

Meeting Minutes

Central Oregon Area Commission on Transportation COACT October 14, 2010

Members:

Dennis Luke (Deschutes County), John Hatfield (Jefferson County), Gary Farnsworth (ODOT), Lon Kellstrom (City of Sisters), Alan Unger (Deschutes County), Don Greiner (City of La Pine), Jack Seley (City of Prineville), EV Smith (City of Culver), Jeff Monson (Commute Options for Central Oregon), Karen Friend (Cascades East Transit/COIC), Mike Morgan (City of Madras), Peg Fisher (Deschutes/Ochoco National Forest), Gus Burrell (City of Madras), Mike Folkestad (Jefferson County Appointed Stakeholder), Eli Ashley (Bicycle and Pedestrian), and Dana Cork (Prineville BLM).

Guests:

Susanna Julber (Office of US Senator Jeff Merkley), Scott Edelman (City of Prineville), Scott Smith (City of Prineville), Matt Kittelson (Kittelson and Associates), Tom Blust and Dan Sherwin (Deschutes County), Mike Lovely (BMPO CAC and SBNA), David Brandt, Chris Doty and Brad Haynes (City of Redmond), Pat Creedan (ODOT Operations and Maintenance), Eric Porter (City of Sisters), Steve Davis (Jefferson County), Kev Alexanian (Crook County Weed Control), and Nick Arnis (City of Bend).

Staff:

Andrew Spreadborough and Sharon Nance (Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council).

Call to Order and Introductions

Chair Dennis Luke called the meeting to order and introductions were made.

General Public Comment

There were no public comments.

Old Business

EV Smith moved to approve the COACT Minutes of September 9, 2010. Mike Morgan seconded. The minutes were approved by consensus.

2012-2015 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Review

Gary Farnsworth stated that the 2010-2013 STIP has just been adopted, so it is time to start the process for the 2012-2015 STIP. He provided a spreadsheet of Region 4 staff's first draft of the 2012-2015 STIP. In late December, Region 4 staff will submit their input to the draft 2012-2015 STIP. The STIP will remain in draft form for one year which will allow for continued review and adjustments.

Gary Farnsworth reviewed the spreadsheet in detail noting the following STIP categories: Modernization, Prevention, Safety, Operations, and the new categories Local Projects, Bridge Projects, Special Program Projects, and Transit Capital Projects. He noted that the Bridge Projects, Special Program Projects and Transit Capital Projects are managed by Salem. He explained the spreadsheet category headings and clarified the abbreviations used. ODOT has chosen to keep a "set-aside" for

development of Material Source for the region. Members requested that ODOT staff prepare a definition list to assist members in deciphering the acronyms used.

Dennis Luke asked if projects can be listed in multiple categories. Gary Farnsworth stated that a project can fall under more than one category. In that instance, dollars will be utilized out of those applicable categories. Since funding in the various categories has declined, the “bucket” approach is currently being implemented. “Bucket” is used to describe those dollars that are set aside without being targeted to a specific project to be managed on a year-to-year basis for projects, such as chip sealing after assessing winter damage. In answer to a question, Gary Farnsworth stated that ODOT has an emergency program that can respond to unforeseen emergencies.

Gary Farnsworth informed members that there is a Technical Advisory Committee meeting scheduled in November. At the December COACT meeting, he should have more concise information on the 2012-2015 STIP. He added that the Modernization category is the only category that the Transportation Commission has requested deliberate advisory input. In answer to a concern regarding the recent pedestrian death that occurred on the by-pass in Bend and if that incident would constitute the use of emergency funding to rectify the situation, Gary Farnsworth stated that there are a wide range of solutions with a variety of funding sources that could be accessed and noted that the STIP program is constantly be adjusted and updated.

Flexible Funds Program

Gary Farnsworth distributed an announcement for the Flexible Funds grant program. ODOT announced the availability of \$21 million in federal transportation funds for the fall 2010 application cycle for the newly created Flexible Funds Program. The Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) has directed these funds be made available for Transit, Bicycle, Pedestrian, Transportation Demand Management (TDM), and the planning, research and project development that supports those projects. Staff has been directed to initiate a project solicitation process to be completed and submitted to OTC by January of 2011. Gary Farnsworth informed members that a webinar has been scheduled for the morning of October 15th to outline the program and process.

