

NW Oregon Area Commission on Transportation

May 3, 2007

Fort Clatsop National Historic Park
Warrenton, OR

The meeting was called to order by Shirley Kalkhoven, Chair. The following members and guests attended or participated by teleconference:

Rita Bernhard – Columbia County Commission	Gerald Meyer – Port of St Helens
Bernie Bjork – Port of Astoria	Matt Mumford – Tillamook Co Transit
Dick Hellberg – City of Warrenton	Paul Pulliam – Port of St Helens
Dave Hill – Columbia County	Ron Puzey – City of Clatskanie
Jim Hunt – Clatsop Private Sector	Shawn Reiersgaard – Tillamook Private Sector
Bill Jablowski – ODOT	Melissa Satkhowski – ODOT
Shirley Kalkhoven – City of Nehalem	Mike Schroeder – ODOT
David Kim – ODOT Region 1	Jeff Scheick – ODOT Region 2 Manager
Mark Labhart – Tillamook County Commission	Carmen Swigart – Cannon Beach
Rosemary Loerke – Columbia Co Private Sector	Dave True – City of Clatskanie
Don McDaniel – Port of Astoria	Liane Welch – Tillamook Co Public Works
Ray McFarlane – City of Rockaway Beach	Lonny Welter – Columbia County
Larry McKinley – ODOT Region 2	

Excused: Ed Armstrong, Ron Bline, Clark Berry

1. Welcome and Introductions: Members and guests introduced themselves.
2. NWACT Minutes/Updates:
 - Approval of March 1, 2007 Minutes – Approved unanimously with the following amendments: Add Janet Trueblood as attending and Jenny Creek should be Jetty Creek. (RB, LMc)
 - Public Comment – None
 - Legislative Comment – None
 - Region 1 – David reported that there has been some personnel changes, Allan McDonald has gone to work on the Interstate Bridge crossing project, and the City of Rainier bike ped project will need a new lead with Chad Olsen leaving. Port Westward \$500,000 immediate opportunity fund should be going out to bid next month. Looked at rehabilitating or widening Quartz Creek bridge on Hwy 26 but can't be retrofitted. Will require a new bridge. 2009 – 2010 for construction. Clatskanie paving project was awarded to the contractor and should start this Summer. Coordinating with Wauna Mill on their transportation improvement projects.
 - Region 2 Update – Larry reported that there is an open hearing scheduled for Connect Oregon II in Salem on Tuesday, 1 pm, in the Capital. New Youngs Bay bridge mechanical is looking favorable regarding letting a bid, and that should get started right away. A two year project, painting will occur next year. Shouldn't require much if any lane closures. Will be closed for some time to marine traffic however. Will be info out to the public. Jetty Creek is also getting underway, another two season project. Signal replacements are underway in Warrenton and Tillamook. John Day River bridge panels updating will occur this Fall and Winter. Hwy 101 slide has been repaired. Still three slides on Hwy 6 on the hillside, looking at work occurring Summer through late Summer. Probably will involve some lane closures. Astoria, Netarts/Oceanside and Cloverdale refinement plans should be completed by end of June. Valerie Grigg Devis has taken a job in Washington to be with her husband. Will be getting a new planner, who will be located in the region rather than Salem.
3. Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC)

Jeff Scheick reported that 80% of the OTIA I and II projects are open to traffic, well ahead of schedule. State bridges should also be completed by 2011, as will the Connect Oregon projects. May 23rd will break ground on the Tillamook Transit Center project. The OTC is also working on tolling options for financing highways. Newberg Bypass – have been working on a private enterprise partnership, but still a significant gap in financing. Bear Sterns working with ODOT on options for completing a bypass. Appears to be Legislative support for Connect Oregon II.

Costs of Highway Limitations and Traffic Delay to Oregon's Economy – Study done for the Oregon Transportation Commission, shows that Oregon's economy is transportation dependent. Despite Oregon's excellent rail, marine, highway and air connections to national and international destinations, projected growth in freight and general traffic cannot be accommodated on the current system. More than 1 in 5 jobs in Oregon (over 400,000) are transportation related or reliant. Increasing congestion and travel time delay – even with currently planned improvements – will significantly impact the state's ability to maintain and grow business, as well as the quality of life.

Failure to adequately invest in transportation improvements will lead to additional travel delay and associated reductions in market access, and will result in potential income loss valued at over \$1.7 billion annually in value-added generated in Oregon by 2025, with a loss of 16,000 permanent full-time jobs.

4. ODOT Program Updates

- Transportation Growth Management Applications – Award letters should be going out by the end of the month. Most applications were well done and funded.
- Immediate Opportunity Fund – Helps communities, in conjunction with Oregon Economic and Community Development Department, to recruit, retain and expand business development. Types of projects considered are job creation, industrial revitalization and site certification. ODOT is considering looking at modernization projects associated with certified building sites that may fit with Immediate Opportunity funding, to make strategic investments directly related to economic development. Long Prairie Rd, Trask River Rd, and the Astoria Airport may be future projects. Johnson Bridge in Tillamook County is the last bridge in the OTIA list and is running short of funds.
- Refinement Plan Frequently Asked Questions – Posted on the ODOT website under planning.
- Neakahnie Mt Scenic Byway – Looking as though it probably will get funded. Will be a challenge to get the work done because it has to be meticulously taken apart and put back together.
- West Eugene Parkway – All ACTs in Region 2 put together a contingency plan for the funds that will not be used by the parkway. Another project short of funds is the Eddyville/Pioneer Mt corridor alignment. Contractor has experienced significant slides, and has asked to be released from the project. Rather than making a decision on the allocating the West Eugene Parkway funds, the OTC is waiting to see what happens with the Pioneer Mt project.
- Freight Advisory Stakeholder Survey – Looking at putting together a Statewide Freight Plan. Collecting information via survey of several elected officials, including Shirley and Don McDaniel. ACTs will be involved at a later date. Shirley also sent in an application to sit on the Freight Advisory Committee.

