

Rail Advisory Committee (RAC)

Tuesday, March 22, 2022

9:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Meeting Minutes

Attendees

RAC Members

Bruce Carswell, Chair

Johan Hellman

Ivo Trummer

Gary Cardwell

Peggy Harris for Aaron Hunt

Paul Langner

Johan Hellman made a motion to approve the minutes. Paul Langner seconded. The February 15, 2022 and February 16, 2022 minutes were approved.

Introductions and Committee Business

- John Ficker has resigned from the RAC.
- RAC members are not appointed by the governor. Only committee members appointed by the governor are required to take trainings previously discussed.

RAC Membership Refresh and Recruitment – Jennifer Sellers and Bruce Carswell

- ODOT team met internally to discuss proposal to refresh the membership process then met with Bruce and Johan to revise
 - Refreshment based on legislative initiatives to widen engagement. RAC can have up to 20 members.
 - What should RAC membership look like? How are we getting the best input? Who are the stakeholders?
 - Propose 11 permanent seats to insure representation of entities specifically identified by the OTC when authorizing creation of the RAC in 2005
- This proposal is a recommendation for discussion. We will get feedback and then formalize
 - Larger groups are great for getting wide input but can also be cumbersome to manage
 - Do we want 20 people on the committee just because we can?
 - The permanent seat recommendations are good, but, may have a few others that should be included
 - With our focus on safety should we add permanent seat for state coordinator of Operation Lifesaver? After it was mentioned that ODOT just hired Oregon's OL coordinator, Chair Carswell said it would be inappropriate for an ODOT staff person to sit on the committee.
- Should allow flexibility to designate seats for subject matter experts
- There is no need to have the nine additional seats filled immediately.
- What is the timeline for recruitment? Suggest that in the short-term figure out what constituencies are missing then recruit
 - Per the timeline ODOT will work with RAC to determine constituency and outreach, edit the charter, then submit at June meeting.
- There was a suggestion to recruit retired railroaders to serve on the RAC.
- The OTC approved up to 20 membership positions. A suggestion was made to have the charter reflect "up to".

- There is only one shortline represented on the committee. Historically there has been at least two or three.
 - Need to determine the distribution of the three shortline seats
 - It was suggested there should be four: one from Willamette Valley, one from the coast, one from northwest and one from the northeast corners of the state.
 - Bob – from the start of RAC up to present, but not currently a member, we've had someone representing Genesee & Wyoming. If someone from G&W were seated, they would represent three railroads and three regions, i.e. the northwest, the Willamette Valley, and southwestern Oregon.
 - An economic development position would be great and could be a permanent seat

Action Item: Jennifer to meet with RAC Membership refresh workgroup to determine constituency, outreach, edit the charter, to submit at June meeting.

Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) – Karyn Criswell

- The Oregon Transportation Commission is figuring out how to allocate approximately \$412 million in flexible funds
- With the IIJA and new programs being initiated people are scrambling to figure out what to do
 - Concerned about funding targeting grade crossing safety; because no one has a state-level process and with no matching funds there isn't a lot of activity going on. There are pots of money now that were inaccessible in the past but there hasn't been much time or effort in considering how to go for those funds
 - There's concern applicants may try to contort their project to fit. Rail should look into those funds and try to get them before they are swept away; define projects on our own terms
- Criteria:
 - Isted in Rail Needs Inventory?
 - Project readiness – is the project well defined?
 - Is it in the local or regional plan?
 - Passed NEPA clearances?
 - If ODOT had to apply on their behalf, what is the risk?
 - How does pursuing funds fit into priorities?
 - Which pots of funding would we be most competitive in?
- IIJA has five years for spending the money and some programs will go out every year. May be beneficial to pass on one year so we can be extremely competitive the next.
- Figuring out where projects need to be scoped or put into the STIP is one thing but federal funding with state funding to match is limited. More money for CRISI is encouraging but with no grant writers we may need to collaborate with those that have them to come up with quality grant requests. Crossing safety is number one concern.
- Washington has had success with passenger rail. Grade separation projects are big initiatives for local – how would local agencies be involved in those?
 - ODOT has a new process in terms of letters of support and partnerships. If rail or local government want letters of support from ODOT, begin coordinating with ODOT region manager and our team. The project will determine the degree to which regions need to

be involved. Paying more attention to basic viability and readiness, right of way, environment, and engineering to have a sufficient idea of costs. Looking at partnerships if there is a broad range of local support, that influences ODOT's system operations, and benefits ODOT overall. Having it in the local plan is a big issue. If going after rail crossing and safety, loop in Chris Malm and Amy Ramsdell.