Gary Farnsworth reported on Transportation Enhancement program applications received from Central Oregon applicants. Applications include: Crook County Railway Caboose Exhibit, Madras J Street, Prineville Ochoco Lumber, Redmond Gateway project, Sisters US 20-Cascade Street and a project submitted for Maupin. The Technical Advisory Committee will take a look at the above projects at their November meeting.

Overview of Cascades East Transit Management of Bend Area Transit

Karen Friend gave an overview of Cascades East Transit’s management of the Bend Area Transit system. She explained that approximately 1 year ago, the City of Bend formed a “Transit Analysis Team” to look at the opportunities available in the region and what was the best outcome for BAT. As a result of the Transit Analysis Team’s review and evaluation of the BAT system, the Team identified some duplications of service between BAT and CET, recognized that the City of Bend wanted a new image for BAT, determined that CET had the capacity to run the system, and acknowledged the benefits to having one regional system. The Team’s recommendation to the City of Bend was to merge the BAT and CET systems. After 4 months of negotiations, COIC entered into an intergovernmental agreement with the City of Bend on September 1 to operate Bend Area Transit. The City of Bend agreed to a 5 year commitment to support the system recognizing the need to

establish a long term, sustainable transportation system by the end of those 5 years. Currently, BAT is providing approximately 35,000 rides a month and CET provides approximately 18,000 rides per month with 5,000 rides being contracted out to private providers. Both transit systems are experiencing substantial growth – BAT 29% growth over last year and CET 109% growth over last year.

COIC's short term activities to support BAT include:

- Conduct a cost benefit analysis of in-house services vs outside service for maintenance
- Complete a regional branding process from BAT to CET
- Completion of a Regional Rider Guide including other systems
- Development of a regional fare policy
- COIC Board is working through regional governance policies
- Formation of a Regional Public Transportation Advisory Committee
- Examining route efficiencies
- Development of the Intermodal Center, which will be a hub for transportation services in Bend
- Proceed on the Maintenance and Operations Facility in Redmond that resulted from the receipt of a ConnectOregon III grant.

Dennis Luke asked about the timing on completing the Intermodal Center in Bend. She stated that the remodel will be completed December 31, 2010. The building will be the public transit intermodal facility which will serve as a hub for transportation providers in Bend and will include a public transit lobby to disseminate transportation information, provide heated platforms for all buses, provide bike parking, lighting and security. Alan Unger noted that he is COIC's board chair, and stated that COIC is working through the challenges involved in operating a regional transportation system including securing matching funds for the grants. He added that the Board initially intended to rent out the remaining portion of the building not used for transportation in order to payback the match dollars; but due to the current economic climate, that may not be possible. The Board is exploring moving the Redmond Administration office to the Intermodal Center to recover some of the cost associated with the project.

Karen Friend reported that the Redmond hub for the CET buses located at the Redmond WorkSource has outgrown the space available and will have to find a new location. It has been suggested to locate the hub on 7th and Evergreen. In answer to a question, she stated the greatest growth has come from riders going to work and school.

Roadside Weed Issues and Revegetation Projects

Pat Creedian from ODOT's Operations and Maintenance Department in Bend gave a presentation on "ODOT District 10 Spray Program – Present and Future". He stated that ODOT covers all or part of 8 counties, 3 National Forests and the Warm Springs Reservation totaling 800 miles of highway, approximately 1,600 miles of shoulders. Jefferson County contracts with ODOT to perform the residual application and noxious application. District 10 IVM responsibilities include 4,500 acres in stockpile/quarry sites, 9,500 acres of R/W and 1,642 total shoulder miles. The current budget is \$176,104 for fiscal year 2010.

