

12-7-62

Orofino Area Leaders Want Permanent Ahsahka Bridge, L-C Relocation, Highway Improvement

OROFINO — Orofino and Clearwater County officials Thursday unanimously recommended that the State Highway Department participate with the Corps of Army Engineers in the construction of a proposed new bridge across the Clearwater River at Ahsahka and thus make it a permanent structure.

As measures to meet the impact of Bruce's Eddy dam construction, the group also recommended that:

1. The present bridge across the Clearwater at Orofino be extensively improved.

2. State Highway 7 between Orofino and Ahsahka be improved and that it be made a limited access highway.

3. The Lewis & Clark Highway be rerouted in the vicinity of the Orofino Municipal Airport to permit improvement of the airport.

Followup Session

The meeting was an outgrowth of a Monday Orofino Chamber of Commerce session here at which Col. James Beddow, Walla Walla, district engineer of the Corps of Army Engineers, told of the corps' plans for this area in connection with the building of Bruce's Eddy dam.

He said the corps plans a temporary bridge at Ahsahka in 1964 to handle construction traffic but said it could be made a permanent structure if the Idaho Highway Department wanted to participate in its construction.

Orofino Mayor A. B. Curtis said the highway department had followed up by asking him to arrange for representatives of various interests here to meet with department officials and provide an expression of opinion on the bridge project.

At the Thursday meeting were the Orofino City Council, Clearwater County Commissioners, planning commission and school officials and other civic leaders. Representing the highway department were Norman S. Crossley, Boise, the department's chief urban engineer, and William Sacht, Lewiston, new Lewiston district engineer.

Save Nine Miles

Curtis said after the meeting that the proposal is for the bridge to extend across the Clearwater from Ahsahka to the vicinity of Chase Flat, an Orofino suburban area just west of Riverside, also a suburban area.

If the corps alone builds it, he said, it would be built to rugged Army standards permitting it to handle "class 50" loads, which are as heavy as anything handled on the highways. However, if the state participates, plans would be modified so that the bridge would meet state standards in specifications other than weight.

Curtis noted that the bridge would save nine miles in the hauling of materials to Bruce's Eddy, compared with the distance involved in traveling through Orofino, and would also make possible bypassing congested areas. The saving alone on the cost of hauling 6 million yards of concrete to the dam, as planned, would "pay for a lot of bridge," Curtis said.

Improvements recommended for the present Clearwater bridge, according to Curtis, are principally in providing for wider approaches at each end of the bridge and for passing lanes there.

Bigger Runways

The recommendation regarding relocation of the Lewis & Clark Highway calls for it to extend along the foot of the hills to the south of the airport instead of along the Clearwater River to the north of the airport. Curtis said officials are anxious to settle on final locations for the runways of up to 4,000 feet, instead of the present 2,850. Traffic at the airport is expected to increase with the building of Bruce's Eddy.

Regarding the highway between Ahsahka and Orofino, Curtis said the need is to improve the route to provide a rugged transportation facility.

Curtis said the next issues facing officials here in connection with preparing for the Bruce's Eddy impact is to go into the questions of airport improvement, zoning and planning for increased population and extension of sewerage and water lines.

Chet Moulton, Boise, state director of aeronautics, will come to Orofino soon in connection with the airport discussions, he said.

Bids Opened

Meanwhile at Walla Walla, Army Engineers reported Thompson Drilling Co. of Boise, with a bid of \$66,977, was apparent low bidder on a contract for exploratory drilling for foundation investigation at the Bruce's Eddy dam site.

Runner up was McCabe Bros. Drilling, Inc., of Idaho Falls with a bid of \$79,877. A third contractor, R. S. McClintock of Spokane, bid \$94,960. The government estimate was \$77,730.

Specifications call for completion of the job 110 calendar days after Army Engineers give the contractor notice to proceed. Work involves drilling a number of different holes in rock at the dam site, both vertically and inclined, to test for high structure's foundation. A total of 5,772 linear feet are to be drilled, including advancing holes with and without drive sampling and core drilling.

Thompson Drilling Co. was apparent low bidder on another contract on which bids were opened earlier this week for exploratory drilling for a diversion tunnel for the dam.