

Meeting Minutes

Central Oregon Area Commission on Transportation  
COACT  
March 8, 2007

**Members:**

Lonny Macy (Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs), Dennis Luke (Deschutes County), Bill Bellamy (Jefferson County), Bill Friedman (City of Bend), Dan Lovelady (City of Prineville), Brad Boyd (City of Sisters), Alan Unger (City of Redmond), Luana Damerval (City of LaPine), Dan Harnden (City of Culver), Jeff Monson (Commute Options), Ron Wortman (Prineville BLM District), Mike Morgan (City of Madras), Gary Farnsworth (ODOT, Region 4), Randy Pape' (Oregon Transportation Commission), and Gene Moe (Jefferson County).

**Guests:** Eileen Stein (City of Sisters), Bernie Roberts (City of La Pine), Dana Cork (Prineville BLM District), Tyler Deke (Bend MPO), Peter Russell (Deschutes County Planning), Bob Bryant (ODOT, Region 4), Jason Hale (City of Madras), Connie Kennard (B.A.N.A.), Mike Lovely (MPO-CAC & SBNA), Jeane Newton (Mt. View Neighborhood Assoc.), Wayne Schnur (CAC), Chris Doty (City of Redmond), Peter Murphy (ODOT), Charles Kettenring (ODOT Rail), and Nick Arnis (City of Bend).

**Staff:**

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

**Call to Order and Introductions**

Chair Luke called the meeting to order and introductions were made. Chair Luke congratulated the City of Culver for receiving a Transportation Enhancement Grant to install curbs, sidewalks and lights.

**General Public Comment :**

Chair Luke recognized City of La Pine representatives, Ms. Luane Damerval and Mr. Bernie Roberts. Ms. Damerval expressed the following issues facing the City of La Pine:

- 1) The City of La Pine has a number of roads that have deteriorated to the point that the ambulance is unable to pass. Approximately 7 miles of road is gravel or dirt within the city limits. A majority of the roads in the past have been maintained by homeowners; but with the condition of the roads being so deteriorated, homeowners are no longer able to maintain the roads. The city is requesting help from ODOT, specifically asking to receive excess cinders from state roads after the winter. Also, Ms. Damerval stated that the city has no equipment and requested that if any jurisdiction had surplus equipment, such as tractors, etc., please contact the City of La Pine.

Mr. Luke clarified that the county will continue to maintain roads under county jurisdiction and ODOT will continue to maintain state highways.

- 2) Ms. Damerval suggested that La Pine would be an ideal site for a rail transfer loading warehouse.

Mr. Luke noted that the City of Prineville is looking into legislation to create a point of distribution at the Prineville rail site at O'Neil Junction. He suggested that representatives from Prineville and La Pine should meet to discuss this issue.

Chair Luke closed the Public Comment portion of the meeting.

### Meeting Minutes

Mr. Unger requested the following correction to the January 11, 2007 minutes, last paragraph on page 6: "City of Redmond, using the information based on the traffic model *supplied* by Remington Ranch located in Crook County, *requested* \$750,000 to support the impact to the Redmond intersections due to the Remington Ranch."

**Minutes were approved by consensus.**

### Regional Transit Market Analysis Update

Mr. Spreadborough gave background information on the Mobility Market Survey.

Chair Luke requested that Mr. Unger provide information on the Mobility Consortium. Mr. Unger stated that the consortium is comprised of representatives from cities, counties and the private sector. The consortium's goal is to craft ways to address public transportation that creates public/private partnerships. He further explained that the consortium is looking at a model that would take and analyze what is needed, what are the resources, and from that analysis come up with a model that would incorporate all these elements to create a public transportation system in the region. The Mobility Consortium has expressed the desire to utilize COIC as the formal body to create a consortium that would continue to address public transportation, along with funding needs, and explore ways of creating a regional transit district.

Mr. Spreadborough continued stating that the Mobility Consortium's current project is to conduct a regional market analysis. The goal is to assess the demand for non-single occupant vehicle transportation in the region. The Mobility Consortium has solicited RFQ responses from consultants. Mr. Spreadborough referred to Attachment B in the packet which gives an overview of the Scope of Work for this project. It is anticipated that the consultant will be selected next week, with the survey getting underway in March and results being received in April. The RFQ's have been provided to the COACT Technical Committee and a summary of comments/responses were provided to the COACT Board as a handout and also provided to the Mobility Consortium members. The Mobility Consortium has invited the COACT Technical Committee to appoint an individual to serve on the RFQ review team. Mr. Spreadborough extended the invitation on behalf of the Mobility Consortium committee to the COACT Board members and requested that anyone interested in serving on the RFQ review team contact him at the conclusion of the meeting.