5. State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)

Larry condensed down ODOT's 21 page draft STIP criteria to a 4 page summary. ODOT's STIP is its budget. Currently work on three STIPs at one time, eg, current – 2006 – 2009, upcoming – 2008 – 2011, and future 2010 – 2013.

NWACT is primarily concerned with modernization project priorities. Projects must be consistent with the applicable acknowledged transportation system plan (TSP) or in its absence, the applicable comprehensive plan and any applicable adopted TSP. TSPs need to be updated periodically, to revitalize what's listed as transportation priorities. Currently, City of Seaside doesn't have a TSP, so ODOT cannot look at any modernization projects for that community. Projects must also be consistent with the Oregon Highway Plan policy on Major Improvements (Policy 1G, Action 1. G.1), where applicable.

ACTs can add priority factors and can weight some ODOT factors depending on the priorities of the region. Input on draft STIP criteria is being taken through May 18th. These draft priorities are

- Project readiness (an assessment of the likelihood of a project getting to construction in the timeframe contemplated)
- Projects that best support the policies of the Oregon Highway Plan
- Projects that support freight mobility
- Projects that leverage other funds and public benefits.
- Class 1 and 3 projects that have completed an environmental milestone or a Record of Decision (ROD) or Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

Process starts this Spring with NWACT completing their draft lists by the end of 2007. Fall of 2008 will start the public input. ODOT will also be sharing with NWACT those projects currently being considered for safety improvements. Will also want to look at those projects currently in the developmental or environmental impact stage (EIS) that will need to start construction. Local communities need to start pulling together their projects.

Dick Hellberg and Don McDaniel expressed their frustration that the Astoria Bypass cannot be completed because it is felt by the local community that the bypass is critical for future economic development. Particularly, because it appears that funds are being spent on smaller projects.

Discussion on risk criteria – Is there public support for the project? How committed is the matching funds? How do you accurately and meaningfully measure public support? Since it is supposed to be a weighted factor, NWACT will need to look at defining risk for this region. By having public open houses in the Fall, could help identify potential public feedback on proposed projects. Need to be creative on how to get the word out to the public.

6. Oregon Business Plan

Proposed to fund transportation are increases in the gas tax, vehicle titles, and vehicle registrations. Lonny asked whether the Plan will be restrict how the new funding would be spent, eg, 25% would be restricted to projects that improve freight mobility or relieve congestion on the state system. Question – would the tax also be on diesel? (Might be difficult because those taxes must be shared interstate). Issue, this only addresses the state roads, while local roads can't get freight to the state roads because of their failing quality. Question – Didn't the Legislature say a gas tax was dead? Wouldn't these taxes have to go to the voters? Real problem with distribution of funding, smaller counties don't get much from vehicle registration, particularly compared to the larger counties. Needs of local governments are vastly different than how the funds are allocated. Concern, may not see any of 25% allocated to state system if priority is outside where the funds are collected. In tourism counties where many miles driven by non-residents, don't get to see revenues to support local communities deal with the increased travel.

If just went by vehicle miles traveled, over a 5 – 6 year time span, there has been a higher percentage of STIP funds spent in the NWACT region. Also, in terms of miles of paved lanes, there is also a higher percentage of improvements in NW Oregon. Doesn't seem likely that a stepped gas tax would ever pass either by the Legislature or by voters. Perhaps it should be indexed instead. Local cities are raising their own gas taxes, can't let State usurp local ability to raise revenue.

While this proposal may not be perfect, it is an opportunity to start bringing in some new dollars into the system. If the ACTs don't support this, it will be more difficult for the Legislators to support. NWACT agreed to support the proposal with the caveat that t local communities get their fair share, eg, support in concept, as long as rural local governments receive a larger share of the revenues generated to be used without any restrictions. (ML, SR) Don McDaniel amended the motion to read "local jurisdictions receive a minimum of 25% of the funding", Rosemary seconded. The amendment failed. For 8, Opposed 13.

7. Next Meeting

Change to July 12th.

Federal Safety Net Legislation – Mark Labhart reported that the legislation was vetoed by the President, revenue from which represents 40% of Tillamook County's road budget. The Legislature is looking at replacement funds, with the ACTs potentially making local decisions on how those transportation funds are spent. Mark specifically asked NWACT members if they would support a proposal such as this. Unclear where the funds would come from. May be bridge financing until Safety Net Legislation comes through. NWACT members indicated support for the concept.

Recorded: Mary McArthur, Staff

Shirley Kalkhoven, Chair