

Meeting Minutes

Central Oregon Area Commission on Transportation COACT March 10, 2011

Members:

Alan Unger (Deschutes County), Stephanie Serpico (ODOT), Lonny Macy (Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs), Mike McCabe (Crook County), Eileen Stein (City of Sisters), Wendy Holzman (City of Sisters), Gary Farnsworth (ODOT), EV Smith (City of Culver), Kathie Eckman (City of Bend), Dana Cork (BLM), Ken Mullenex (City of La Pine), Jeff Monson (Commute Options), Peggy Fisher (Deschutes/Ochoco National Forest), Mike Folkestad (Jefferson County Appointed Stakeholder), and Cheryl Howard (Deschutes County Bike/Ped Advisory Committee).

Guests:

Penny Keller (Crook County), Scott Edelman (City of Prineville), Nunzie Gould (Resident), Nick Arnis (City of Bend), Tyler Deke (Bend MPO), Nick Snead (City of Madras), Joe Bessman (Kittelsohn & Associates), James Lewis (COIC), Pauline Hardie (City of Sisters), Chris Doty (City of Redmond), Tom Blust (Deschutes County), Jerry Brummer (City of Prineville), and Eric King (City of Bend).

Staff:

Andrew Spreadborough (Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council).

Call to Order

Judge Mike McCabe called the meeting to order in the absence of COACT chair John Hatfield. Introductions were made.

General Public Comment

Nunzie Gould informed COACT that earlier that day a semi truck conducted a u-turn on Highway 20 in Tumalo, using parts of Cook Avenue. She said that it is important for COACT to monitor Highway 20 speeds and movements. She said that she is beginning to see this sort of traffic movement on Highway 20 as a result of restricted movements. Commissioner Alan Unger said that similar issues have been observed on Highway 97, and that we need to consider solutions. Nunzie Gould noted that a land use application has been submitted to develop a school with 200 students on the south side of Highway 20, which could compound the problem.

COACT Business

Alan Unger moved approval of the December 9 meeting minutes. EV Smith seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by consensus.

Mike Folkestad moved approval of the January 13 meeting minutes. EV Smith seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by consensus.

Andrew Spreadborough said that the COACT Orientation Meeting was held prior to the COACT meeting. He said 13 people participated, and attendees provided positive feedback on the meeting. Andrew said that the orientation meeting packet will be posted to the COACT web page.

Legislative Update

Andrew Spreadborough announced that Art Schack of the Association of Oregon Counties was unavailable to call into today's meeting. He referred to Attachment C of the meeting materials, and explained that this document is a summary of selected transportation-related bills from the Oregon legislative session, along with notes on their status. He said that Art Schlack will be asked to attend the May meeting to provide a more detailed status report. In the meantime, he encouraged COACT members to either identify additional bills that they'd like tracked, or to provide updates if members had information related to bills.

Eileen Stein said that SB580 was of interest to the City of Sisters. If passed the bill would create limitations on the development of roundabouts on state highways. Tom Blust said that Deschutes County is following this bill as well. Eileen said that the bill has not been scheduled for a hearing, and that nobody has signed onto the bill. Andrew will add this bill to the legislative summary for update in May.

Jeff Monson said that the Oregon Transportation Association has a lobbyist who has been tracking legislation, and that we can follow up with him for more information.

2010 Report on the State of Oregon's Transportation System

Gary Farnsworth provided the web address to ODOT's "State of the System" website (<http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/TD/STATEOFTHESYSTEM.shtml>), and encouraged COACT members to visit. He said that there are several trends affecting the transportation system:

- Portland State University projects statewide population growth of 25% over the next 20 years
- While population is increasing, vehicle miles traveled are decreasing
- This presents issues with aging infrastructure, inadequate funding to maintain
- Gas tax revenue is a challenge because VMT is decreasing, and the gas tax revenue is flat

He reviewed a powerpoint presentation. Highlights:

- Anticipating declining revenues; revenues are trending downward due to the end of the ARRA funding and OTIA III.
- A portion of revenue will be allocated to paying back bond debt.
- Bridge conditions will significantly deteriorate over the next several decades; although the OTIA III program provided bridge funding that allowed ODOT to catch up on repairs, declining federal revenues will reduce bridge funding going forward.
- Several bridge preservation strategies are envisioned, including protecting high value bridges, utilizing practical design, and prioritizing bridges on freight routes.
- Pavement conditions will significantly deteriorate over the next decade; federal funds are declining and inflation has reduced the purchasing power of gas tax revenues.
- Pavement funding spiked in 2009 and 2010 due to ARRA investments, but funding will decline to pre-ARRA levels moving forward.
- The percent of pavement in fair or better condition will decline over the next decade at current funding levels.
- Pavement strategies are being considered, including partial pavement restorations in the interstate program, moving some state highways to the low volume program, re-evaluating the split between interstate and non-interstate systems, and implementing lower-cost pavement programs.

