

Meeting Minutes

Central Oregon Area Commission on Transportation
COACT
September 11, 2008

Members:

Bill Bellamy (Jefferson County), Dennis Luke (Deschutes County), Lynn Lundquist (Crook County), Lonny Macy (Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs), Bill Friedman (City of Bend), Thelma Krueger (City of Culver), Peggy Fisher (Deschutes National Forest), Dana Cork (BLM), Mike Morgan and Gus Burrell (City of Madras), Brad Boyd and Eileen Stein (City of Sisters), and Gary Farnsworth (ODOT).

Guests:

Jerry Brummer and Scott Smith (City of Prineville), Tyler Deke and Jovi Meyers (Bend MPO), Mike Lovely (BMPO-CAC & SBNA), Tom Blust (Deschutes County), Jeanne Newton (North Corridor CAC, Mt. View Association), Erin Golden (Bend Bulletin), and Travis Brouwer and Pat Fisher, (ODOT – by phone).

Staff:

Andrew Spreadborough and Kelly Elzner (Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council).

Call to Order and Introductions

Chair Bellamy called the meeting to order.

General Public Comments

Commissioner Luke noted that the City of Culver sent a general email requesting letters of support for their Phase II City Curb and Sidewalk project. Deschutes County will be submitting a letter in support of the project. Chair Bellamy did not recall Jefferson County receiving a request and asked Councilor Krueger to follow-up.

Old Business

Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Luke moved to approve the minutes of July 10, 2008. Commissioner Lundquist seconded. Minutes were approved by consensus.

Oregon Transportation Commission Meeting Debrief

Both Chair Bill Bellamy and Commissioner Dennis Luke thought that the OTC meeting went well, and there was a good discussion between the ACT and the OTC. Commissioner Luke mentioned that the OTC heard testimony, but they also asked questions and allowed COACT members to respond. He said that the City of Bend provided a presentation on the Cooley / Hwy. 97 issue and he, along with the City of Redmond, provided a presentation on Hwy 126 / Hwy 97 on day two.

Chair Bellamy asked if the OTC is going to be doing another regional roundtable in the near future. Gary Farnsworth answered that the OTC does feel that the regional roundtables are successful and they will be conducting another one in Central Oregon in the future. This was a great opportunity to present the wealth of issues in and around Central Oregon.

Federal Earmark Project Recommendations

Mr. Farnsworth distributed a Handout from Travis Brouwer, ODOT Federal Affairs Advisor, providing a summary of the expected actions by the ACT. Mr. Brouwer joined the meeting by conference call, and announced that the House and the Senate passed a Bill that will restore \$8 billion to the highway account that was transferred to the general fund in 1998. He explained that the expectation of the OTC is for each ACT to submit recommendations to the OTC on what projects from their region best meet the earmark criteria that have been laid out in the earmark policy. ODOT plans to submit a limited amount of projects to the congressional delegation. He said ODOT wants to put forward projects that have strong support in the regions.

Mr. Farnsworth asked about separating out the transit and trail projects. Mr. Brouwer answered that he did not want to tell COACT to not include trail projects, but that most trail projects would not be included on the OTC earmark request list due to the fact that most trail projects are not on the state highway system so the OTC does not have responsibility for those projects. He noted that the OTC will be looking for projects that are either on the state highway system or provide benefit to the state highway system. Mr. Brower said that COACT can recommend trail projects, but unless it serves a larger regional transportation purpose he doubts that the OTC would put it on its list.

Commissioner Luke asked why COIC did not put forward a project for consideration. He explained that COIC has recently taken on the Dial-A-Ride buses and are running them between the three counties this would be a good fit. Andrew Spreadborough answered that COIC has recently been awarded state capital purchase grants that are serving the current needs of the Cascades East Transit program. There will clearly be a need in the future, but at this time, COIC was not ready to submit a formal earmark request.

Mr. Farnsworth asked the group to refer to the summary spreadsheet (Attachment B-1). He explained that the highest priority project based on the earmark criteria is the Murphy Road project. He further explained that the J Street @ Hwy 97 project and the 19th Street Extension project are regional priorities. Mr. Farnsworth said that there is some concern regarding the funding mix for the J Street project; according to the policy criteria this project would have trouble making the screen unless there is a plan for phasing or for other funding in case the earmark does not fully fund the project. Mr. Brouwer agreed that this is a key criteria for the OTC, since ODOT will be committing to the project even if not fully funded through an earmark. Mr. Farnsworth noted that the 19th Street project is not part of the state highway system; however, Deschutes County and the City of Redmond could argue that the project provides benefit to the highway system as a parallel facility. He said that other projects on the list did not meet the OTC criteria, so are not recommended to be moved forward.