In response to a question from Chair Luke regarding funding for this project, Mr. Unger stated that the consortium is currently soliciting donations from the private sector.

Mr. Bellamy questioned how the results of the survey were going to be presented to the public. He stressed the importance of getting the information out to public and suggested hiring an individual to market the survey results. He added that in order to accomplish this, he would be willing to commit some Jefferson County Economic Development dollars. Members discussed various options/venues for disseminating the survey results.

Mr. Friedman added that an important element to the success of a regional transportation program is the establishment of a transit district.

### **Comments from Randy Pape', Oregon Transportation Commission**

Mr. Pape' commented that the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) enjoyed meeting with COACT last April. The meeting gave the Commission an opportunity to learn about Central Oregon transportation issues and the progress being made in meeting the objectives.

Per Chair Luke's request, Mr. Pape' gave background information on himself, personally, professionally and as a member of the OTC. He spoke to transportation issues facing Central Oregon including freight, rail, air, job growth as it relates to commuter traffic and mass transit.

As a member of the Oregon Transportation Commission, each of the 5 members are assigned to respective ACTs throughout the State. He stated that important issues facing the Commission at this time include:

- 1) With the legislature in high gear, it's important to find new and additional funding opportunities to increase the revenue base; exacerbating the situation is the counties possible loss of federal funding through the Secure Rurals Schools Program. Possible options for additional general state funding include increasing the gas tax and/or additional registration fees. There continues to be increasing demands, increasing needs and fewer and fewer resources. Alternative methods are being explored such as public/private partnerships to try and stretch dollars and leverage more dollars into the system.
- 2) OTIA I, II and III projects are in full stream. Construction projects will be tapering off within the next 3-4 years. Payment on bonds over the next 30 years will decrease the Modernization Fund.
- 3) Connect Oregon 2 – Would be considered a great accomplishment for this legislative session. This program follows on the heels of the first Connect Oregon program. OTC is looking at ways to improve the process. One hundred million dollars have been targeted for projects. The Connect Oregon program funds non-highway projects, focusing on making investments to help move the state's overall economy and transportation systems forward. He recommended COACT begin looking at what was accomplished with Connect Oregon and start preparing to participate in the Connect Oregon 2 process if passed by the Legislature.

Mr. Luke stated that the Redmond Airport, the Bend Airport, the Prineville Railroad, and Bend Transit were recipients of Connect Oregon funds.

- 4) Mr. Pape' requested help from COACT to encourage their Legislative representatives to move Connect Oregon 2 through the Legislative body. He also requested help from COACT to encourage their Legislative representatives to act on the gas tax and/or registration fee proposals.

Mr. Pape' answered questions from the Board. Mr. Unger expressed the need for a discussion on regional gas tax vs state gas tax. Mr. Luke stated that Deschutes County is losing \$3 million in road fund; at this point, the County is not keeping up with road maintenance. Additional funds are needed to make long term investments in the road system.

### **Rail Planning Update/Recommendations**

Mr. Farnsworth distributed a handout “Central Oregon Rail Plan – COACT Outline of Recommendations” and thanked Peter Russell for his assistance in preparing the “Scope of Work”. At the last COACT meeting, members discussed the Problem Statement and Project Objectives.

The front page of the handout summarizes the outcomes of the discussion at the last COACT meeting. One area for further discussion – Is there a market for passenger rail?

Second page of the handout is an outline of the 16-month timeline for completion of the Work Tasks. The Task Team is not only focusing on the Scope of Work but also what can be accomplished with current COACT resources, such as work accomplished through monthly meetings vs work that would be completed by a consultant.

The third page outlines a proposal for Work Tasks. Included in the proposal is the creation of a project management team with representatives from ODOT, each county, City of Bend, City of Redmond and City of Prineville Railway. It is the task team’s concept to have a consultant representative on the project management team that would compile information from meeting decisions and would be assigned specific tasks throughout the process. Project tasks include:

- Task 1: Project Management
- Task 2: Public/Stakeholder Involvement
- Task 3: Inventory and Decision Methodology for At-Grade Railroad Crossing Needs
- Task 4: Analyze Existing and Future Traffic Conditions for the Street, Roads and Highways at At-Grade Railroad Crossings
- Task 5: Analyze Existing and Future Rail Conditions
- Task 6: Assess the Feasibility, Costs, and benefits of Relocating the BNSF Mainline East of Redmond and Bend
- Task 7: Assess the Feasibility of Preserving and Enhancing Railroad Freight Mobility
- Task 8: Develop Preferred Alternative
- Task 9: Prepare and Adopt Plan

Ultimately, once the project is launched it is anticipated that within a year alternatives will be identified for the major objectives and would be in a position to adopt the major elements.