In summing up, Gary noted that a more deteriorated system is more expensive to maintain. He suggested that we may need to discuss if we should abandon parts of our transportation system – what are the tradeoffs? There are no indications that revenue will increase, so how do we maintain our system? He said that it is critically important that we continue to work together and collaborate; forums such as COACT are necessary to determine where investments should be placed. Gary said that the Central Oregon Rail Plan was a good example of how regional collaboration led to a new way of thinking about and addressing a regional problem.

Mike Folkestad suggested one area to look at to reduce costs is the Prevailing Wage Rate law requirements. Gary Farnsworth said that the cost increases have been related to materials and interest payments, rather than labor costs. Alan Unger asked what is to be expected in terms of local funding over the next five years. Gary said that ODOT is not expecting any changes in the formula for allocating state and federal funding, so we can apply the trends related to revenue reductions to local governments as well. He noted that there may be additional impacts resulting from the elimination of federal timber payments. Jeff Monson said that the Oregon Transportation Commission is focusing on commute options and alternate modes as lower-cost methods to move people. He also noted that Commute Options for Central Oregon is looking at methods to reduce trips at peak hours. Gary said that there have been discussions regarding the use of technology to maximize the efficiency of transportation assets. He also suggested that Jim Witty of ODOT be invited to a future COACT meeting to discuss innovative planning work are Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT).

Alan Unger said that having projects ready-to-proceed will allow us to be opportunistic in accessing funding. Eileen Stein noted challenges related to funding the required preliminary design, engineering and environmental analysis to create ready-to-proceed projects.

Light Detection and Radar Aerial Survey (LIDAR)

Stephanie Serpico said that this agenda item was postponed until a future meeting, since presenter Ian Madin was unavailable for today's meeting.

Intermodal Transportation Center Update

James Lewis of COIC provided an update on the status of the COIC intermodal transit center – the Hawthorne Station. He said that the intermodal center was created by remodeling the old Cascade Natural Gas headquarters building in Bend; this work was funded in part by a ConnectOregon II grant. He said that the City of Bend applied for and was awarded the grant, but transferred the grant to COIC. The remodeled facility will support the BAT and CET bus system, and will be the primary regional transfer station. The intermodal center is an important public transportation infrastructure component which will enhance and build the transit system.

Other providers will use the facility, including the Breeze. Bicyclists and pedestrians will also use the facility. He described the external and internal improvements to the facility, noting that there will be transit lobby area with vendors. He said COIC is working with Visit Bend to set up an informational kiosk on Bend area lodging and services.

He said that the facility construction started in August, and is scheduled to wrap up this month. A 'soft opening' is scheduled for March 14. Hours of operation will be Monday through Friday from 6:30 AM to 6:00 PM, with some Saturday hours as well. A public grant opening event will occur at some point.

Mike McCabe commended COIC on this project, and noted their good work in serving Crook County veterans.

TRIP 97 Partnership

Chris Doty reviewed a powerpoint presentation on the Transportation Reinvestment Innovation Planning (TRIP 97) partnership, which is a partnership between the cities of Bend, Madras and Redmond. He said that the partnership was developed for multiple reasons: a lack of resources at the state level to address US 97 transportation challenges; the need to broaden the flexibility in mobility standards on US 97; and recognition that regional coordination for transportation planning shares the costs, benefits, and efficiencies amongst the partners.

The goal of the partnership is to introduce a practical approach to planning and funding transportation improvements and remove transportation as the obstacle to growth in the US 97 corridor. The four elements of the partnership concept plan are:

1. Redefine the state highway mobility standard from an intersection-by-intersection, volume-to-capacity ratio to a broader corridor-wide standard.
2. Rank projects regionally with a corridor perspective.
3. Craft funding mechanisms that will take small bites from many different sources tied to growth and growth related congestion.
4. Use the plan to develop local, state, and federal buy-in regarding the future of the corridor.

Chris closed by discussing the next steps for the partnership, including funding a study of the concept. Alan Unger asked what ODOT thinks of the TRIP 97 partnership. Gary Farnsworth said that ODOT has been interested in this discussion for years, and that a creative approach is necessary.

Eric King said that several years ago Gail Achterman of the Oregon Transportation Commission encouraged creativity in Highway 97 corridor planning. She made this challenge to local governments, encouraging them to be a partner in the solution rather than expecting the state to address highway issues. This partnership will provide a means for local governments to engage in addressing these problems.

Other Business

Stephanie Serpico said that the City of Sisters application for Transportation Enhancement program funding was moving forward. She also said that several Central Oregon projects were awarded Flex Funds, including:

- COIC – Redmond transit hub project
- City of Madras- Bike/ped trail
- City of Bend – 3rd Street pedestrian improvements
- COIC – Regional Park and Ride plan
- City of Redmond – Bike/ped improvements in the Dry Canyon

She said that there will be a second Flex Funds round in the future.

Meeting adjourned at 4:50 PM.