Mike Morgan said that the City of Madras is asking for the support of the J Street @ Hwy 97 project. He explained that in 1993 ODOT requested that the City build J Street and the couplet as a loop road to relieve transportation pressures. The City built the project mostly with city funding. This project will develop the intersection at Highway 97. When the City was facing a risk of a construction moratorium on the east side of Madras they met with ODOT. This was approximately two year ago and at that time the project was estimated to cost \$4.8 million. The City volunteered to take its future SDCs and apply them to this project. The current challenge is that the project cost keeps creeping up. It is now estimated to be a \$10.9 million project. Mr. Morgan explained that this is a strategic investment - it is on Highway 97 and it brings two major highways together and takes them through town. He said that there are about 13,000 vehicles a day at this location and it is creating a huge problem. The funding

mix is always a risk in most of these cases, especially in a smaller organization. That is why the City of Madras is requesting the full amount of the earmark; but the City is open to phasing if necessary.

Commissioner Luke said that the 19th Street project has been discussed by Redmond and Deschutes County for a very long time. 19th Street, whether or not it goes all the way to Deschutes Junction, will go to the Quarry Road interchange eventually. In addition, once Pronghorn gets 50% built out, it will be required to complete a secondary access, and 19th Street will be part of that secondary access. Commissioner Luke said that the OTC has talked about investing in local roads that take traffic off the state highway system. This project would relieve highway traffic between Deschutes Junction and Redmond. Tom Blust added that the 19th Street project is eligible for system development funds. Also, there will be some additional work done to help quantify the fact that this project benefits the overall state highway system. Commissioner Luke said that he is interested in seeing how the OTC treats projects that improve local roads. Mr. Brouwer said that he has not yet heard from the OTC on this issue, but will ask them in October when the initial earmark list is presented. The policy states that local projects can be added if it can be shown that they benefit the state highway system.

Chair Bellamy asked if the funds could be used for right-of-way purchase. Mr. Brouwer answered that the funds could be used for right-of-way purchase; however, the policy gives preference to construction projects.

Eileen Stein asked about the OTC's commitment to a project if the earmark amount is insufficient to complete the project. Mr. Brouwer answered that there may be rare cases where the delegation delivers 5%, 10% or 20% of the requested amount and the project will not be able to be completed. In these cases, they would determine if the funds should go to another project. Generally, the earmarks are in the range of 25% - 50% of the amount requested. ODOT would consider that sufficient. The project applicant will need to have a plan in place to complete the project should they receive 25% - 50% of the funds requested. Councilor Friedman asked in cases where only 25% - 50% of the earmark request is approved, what is the OTC's commitment? Mr. Brouwer answered that STIP resources can be used, which are limited. Mr. Farnsworth said that the last STIP update contained no new modernization funding. Councilor Friedman pointed out that the OTC is prioritizing projects that will be funded by the federal government and local communities. Mr. Brouwer said that the state is contributing STIP funds, and hopefully a state funding package will be approved.

Commissioner Lundquist explained that Millican Road project is not located on the state highway system, but it takes pressure off Hwy 126 and serves as a major road for folks to take from Hwy 20 to Prineville. Mr. Farnsworth mentioned that the project application was not focused on adding capacity; rather, it will provide operational benefits.

Ms. Stein asked about the timing of this money relative to the STIP? She commented that should the state need to make up for any shortfall, wouldn't one of these projects move to the top of the STIP and bump another project down on the STIP? Mr. Brouwer answered that additional STIP \$ will become available beginning 2011 and continue to 2015.

Mr. Farnsworth added that as a voting COACT member he would not object to recommending the three projects that are marked for Region 4 Potential OTC Endorsement, with the caveat that more detail on the proposals needs to be provided, and the concerns that were brought up earlier need to be addressed. He also suggested to the group that they indicate any additional projects that they feel should move forward or would like to show general support toward. Ms. Stein added that the group

needs to understand that decisions that are made on earmark priorities will be affect the STIP project list - the decisions made will move projects to the top of the STIP. Mr. Farnsworth disagreed with Ms. Stein's comment. He said that the work done around the SB566 list does influence priorities. However, every scenario that is discussed from a funding standpoint is different; they come with different strings and different expectations. There will be some correlation, but said that he has never seen direct correlation between earmark and special fund requests and the STIP projects.

Councilor Friedman moved that the following Region 4 projects be submitted to the OTC and be recommended to the Congressional Delegation for federal earmarks:

- **The J Street @ Highway 97 – Realign Intersection of J Street and Highway 97**
- **Murphy Road @ US 97 – Interchange**
- **19th Street Extension – Construction new Road parallel to Highway 97**

Commissioner Lundquist seconded. Approved by consensus.

