

TAIJA-BELWOOD.COM

"For a Safer Cornelius Pass Road"

Mission Statement:

The Taija Belwood foundation is being established simply *"for a safer Cornelius Pass Road"*. In the spirit of cooperation and kindness we intend to heighten public awareness through activism to influence the elected officials and their public works departments to incrementally make safety improvements on this road.

Please visit us at WWW.Taija-Belwood.com



Taija Belwood Foundation is a project made possible by the Community Foundation for Student Excellence.
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**Cornelius Pass Road Safety Task Force Meeting
December 9th, 2008**

*Things alter for the worse spontaneously,
if they be not altered for the better designedly.*
Francis Bacon

**Prepared by
The Taija Belwood Foundation
'For a Safer Cornelius Pass road'**



Taija:

Words fall short...she was voted "*the most likely to give a sincere compliment*". She welcomed strangers, made friends feel special. She never left the house without saying "*I love you*", and greeted everyone with her engaging smile. She was a member of the National Honor Society, a student leader and deeply touched her teachers and faculty with her bold dreams of being a special needs teacher in Africa. Over 500 people attended her candlelight memorial and her funeral to pay respect to a 17 year old girl that touched all of us so deeply. She was profound in her thoughts and writings and wise beyond her years. She was hippie, funky, nice and cool. In her words "*Love Everyone*".

NOTES

Cornelius Pass Road.....

Cornelius Pass Road is an arterial road over Cornelius Pass in the Tualatin Mountains west of Portland Oregon. Running north-south, the road stretches between U.S. Route 30 on the north and Oregon Route 8 on the south. The road passes through Washington and Multnomah Counties, crossing the Tualatin Mountains at Cornelius Pass at the 577-foot elevation.

History - The road was built by Thomas R. Cornelius in the 1800s. The interchange with the Sunset Highway was rebuilt and widened in 1989, and the road widened to five lanes from the freeway to Cornell Road the following year. In 1996, the road was extended southward when 216th and 219th Avenues were renamed and became the southern section of the road. At that time the intersection with Baseline Road was re-aligned. The intersection with U.S. 26 was revised in 2005 with new on and off ramps extending from Cornelius Pass to the east where a railroad overpass had previously been located. In 2008, the entire Multnomah County section was changed to a no passing zone on the winding road over the Tualatin Mountains.

Details - Cornelius Pass is one of only two main north-south connecting roads in Hillsboro. The former country road handles 11,000 drivers each day and is an arterial route from the Tualatin Valley between Hillsboro to the Columbia River north of Portland. A mountainous road at points, 1,500 of the 11,000 vehicles each day are tractor-trailers on the road designed to handle up to 10,000 vehicles per day. A portion of the road, from US 26 to Cornell, is part of the National Highway System.

A Case for Change.....

Prior to Taija Belwoods death on December 31st, 2008, the Multnomah County Sheriffs office had begun to notice a disturbing trend in serious accidents on Cornelius Pass Road. Representatives of the MCSO brought their concerns to the LUT (Multnomah County Land Use and Transportation Program) and subsequently

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briefed Com. Rojo De Steffey in the Spring of 2007. At that time the finding was that “No viable options were presented”. Further adding to the stalemate was the “high cost and lack of funds” of any capitol improvements needed to address the engineering solutions. An independent safety audit of the road was included in the discussion of possible next steps during this time.

When members of Taija’s family began a petition drive to gather support for safety improvements, it became evident that there were many incremental and meaningful changes that were possible to implement and save lives on a very dangerous road. After gathering in excess of 9100 signatures, collecting over 600 personalized letters from commuters and hearing dozens of survivor stories, it became apparent that the users of this road were very willing to lend their support for change.

