

Rail Advisory Committee (RAC)

Tuesday, June 21, 2022

9:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Meeting Minutes

Attendees, *RAC Members*

Bruce Carswell, Chair

Johan Hellman, Vice-Chair

Aaron Hunt

Gary Cardwell

Glenn Carey

Chase Kitchen

Ross Lane

Chris Myron

Paul Langner

Introductions and Committee Business

- Quorum Confirmed
- Welcome new RAC members Ross Lane and Chase Kitchen.
- Previous Minutes (March and May) - Motion to approve minutes as presented, minutes approved.

Oregon State Rail Plan Implementation Plan – Bob Melbo and Ted Axt

- Implementation Plan Purpose
 - Identify and assess rail policies, actions, and projects that could be implemented or supported by ODOT.
 - Streamline and standardize the tracking and funding of rail projects.
 - Rail Needs Inventory - Master list of potential rail projects in state to be foundation for Implementation Plan.
 - Support transparency and thorough documentation of decision-making for selecting projects.
 - Leverage federal and state grants, and private funds
 - Many federal grant opportunities available from legislation passed last year.
- Implementation Plan Timeline
 - Current timeline objective - RAC Update - this meeting
 - Internal Review planned for late June, July
 - Goal is for review to be ready for RAC review in August
 - RAC to accept plan at regular September meeting
 - Project Scoring Workshop to take place in October - 120 to 125 projects anticipated
 - Projects selected for funding by Connect Oregon, will not need to be scored but will continue to be listed in the RNI until completed.
- Public Engagement Summary – 30-day public comment period (April 20 - May 22)
 - External Stakeholder Outreach - formal notification sent out from ODOT.
 - Mass email distribution.
 - Presentations for several organizations (AORTA, American Society of Engineers, ORULE).
 - Assoc. of Oregon Counties and League of Oregon Cities sent out info to membership.
 - Stakeholder Outreach Sources
 - Freight Railroads (UP, G&W, Mt. Hood, RVT, and Columbia Rail submitted comments).
 - Cities (Milwaukie, Medford, and St. Helens submitted comments).
 - ODOT Internal Review ongoing.
 - Citizen Input – General support, and request for extension of passenger rail to other parts of Willamette Valley
 - Feedback Themes

- Add weighting in favor of projects that offer multimodal opportunities.
 - Add weighting in favor of projects for which applicant's matching funds are coming out of their own pocket versus other sources such as public funding.
 - General support for existing Rail Needs Inventory projects and the proposed prioritization process.
- Draft Implementation Plan Preview for formal RAC review in August - Presenter Ted Axt
 - Executive Summary - policy level context used to update Oregon State Rail Plan
 - Development Background - describes the evaluation process
 - Operational Framework - will summarize outreach, available funding, scoring guidance
 - Project Identification - Does process capture all eligible projects?
 - Project Evaluation - Does the group evaluating it have the right makeup?
 - Project Ranking and Filtering - Does the approach used make sense?
 - Ongoing Administration - Is ownership for results correctly assigned?
 - Appendix
 - Stakeholder Outreach
 - Funding Overview
 - factors and Evaluation Criteria
- Next Steps/Schedule - Presenter Bob Melbo -
 - Draft Implementation Plan refinement – June - July 2022
 - Review and acceptance of plan by RAC - August - September 2022
 - Implementation Plan project scoring workshop - October 2022
- Questions/Comments from RAC
 - Multimodal efforts to include broad spectrum of endeavors including adjunct activities
 - Bob Melbo shared additional details on feedback from Milwaukie and St. Helens
 - Status on Millersburg lead currently not completed - pipeline to be lowered tentatively in July and facility hoping to open for business in early August.