In answer to a question from Mr. Friedman regarding funding participation from the cities and counties, Mr. Farnsworth answered that funding would come from staff participation and dollars from the rail division. Mr. Friedman stated that he is hesitant to devote limited staff resources to a project that has limited impact on the majority of the traffic volume which is road traffic.

Mr. Unger stated that the reason this is before COACT is that the issue needs to be examined on a regional basis.

### **Legislative Update**

Mr. Art Schlack, Association of Oregon Counties joined the meeting by phone to give a legislative update. He reported on the following:

House Bill 2033 – This bill will change the formula allocation between ODOT and the counties in the Special County Program—a program that helps counties with small populations and with large road systems. No COACT counties benefit from this program.

House Bill 2034 – This bill will require a 30 day timeframe to acquire a driver’s license, and license a vehicle. This bill has passed House Transportation and has been referred to Ways and Means.

House Bill 2691 – This bill would remove the requirement that if a county adopts a vehicle registration fee that it has to go to a vote before it becomes effective. This bill is in House Rules. There was a hearing on Tuesday where clarifying amendments were submitted. It affects all 36 counties.

House Bill 2278, Connect Oregon 2 – The bill is in route to Ways and Means. AOC expressed disappointment in the fact that the regional allocation was changed from 15% to 10%. The bill has received favorable support except for concerns regarding the rules and processes. A work group will review the rules and processes and make recommendations. There doesn’t appear to be a concerted effort to raise the regional allocation percentage, but appears to be some effort to increase the funding amount.

There are place holders for a registration fee increase bill, which would direct 25% of the revenue off the top to be used for projects that have a statewide significance.

House Bill 2653, Gas Tax – This bill calls for a 5¢ initial increase, in 5 years an additional 5¢ increase, and so forth. This is viewed as a place holder. The strategy going into the session was that the business community was going to be “front and center” with a proposal. The business community has yet to come forward with a proposal. Mr. Pape’ assured members that the business community will submit a proposal.

Mr. Unger thanked Mr. Schlack for the Legislative update.

**Public Lands Highway Earmark Program Proposals**

Mr. Farnsworth distributed a handout listing Public Lands Highway Earmark Program projects that OTC has reviewed. He requested that COACT endorse letters of support for two of the seven projects listed and forward them to our Congressional Delegation. He noted that it is a program that has been used in the past as an annual funding source for projects that incorporate transportation access to public lands. Projects are Lava Lands Visitor Center and Access Road and US 26 Beaver Creek Refinement Plan.

Lava Lands Visitor Center and Access Road would construct a parallel access road from US 97 to the Lava Lands Visitor Center and Lava River Cave Recreational Area, as well as a bridge over US 97 to provide access to the two recreation areas.

US 26 Beaver Creek Refinement Plan is a refinement planning effort to evaluate and recommend a preferred alternative for long-term protection of Beaver Creek from US 26 runoff.

Mr. Morgan moved to approve a COACT letter of support to the Congressional Delegation for the Lava Lands Visitor Center and Lava River Cave Recreational Area. *M/S/C*

***Morgan/Unger/Consensus***

**Beaver Creek – Highway 26 Realignment Project**

Mr. Macy distributed a handout “Problem Statement – Highway 26, Removal and Relocation away from Beaver Creek” and reviewed a power point presentation. He noted that Beaver Creek is a sensitive and critical fishery habitat for salmon, rainbow trout and other aquatic species. Recurring truck crashes have released toxic and hazardous materials directly into the creek. Also during the winter months a large volume of pollutants also enter Beaver Creek as a result of routine highway maintenance like cinder applications. The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs has requested that ODOT relocate Highway 26 away from Beaver Creek and out of its floodplain. In answer to a question, Mr. Macy stated that the area above Beaver Creek (the suggested re-route) is mostly tribal land. Mr. Farnsworth noted that the Public Land Highway program doesn’t prioritize planning efforts for funding and chances for project funding through this source are not good. Mr. Morgan moved to approve a COACT letter of support to the Congressional Delegation for the US 26 Beaver Creek Refinement Plan. *M/S/C Morgan/Unger/Consensus*

Mr. Morgan moved to approve that a COACT letter of support for the US 26 Beaver Creek Refinement Plan be submitted to Federal Lands. *M/S/C Morgan/Unger/Consensus*

In addition, Mr. Spreadborough and Mr. Farnsworth were directed to draft letters of support for the Beaver Creek project to be provided to cities and counties for their action.

Mr. Unger moved to approve a COACT letter of support addressed to the Oregon Business Plan c/o Oregon Business Council and OTC in support of the gas tax at the current ratio. *M/S/C Unger/Boyd/Consensus*

Mr. Luke commended Mr. Pape’ for his involvement in restoring the Inn of the 7<sup>th</sup> Mountain Resort in Bend.

Meeting adjourned.