District 10 IVM Goals:

- Maintain shoulders for adequate clear zone and visibility
- Maintain shoulder drainage
- Maintain, reduce or eliminate noxious plants on R/W

- Reduce overall highway maintenance cost to taxpayers
- Maintain or enhance the environment

Current IVM Program

Residual Program

- 1,044 acres sprayed with residual annually
- Shoulder spray widths vary from 2 to 8 feet
- 1 truck mounted computerized spray vehicle contracted from Jefferson County

Noxious Program

- Approximately 387 acres sprayed annually
- Goal can vary from eradication to containment
- 2 vehicles mounted spray tanks
- 1 quad ATV with spray tank
- Multiple back pack sprayers

Mechanical Program

- Approximately 890 acres mowed or cut annual
- 2 track vehicle mounted forestry mowers
- 2 4x4 tractors with multiple heads
- Multiple chainsaws and pole saws

Pat Creedian explained that the current direction of the program is to reduce the spray program by 25% statewide over the next 5 years. This approach will reduce the use of chemicals in the environment. To accomplish this ODOT will 1) reduce the residual program, 2) increase the mechanical program; 3) plant native grasses, and 4) increase the noxious program. Members discussed consequences associated with the reduction of the spray program by 25%.

Dan Sherwin gave a presentation on “Roadside Weed Issues and Revegetation Projects”. His presentation showed local examples of the weed issues including pictures showing before and after treatment. The topics he covered included:

- Weeds Along Rights of Way – Presentation showed local examples of weed issues along various rights of way.
- Integrated Vegetation Management - Methods of integrated vegetation management include pulling, mowing (mowers or animal grazing), spraying, cultivating, fire, and biological agents.
- Restoration Projects - The presentation showed examples of restoration projects in the City of Bend, City of Redmond and Deschutes County and the process that was used.
- Current Vegetation Issues – Roadside concerns include fire, visibility, erosion, wildlife, encroachment, and noxious and obnoxious weeds.

Members asked specific questions on the presentation pictures. In explaining the aggressive nature of Spotted Knapweed, he stated that Spotted Knapweed arrived in Central Oregon in 1971 and today there are approximately 200,000 gross acres of Spotted Knapweed in Central Oregon, not including BLM and federal lands. More dollars are spent controlling Scotchbroom than any other plant. When asked, it was noted that all the counties do similar roadside weed treatments and revegetation projects. Members discussed the difficulty in controlling noxious weeds due to the transportation of noxious weeds by various methods. In answer to a question about weed free rock sources, Pat Creedian stated that Deschutes County was the first county to adopt an aggregate ordinance specifically for aggregate sites to be implemented in the winter of 2010.

Gary Farnsworth will follow-up with ODOT on what process is available for individuals/organizations to express their concern regarding the reduction in ODOT funding for the treatment of noxious weeds.

Dan Sherwin stated that Deschutes County has a “Cost Share Program” working with the land owners specifically. A couple years ago, the program was expanded to assist the school districts with their weed issues. He received a grant to spray rock pits in Deschutes County and several in Crook County. In addition to spraying, landowners were educated about the treatment of noxious weeds on their property. In answer to a question regarding funding, he stated that he generates revenue by contracting with the counties, receiving grants, doing consulting work for Bureau of Reclamation statewide, and working for Bonneville Power Administration. Dan Sherwin, in answer to a question, stated that he contracts with the Irrigation Districts to do weed treatment work along the canals. In addition, he attends the county fairs to spread the word regarding noxious weeds.

EV Smith stated that the City of Culver does spot spraying and contracts with the county additional work. Lon Kellstrom stated that the City of Sisters has an aggressive weed program due to the concerns surrounding forest fires and wildfires. They are proactive in working with the large land owners such as schools, churches and vacant land property owners.

Updates

Gary Farnsworth informed members that the northbound lane on the Highway 97 - Lava Butte project is now open to traffic.

The Oregon Transportation Commission will be meeting in Central Oregon on Tuesday, October 19 and Wednesday, October 20. Alan Unger will be attending and solicited members to submit information to him prior to the meeting.

Dennis Luke informed members that an additional COACT meeting on December 9 has been added to the schedule. He noted that Jefferson County will take over the chairmanship of the committee for next year.

Meeting adjourned at 4:50 PM.