

Meeting Minutes

Central Oregon Area Commission on Transportation COACT July 9, 2009

Members:

Lynn Lundquist (Crook County), Dennis Luke (Deschutes County), John Hatfield (Jefferson County), Lonny Macy (Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs), Peg Fisher (USFS Deschutes-Ochoco National Forest), Alan Unger (Deschutes County), George Endicott (City of Redmond), Eileen Stein (City of Sisters), Jack Seley (City of Prineville), Mike Morgan (City of Madras), Gary Farnsworth (ODOT), Gus Burrell (City of Madras), Lon Kellstrom (City of Sisters), Jeff Eager (City of Bend), and E.V. Smith (City of Culver).

Guests:

Dale Keller (City of Prineville), Jerry Brummer (City of Prineville), Scott Smith (City of Prineville), Tyler Deke (Bend MPO), Chris Doty (City of Redmond), Nick Arnis, (City of Bend), Mike Lovely (Bend MPO CAC & SBNA), Tom Blust (Deschutes County), Wayne Pearson (Madras-Jefferson County Economic Development), Joe Bessman (Kittelson and Associates), Mark Radabaugh (Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development), Jon Stark (Redmond Economic Development), Casey Bergh (Kittelson and Associates), Charles Kettenring (ODOT Rail Division), and Art Schlack (Association of Oregon Counties) by phone.

Staff:

Andrew Spreadborough (Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council).

Call to Order and Introductions

Chair Lynn Lundquist called the meeting to order and introductions were made.

General Public Comment

There were no general public comments.

Old Business

May 14, 2009 Minutes

Dennis Luke moved to approve the minutes of May 14, 2009. Mike Morgan seconded. Minutes were approved by consensus.

Legislative Update

Art Schlack said that the Governor plans to sign HB2001 within two weeks, according to the Governor's staff. The timing of his signing in part has to do with the possibility of referral, which now appears unlikely. Dennis Luke said that tax opponents will likely fight increases to the corporate and personal income taxes rather than the gas tax. Art agreed. Lynn said that Freedom Works appears to be focusing on other bills for referral.

Art said that the Governor vetoed Senate Bill 580, which directed ODOT to look at establishing tolling for the I-5 and I-205 bridges over the Columbia River in connection with the development of a new I-5 bridge.

Dennis Luke said that HB2001 included earmarked projects. He asked when funding will be available for those projects. Art said the timeline will be beyond 2011, since bonds will need to be sold. ConnectOregon III funding will be available earlier, since it is funded by lottery-backed bonds. Art said that the ConnectOregon III process will be nearly the same as previous rounds, with ACTs and modes proposing and reviewing projects.

Gary Farnsworth said that the legislature provided 25 additional staff positions for ODOT – primarily technical positions such as engineers. He said Region 4 will receive 7 of those positions. He said that the Oregon Transportation Commission will be considering the remaining Recovery Act funding that is available due to lower construction costs. Funds will be added to the scopes of existing projects, but an additional \$35 million will be available. He said that the 2010-2013 STIP update will begin, with anticipated cutbacks to preservation, safety and operations categories. The modernization definition is under review to determine if improvements other than adding lanes can be considered as modernization projects. The goal is to move projects into the modernization category to free up preservation and operations funding.

Eileen Stein asked about the process for allocating the \$35 million in remaining ARRA funds. Gary said that there will still be a focus on getting people to work this summer, and that projects will need to be ready to proceed. He stressed that the OTC will set the direction.

Rail Planning Current Findings

Gary Farnsworth distributed rail planning materials including the draft Study of Economic Opportunities – Rail Accessible Land Supply in Central Oregon. He said that they planning team is evaluating questions around rail, including strategic planning for at-grade rail crossings and enhanced freight mobility. He said that the first question asked in this process was regarding rail line relocation. The result was that further analysis of rail line relocation is not recommended since it is not feasible. Gary distributed a table of at-grade rail crossings prioritized for future removal. He explained the coding of the table, and noted that it is a work in progress so input, edits and corrections are requested. He noted that Economic Development for Central Oregon assisted in the development of the cost-benefit analysis. Mark Radabaugh asked how the Central Oregon study ties into the state rail plan. Gary replied that the Central Oregon study was the model for the state plan, and that as a result the region will be positioned well for funding.

Alan Unger asked if the study looked at all rail crossings or only the Class 1 rail crossings. Gary Farnsworth replied that all crossings in the region were studied. He said that industrial spurs are no longer feasible since the Class 1 railroads have moved to a “hook and haul” business model. The railroads favor long-hauls as opposed to local access. Alan asked if rail cars can be loaded within communities of Central Oregon and then brought to a central hub. Gary replied that the BNSF will not allow City of Prineville to use their tracks for local movement of freight.

Gary Farnsworth reviewed the handout final page which included a table of potential rail freight hub locations with scores based on site-related factors. He mentioned ConnectOregon III and federal stimulus “TIGER” grants as possible sources of funding for a regional rail hub project. He said that

the DLCD grant ensured that the consultant looked at the locations from a land use perspective. Dale Keller said that the study provided an opportunity to look at the City of Prineville's 12 acres located on Highway 97 as a potential hub location. He said that they are looking at adding 2,000 feet of track and the development of a small terminal. The Crook County landfill is considering accepting material from other locations, which would be shipped by rail. The BNSF would support the project since the landfill traffic creates necessary volumes. Eileen Stein asked if locally generated rail freight would have to be shipped first to the regional hub before loading onto rail. Gary replied that it would, and this is an element analyzed through the Tangent study.