Connect Oregon State and Policy Plan Update – Erik Havig

- Quick Update on Other Projects
 - Port of Morrow essentially complete.
 - Oregon City Siding project - CRISI grant to help fund, now in the design phase.
 - Nyssa, Treasure Valley facility in construction, facing challenges due to inflation.
- Connect Oregon had \$46 million available for projects in 2022, after carve outs.
 - 49 applications for projects were submitted.
 - Connect Oregon very close to having all agreements for selected projects in the signature process.
 - Discussion ensued around difficulties in competing for funding when large project awards consume so much of available funding.
 - Rail did not fare as well this time as in previous rounds, but 40% of projects awarded were rail.
- Oregon Transportation Plan update – Foundation plan for all modes of transportation including rail.
 - Lead group, Policy Coordinating Committee - meetings open to the public
 - Materials are available at:
 - <https://www.oregon.gov/odot/Planning/Pages/Oregon-Transportation-Plan->

[Update.aspx#:~:text=The%20Oregon%20Transportation%20Plan%20update,and%20People%20of%20Color%20\(BIPOC\)](#)

- Oregon Freight Plan update - Also has strong linkage to this committee , especially freight rail
 - Materials to be available at:
<https://www.oregon.gov/odot/Planning/Pages/Oregon-Freight-Plan-Update.aspx>
- Oregon Highway Plan update - starts next year - another opportunity to weigh in on policy making.

IIJA (BILS) Federal Grant Opportunities – Bruce Carswell

- CRISI funding - substantial increase due for the next round (August NOFO).
 - Matching requirement of 50% not hard rule in past practice, but may limit opportunity for some to compete.
- Chase Kitchen shared info about FRA Corridor ID Program - FRA will eventually fund \$12 billion.
- ODOT is planning joint application with WSDOT for the FRA Program for improvements in the Cascades Corridor.
- Glenn Carey asked if CRISI grants and others were available and who might be looking into those. Karyn described process of submitting projects that most closely fit grant criteria.

PTD Quarterly Updates - Karyn Criswell

- Program Services Manager (key role) filled last Friday.
- Public transit grants manager starting today.
- Currently working on agency recommended budget.
- World Track & Field Event mid-July in Eugene (50,000 visitors expected)
 - PTD is working with the Governor's office on encouraging ridership on Amtrak Cascades.
- PTD has 7 new IIJA positions from the legislature to support initiatives
 - Safe Streets
 - Innovative Mobility Program
 - Transit Climate Specialist position
 - Equitable Engagement Coordinator position

Passenger Rail Quarterly Updates - Kathy Holmes

- Ridership improving and close to 2019 levels - 17% below, but gap is narrowing over time.
- On-time Performance not doing well. High trespasser/vehicle delays (835 minutes in May) was a contributor.
- Discussion on homeless, increased trespasser strikes, funding, and methods of tracking risk areas.
- Return of Cascades train service to Canada - Chase Kitchen
 - Delays due to staffing shortages, extensive training needed for new hires creates a significant challenge.
 - Amtrak hoping to return to once-a-day service to Vancouver, BC as soon as September 2022.
- Corridor Investment Plan: Service Development Plan - Jennifer Sellers
 - Working with FRA - Submitted detailed work plan as a part of the grant requirement.
 - Continuing to work with Union Pacific on the modeling work.
- Freight Rail Industry update - Bob Melbo
 - U.S. carloads and intermodal units are down about 3.5% from 2021, and down 5.8% in Canada
 - Long-term trend of decrease in business may be a sign of heading into a recession

- STB - emergency service order for Foster Farms - in dire need of corn for poultry and cattle
- Supply chain and staffing shortages affecting freight rail industry as well.
- Round table discussion on labor shortages and the impact on existing labor force.
 - Chris Myron shared BLE-T perspective on continued manpower crisis.
 - Glenn Carey outlined problems with collective bargaining, moving to one-person crews, and resulting negative ramifications for Railroad Retirement system.

Agenda Build

- Next RAC quarterly meeting scheduled for September 20, 2022.
 - Meeting to be held in person. Remote-in, and call-in will be available as options.
 - Approach for now is to continue alternating between virtual and in-person meetings; the latter to be in March and September.
- Move to adjourn carried at 11:20 am.