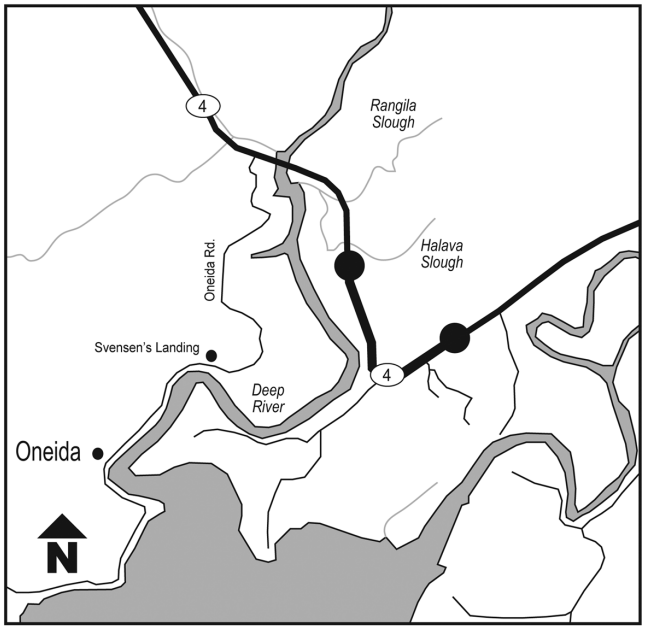
Washington State
Department of Transportation

Svensen's Curve Realignment Update



What is this project?

This project will realign a section of State Route 4 in western Wahkiakum County known as Svensen's Curve. Located a few miles west of the town of Rosburg, this area currently has two very sharp substandard curves with limited sight distance. Replacing these curves with one larger radius curve will improve sight distance and safety, allow traffic to flow more smoothly through the area, and allow WSDOT to remove the advisory speed limit from the curves. The project will also extend Miller Point Road to intersect with the new alignment of State Route 4.

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) began the State Route 4 Svensen's Curve project in 1996. However, changes in the amount of state transportation funding available for new projects since that time forced WSDOT to postpone the project until the nickel gas tax increase was passed the by the state Legislature in 2003. The nickel gas tax increase provided $4.9 million to complete design, environmental analysis, right of way acquisition and construction of the project.

What is the timeline?

The project design will be completed by the end of this year. In 2002, WSDOT completed a Biological Assessment explaining how the State Route 4 Svensen's Curve project would avoid negatively affecting species living in the project area listed under the Endangered Species Act. Since then, one new species of salmon was added to the list, and the Deep River was designated as a critical habitat for two previously listed species of salmon. In addition, new issues regarding the stormwater treatment requirements also surfaced. To address all these issues, WSDOT recently revised its environmental analysis and Biological Assessment for the project. Approval of these changes by the appropriate state and federal ecological and environmental agencies is expected this fall 2005. At that time, final design can be completed.

WSDOT has met with all affected property owners in the area, and right of way acquisition is currently underway. The project is scheduled to be advertised for bids from interested construction contractors in early 2006, with construction beginning in spring or summer 2006.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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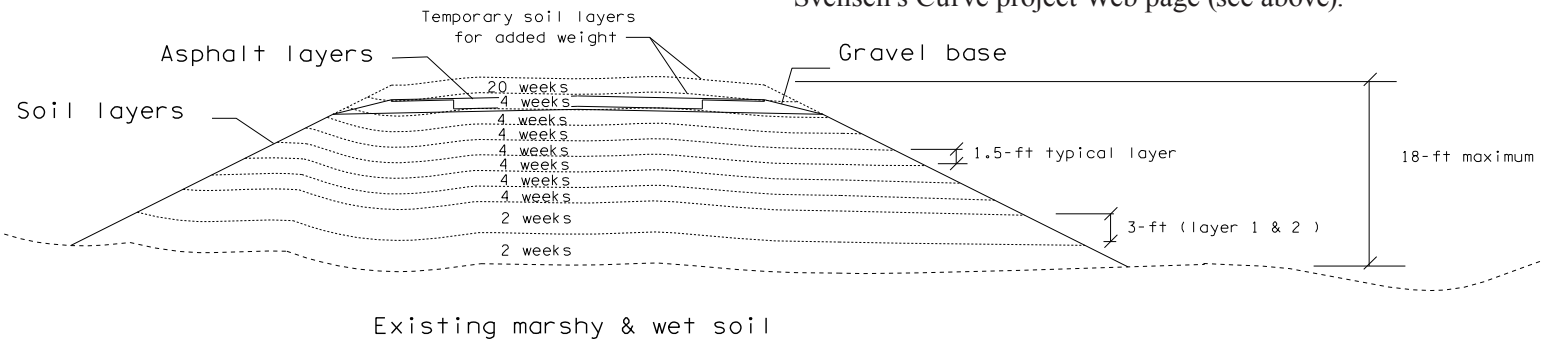
Construction of this project is expected to take approximately two years to complete. Usually, WSDOT is able to build a project like this in about a year. The construction process for this particular project will take longer than one year to complete because of the unique weather and soil conditions in the area.

The new highway alignment will sit on top of a very wet and marshy area, and will consist of up to eight different layers of soil, gravel and asphalt. Because of the marshy terrain, each layer must be allowed to settle for a certain amount of time before another is added (see graphic below). This will prevent sinkholes and minimize other types of pavement settlement problems after construction is complete. In addition, final paving cannot occur in the rain – a relatively common occurrence in this part of Washington – and will have to wait until late spring or summer 2007 to begin.

Cross Section of New Highway Showing the Layers & Required Settlement Times



How will construction affect traffic?

While the new alignment of State Route 4 is being built, traffic will still be able to use the old highway without significant delays or construction impacts. However, there will be occasional traffic delays caused by trucks hauling construction equipment and material to and from the work site. As trucks move into and out of the construction area, flaggers may briefly stop both directions of traffic. These trucks will be moving very slowly as they enter or exit the highway, so motorists should expect slow traffic and use caution when driving through the area after construction starts.

More specific traffic impacts won't be known until after a construction contractor is hired. WSDOT plans to host a **public open house** about this project and the anticipated traffic impacts once a contractor is hired and before construction begins. Invitations to the open house will be mailed out to residents and businesses in the area 1-2 weeks in advance, and information will be posted on the State Route 4 Svensen's Curve project Web page (see above).