Eileen Stein asked where the rail end point destinations would be. Dale Keller replied Seattle and Los Angeles. Velocity is the railroad emphasis – long-hauls between the major urban markets. Lynn Lundquist asked if 12 acres was sufficient for the hub. Dale said that there is an existing 1,000 foot track, and there is space to add two additional 1,000 foot tracks. There are questions regarding the placement of the loading and unloading areas, as well as road access.

Gary Farnsworth said that the draft rail report will be brought back to COACT in September, with a request for endorsement. Alan Unger asked what the committee will be working on in the interim. Gary replied that they will be finishing the matrix and developing recommendations on crossing priorities. They will also be working on developing a decision making process and a plan for implementation.

Alan Unger said that at an earlier meeting COACT discussed the need to upgrade two rail tunnels on the BNSF line around the Maupin area. He asked if this is still a need that could be appropriate for a ConnectOregon III application. Dale Keller said that the railroad is running double-stacked garbage trains through the tunnels with no problems. Charlie Kettenring said that if the region wants to be in the rail network, tunnel upgrades will need to be done at some point. Dale said the BNSF will support if the volumes are there and the players engaged.

Mike Morgan asked if the Prineville location is selected for the rail hub, how does it benefit the Madras industrial park. He noted that the City is still making payments on the development of the rail spur extension to the industrial park. Dale Keller said that Madras has the opportunity to develop a hub, where other areas may not due to inability to accommodate the physical space needs of a hub. Lynn Lundquist said that a Prineville hub would not preclude the development of a hub in Madras. Mike Morgan said that he did not want the development of a regional hub to harm the current levels of rail service. Dale said that the BNSF will be trying to force local rail traffic into a hub.

Lynn Lundquist said that he has not heard from BNSF that the tunnel improvement is a need. He said that the rail hub should be the region's priority. Charlie Kettenring agreed; he said that the region needs to develop a hub, and then the need for tunnel expansion will become evident. Jeff Eager said that the rail crossing matrix criteria are weighted equally, but that they may not be of equal importance. He said that the economic development criteria would be at the top of his list. Gary Farnsworth noted that there is a "COACT Priority" column that would allow the region the ability to consider other factors.

Lynn Lundquist asked for a summary of the report timeline and next steps. Gary said that the draft report will be brought back to COACT in September, and that COACT may elect to endorse the report and/or elements of the report at that time. Eileen Stein noted that funding timelines are short. Wayne

Pearson stressed the need to explore the use of the BNSF railroads for moving freight within the region.

New Business

Reduction in Vehicle Carrying Capacity/Oregon Freight Routes

Gary Farnsworth said that the OTIA III bill including language requested by the trucking association which laid out conditions for freight movement through bridge construction areas. As a result, ODOT is required to enforce ORS366.215. Gary distributed a summary of the statute, which addresses reduction in vehicle carrying capacity. The statute states that ODOT may not reduce the vehicle-carrying capacity of an identified freight route when altering, relocating, changing or realigning a state highway unless safety or access considerations require the reduction. He said that this affects communities in Central Oregon. For instance, a rural roundabout is being explored for Crook County. Any projects like this cannot restrict the ability of oversized trucks to use the road, particularly in areas where large trucks are already accommodated. If a reduction is proposed, the project needs to go to the Oregon Transportation Commission for approval on the grounds of safety or access needs. He noted that largest trucks to travel the highways were delivering windmill components.

Tom Blust asked if adding traffic signals would be considered a reduction in capacity. Gary replied that only physical reconfigurations would apply. He said that policies and processes for reviewing and approving requests are under development. Dana Cork asked if weight reductions would be included within this. Gary said that height issues are the primary focus; it is not often when ODOT would reduce load capacity on a highway.

Regional Roundtable

Lynn Lundquist asked for updates or news from COACT members. Chris Doty said the downtown Redmond 6th Street project is complete and that downtown is open to traffic. Trucks are utilizing the reroute, so the project resulted in a pedestrian friendly downtown area. Dennis Luke said that the Lava Butte – South Century project is under way. Tom Blust said that the Deschutes Junction rail overcrossing project is moving along, and that contractors are on schedule to be finished in the fall.

Mike Morgan reported that the ConnectOregon II project which funded the Butler Air hanger construction is under way. He said that the Oregon Transportation Commission will be acting on a grant request for Immediate Opportunity funding in conjunction with this project, to pay for infrastructure improvements to the Butler Air hanger. He said that the city is working on updating street codes. Eileen Stein said that the Sisters TSP update is under way. A public hearing will be held in August. Mark Radabaugh commented that a request for a land use exception can be made on the rail hub project; the need for the exception is reinforced since the rail line cannot be moved (as opposed to a roadway).

Peg Fisher reported on the status of the Sarbanes grant application submitted by the National Forest. She said that the FHWA and FTA have participated in meetings on the project. Discussions have centered on the need for transit shuttles to national forest destinations. She said that the grant awards will be announced in August. Dennis Luke noted that Deschutes County will be running buses from Sisters, Redmond and Bend to the fairgrounds during the County Fair.

Meeting adjourned at 5:00.