- Commission is meeting on IJJA allocations on March 30th from 12 pm to 2 pm

State Rail Plan Implementation – Bob Melbo

- Implementation of 2020 Oregon State Rail Plan
- Implementation timeline
 - RAC has reviewed evaluation criteria and Rail Needs Inventory
 - April – stakeholder and public comment on draft criteria
 - May – draft implementation plan report
 - June – final report for RAC review
- Feedback from two workshops last month – broad agreement on approach but some thoughts on refining methods
- Was there a formal process put out to request feedback from rail carriers?
 - It may be helpful to put out an RFP for potential projects. There is no refined process.
 - The list will be a living document; this tool is robust enough to handle a large data set
 - The team used concepts or projects that were identified in Oregon State Rail Plan as a starting point, then there was some outreach. Add a call for railroads and other stakeholders to review information and projects during stakeholder engagement.
- The RAC gave the okay to publish criteria for stakeholder review
- Website will be on ODOT's rail page
- PowerPoint presentations planned to Oregon Rail Users League, AORTA, League of Oregon Cities, Association of Oregon Counties. How extensive should we be in our outreach efforts?
- No transportation commission approval required on implementation plan

Connect Oregon and Policy Plan Update – Erik Havig

- HB2017 four projects update – port of Morrow complete, Millersburg almost done and will hopefully be operating sometime this fall, Nyssa well under construction finishing end of summer or early fall, siding project progressing with UP moving on process to begin final design and construction
- Nearing end of process for current competitive round. Final review committee meets on April 6th. 50 projects with total value making a 3:1 ask to amount of money available
- In the midst of the update to the Oregon Freight plan. Consider this an update lite – gathering data, calculating trends, identifying needs and issues, ensuring policies are not completely out of date. Waiting on a revised Oregon Transportation Plan.
- The Oregon Transportation Plan is an overall comprehensive multimodal view – policy coordinating committee is busy with goals and vision. Workgroups will be brought together over the next few months. Will require some hard decisions and cuts due to insufficient funding.

Quarterly Updates – Karyn Criswell, Kathy Holmes, and Jennifer Sellers

- Close to naming the successful applicant for the passenger rail position.

- Program services manager position is out for recruitment.
- Overall, Public Transportation Division is down 20-25% of staff but making progress on re-staffing.
- Working on division strategic plan.
- Have been some improvements in passenger rail ridership but have not received numbers for March. A marketing campaign is helping to boost ridership.
- On-time performance isn't good. Equipment issues and rail work likely contributors but not entire cause.
- Working with Amtrak and WSDOT on repairs to Union Station and future CRISI grant (in fall) for retrofit work. Opportunity to work in phases. Received approval for 30% design.
- Corridor Investment Plan working with DEA as consultant on FRA and detailed project schedule; key critical component is modeling of Cascades. Looking to update costs on service development plan to 2021 dollars.
- On the freight side, we just had a two-day stoppage in Canada due to lockout/strike.
- Freight numbers have been dynamic due to supply chain disruption and a backlog of containers
 - In past supply chain disruptions there was usually only one cause but this has been a global disruption in many dimensions; strong fluctuations in carloadings.
- Number one issue is fuel pricing, especially diesel prices. Smaller shortlines focusing on operations, slowing down train starts, and not running unless absolutely necessary.
- Agriculture market does seem to be robust.
- Gary Cardwell reported port volumes up 20% on export side. Struggling with UP service; 145 containers of export missed scheduled sailing because we did not get third set of power; reevaluating putting power on both ends of the train.
- West Coast International Longshoreman's Warehouse Union (ILWU) contract expires July 1st. In negotiations but historically not agreed to until six months to a year after contract expires. Could see a big slow down at ports. Currently running 10 days late in California.
 - Five-year contract; steamship lines are finally making money. Asking for a 100% wage increase which may sound like price gouging but it is not.

Public Comment

- Raymond Blech – is RAC considering citizen members as potential seats for membership recruitment?
 - Yes, but we must understand what the need is first.
- Joe Samaniego, Tangent City Manager – the city of Tangent is interested in the local government seat being proposed for the RAC, and I will check with two council members who have an interest in rail.

Agenda Build

- Next quarterly meeting June 21st
- With Connect Oregon final review committee hearing April 6th, when will we hear from OTC?
 - Erik – still working on timeline and other issues like how do we hold public hearings and do we have enough time to get it on the May meeting agenda or will it have to wait until July?
- RAC Membership Review and Refresh

- Present proposal vetted by RAC workgroup.
 - Membership composition
 - Types of constituencies to be represented
 - If there are term limits for some
 - Which positions are self-appoint and which should require a recruitment process.
- State Rail Plan Implementation Plan
 - Stakeholder comments on criteria.
 - Added or subtracted projects in the Rail Needs Inventory
 - Share the Draft Implementation Plan – Big agenda item
 - Discussion on sections such as roles and responsibilities
 - State's roles for taking action for implementation would be pretty light
 - Railroads would want to do more to move things forward in the plan.
- Next meeting will be in person.
 - Will discuss location via email.

Action Item: Reach out to Prosper Portland to present regarding Union Station phasing work.

Motion to adjourn by Johan Hellman, seconded by Gary Cardwell. Adjourned at 11:21 AM