

# Hunnell Road improvements could be 'win-win' for county, residents if safety concerns addressed

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*One issue -- neighbors want to keep the curves, to slow traffic*

*(Update: Adding video, comments from Deschutes County, Hunnell Road residents)*

BEND, Ore. (KTVZ) -- Deschutes County is planning to repave, widen and extend Hunnell Road between Cooley Road and Tumalo Road on the north end of Bend, but not everyone in the area is excited for the improvements.

Michel Bayard, who lives along the road just north of Bend, is president of the Hunnell United Neighbors, or HUNS.

The group is concerned with a more than four million dollar Deschutes county project that would extend and re-do Hunnell Road from Cooley Road to Tumalo Road, increasing daily car usage from around 100 per day, to nearly 2500.

"We want to make it very clear to people who come here that this is not a cut-through, this is a neighborhood, recreational area," Bayard said Friday.

Deschutes County Road Department Director Chris Doty said creating a more accessible road will help connect the area to Highway 97 and the Old Bend-Redmond Highway.

"Hunnell Road will allow the people, who actually share a boundary with the city of Bend, the ability to come into the city without having to get on a state highway," Doty said.

He said the upgrade has been on the table since 1998, and part of serious discussions since 2012.

The HUNS say they aren't totally against the project. There's just a few safety parameters they would like to see that they say would help protect the community.

"They have come up with significant improvements, but we don't feel that it's enough," Bayard said.

Bayard and the HUNS said the street is currently used as a recreation area.

"They walk with their kids, their pets, people bicycle, little kids bicycle by themselves, they ride their horse," Bayard said, sharing sheets of photos that show such uses.

And Tom Andrade, another member of the HUNS, said they want to make sure it stays safe enough to continue that way.

"When the public uses this, they're using it in a safe environment, and they can trust that their children are not in harm's way when that happens," Andrade said. "So it's a win-win, if we do this right."

Doty said the county has been working with the HUNS for a long time.

"They've been very vocal in saying, 'Hey, can you please design something as slow as you possibly can? So can you incorporate some traffic calming measures?' And we've done that," Doty said.

Doty said the street will have a 35 mile per hour speed limit, walkways, bike lanes, crosswalks, traffic islands, speed limit detectors and other tools to enforce safe driving.

However, he said the curves in the road need to be straightened in order to modernize it.

"The Hunnell Road alignment has been in existence prior to the arrival of the automobile in Deschutes County. It was designed to move horses and buggies," Doty said.

Bayard feels the current design encourages safer driving.

"We want a road that clearly sends the message that this is not a highway," Bayard said. "So keep the curves."

The project is set to start in late 2022.

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