues. "We wanted to get the past behind us," Squire said. "What's settled is settled."

The project has three parts: the middle, which is the section currently under construction and the only one under contract and funded, the eastern end access near Sam's Creek Road, and the western end access near Eddyville. Squire said the project's "bookends" should benefit from the federal stimulus package.

The new highway shaves about four miles off the old alignment; features 10 bridges designed to withstand a 9.0 earthquake, 12-foot lanes and eight-foot shoulders; scenic views of the Coast Range that in places go for 10 to 15 miles; and is designed for a 55-mile-per-hour speed limit with numerous passing lanes.

Work is moving along, and the big difference, Squire noted, lies in "management changes."

Squire also took a small group of local and state officials on a tour of the site Tuesday morning, including Oregon Transportation Commission member Alan Brown, and Oregon Coastal Zone Management Association Director Onno Husing, to show them what had transpired to put the project back on the road to recovery and bring it up to speed.

If all goes well, Squire said folks could see a ribbon cutting ceremony and traffic on the new highway sometime between June 1 and Aug. 31, 2011 - well ahead of the contract completion deadline of December 2011.

Terry Dillman is the assistant editor of the News-Times. Contact him at (541) 265-8571, ext 225, or [terrydillman@newportnewstimes.com](mailto:terrydillman@newportnewstimes.com).

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