In 2008 the Taija Belwood Foundation presented its case to the Oregon State Senate Transportation Board, held a Scappoose Town Hall Meeting, hosted a fund raising concert and hit the streets logging hundreds of hours of activism. Numerous media reports on Television, radio and local newspapers chronicled the dangers of the road, and the need for change. Meetings have been attended with the A.C.T., Multnomah County roads and Senator Johnson with one recurrent message; let’s work together to find incremental change and prevent the loss of another life.

The Road Safety Audit Report.....

Multnomah County led the effort to commission an independent study of safety related issues with Cornelius Pass Road. After the Senate Transportation Committee ordered a task force be assembled to study like issues, it was agreed that the RSAR would be the best source of independent data from which to find solutions. Nick Forte of FWHA in cooperation with David Kim of ODOT coordinated to execute the study during the first week of July. The results of this study will be discussed today.

Although this data is certainly meaningful and welcomed, there is much that the driving public has asked for already. Ice Sensing

Focus Points.....

- 1 Increased traffic volume since inception.
- 2 Commercial Trucking >than 10% of trips
- 3 Inadequate/No shoulder width
- 4 Creek exceeds 2 ft of water and as such is a hazard.
- 5 Outdated Functional Classification
- 6 Slope grade is steeper than 3 to 1 which is considered unrecoverable.
- 7 Road has curvy alignment, some turns may exceed 15deg. in 30'
- 8 Erosion of Embankment deteriorating road base
- 9 Not adequate clear zone/Inadequate line of site for stopping distance
- 10 Unmarked, 'blind' intersections
- 11 Poor emergency access
- 12 Lack of Barriers and Guard Rails
- 13 Slides
- 14 No Size/Length/Weight limitations for Trucking
- 15 Road is an ODOT designated Haz-Mat route to avoid Vista Ridge tunnel possible environmental hazard
- 16 Incomplete signage and Lighting
- 17 No cellular reception/emergency responder radios do not work
- 18 Planned growth in Washington County
- 19 "Multi-Local" Jurisdiction – requires cooperation amongst peers

warning signs that illuminate when temperatures drop, a protected turn pocket at Sheltered Nook, guard rails where feasible and traffic control solutions at the Hwy. 30 intersection to name a few. While analyzing the reports of the 95 accidents in the 5 years preceding 2005, the foundation was able to categorize the causation of many of the crashes. True to nationally recognized studies, it appears that engineering is at fault in upwards to 35% of the crashes. Too much traffic, too little improvements and too much time wasted has led to a road that is no longer functional. The data from the RSAR should mirror the findings of the Foundation, for it really does not take an engineer to ascertain that a 2" shoulder on the precipice of a 95 foot embankment is a recipe for death. Only the marvels of auto safety have prevented a much higher fatality rate on this road.

A combination of the RSAR results, community input and common sense principles should combine to provide reasonable, meaningful and affordable solution process.

Funding...

Much has been made of the financial deficit of Multnomah County Roads budget. In fact, Nov. '08 the department hosted 5 'Open House' community events eliciting feedback on what services to *cut*. Citing the financial burden of maintaining bridges and 300 miles of roads, the county representatives stated that no new capitol improvement projects were feasible. In a recent 'Oregonian' article Com. Rojo De Steffey was quoted as saying that "Because residents from multiple counties use the road, costs for things such as ice-warning signs or guardrails should be shared among state and local agencies."

It is indeed tough times for everyone. However, in recent weeks Chair Ted Wheeler, Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski and representatives of the A.C.T. have unveiled their priority lists for projects should funding become available. Cornelius Pass road is not on any of these lists. Although Cornelius Pass road has the #1 incident rate of crashes on the West Side and is #4 in all of Multnomah County, no plan is in place to do anything about it.

(The other 3 highest crash rate areas have already been fixed). In order for Cornelius Pass Road to become a priority, the public must make it so. An outcry from the public must be heard by the policy makers, and those responsible for doling out the funding. It is also imperative that the Task Force quickly identify a course of action so that the engineering process can be completed. Once this is accomplished the funding process can be addressed.

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