Commissioner Lundquist proposed adding the Millican Road project to the list as well. Commissioner Luke asked what “geometric improvements” mean on this project. Mr. Farnsworth said these are improvements on curves for safety purposes. Commissioner Lundquist said the road should be a state highway, the improvements were necessary for that to happen.

Commissioner Lundquist moved that the Millican Road project be included on the OTC earmark list. Councilor Friedman seconded. Approved by consensus. Mr. Farnsworth abstained from the vote.

Rail Planning Update

Mr. Farnsworth asked for guidance on the Rail Planning recommendation to no longer pursue the rail realignment options. Mr. Farnsworth said that the final planning report will include all of the analysis and input that contributed to this recommendation, including feedback from the Forest Service, BLM and other stakeholders. The next steps are to continue with the economic feasibility analysis and the at-grade crossing evaluation.

Commission Luke moved to approve the rail planning committee recommendation to no longer pursue relocation of the rail line. Mr. Morgan seconded. Approved by consensus.

Regional Public Transportation Update

Scott Aycock provided an overview of changes to the ODOT Public Transit Division discretionary grant program. In the past, applicants made their application to the counties then the STF committee would considered those applications for 5310, STF discretionary, JARC and New Freedom funding programs in one large discretionary grant process. The Committee would then make their recommendations to the governing bodies, which then made recommendations to the State for funding. All projects are funded out of large state pool – with the final decisions made by the state Public Transportation Advisory Committee. The formula allocations will now be made to each STF agency (counties and tribes) for the 5310 and discretionary STF dollars. The formula is based on general population, % of seniors and % of disabled persons as follows:

- Crook = \$135,659
- Deschutes = \$550,813
- Jefferson = \$128,402
- Warm Springs - \$125,569

Now, STF Committees will actually have to make final funding recommendations to the governing bodies, rather than forwarding all applications along to the state for them to decide. Projects funded by any of these funding sources must be consistent with approved Coordinated Human Services Public Transportation Plans. These plans are scheduled to be updated soon.

Mr. Aycock said that the regional TranSolution Team has been discussing how the growth in inter-community shuttle services, as well as carpools and vanpools in Central Oregon, is exposing our relatively weak system of park and ride lots. He said that Tyler Deke suggested that we work together to develop a park and ride lot plan, so that we can take advantage of the occasional funding opportunities that have passed us by in the past due to a lack of a plan. This is conceived as a fairly simple plan that will 1) inventory the status quo; 2) ID the status quo and projected needs, and 3) outline short, medium, and long-term priorities for park and ride lot development and improvement. The TranSolutions Team is working to identify who should be the “owner” of the plan, and how to fund it.

Mr. Aycock said the TranSolution Team is also discussing the development of a joint rider guide and/or web site for all public transportation services in Central Oregon. The group will consider making a discretionary grant application for this project. Ideas included developing printed media (brochure; rider guides; etc.), developing a web site, and developing a call-in line.

Mr. Aycock said that the “Build a Better Bend Forum on Public Transportation” will be held on September 18 and will feature TriMet GM Fred Hansen. The session is from 6:30-8:30 pm at the St. Charles Conference Center in Bend. Additionally, COIC is planning a series of ribbon-cuttings ceremonies in all of the communities served by Cascades East Transit. These ribbon cuttings are the centerpiece of Cascades East Transit’s marketing blitz, including the new bus design, new website, print advertisements, etc.

New Business

Transportation Enhancement Project Review, Show of Support

Ms. Pat Fisher of ODOT joined the meeting via conference call. Ms. Fisher summarized the Central Oregon Transportation Enhancement project applications:

- Culver – Hwy 361 Sidewalk & Beautification
- Madras – US-97 Sidewalk & Streetscape
- US Forest Service - US97 Wildlife Fence & Underpass Landscape
- US Forest Service – Oregon Birding Trail: Maps, Site Markers, Website & Marketing

Ms. Fisher said that the list of 67 projects statewide needs to be reduced to 30 for funding. She estimated that three Region 4 projects will be approved, maybe more. She said a technical review of the applications is under way, and that ACT input helps in the decision making, particularly in instances when the projects score closely.

Commissioner Luke expressed concern that some local government officials have questioned the wildlife fencing/underpass project. He said that there has not yet been a project like this in Oregon.

Tyler Deke asked who provides match on the two Forest Service projects. Ms. Fisher answered that the federal Forest Service \$ can be used as match to this sort of project. The wildlife

fencing/underpass project match is coming from ODOT Region 4 and the Forest Service. There is a 10% match requirement.

Commissioner Luke moved that project # 21 - Culver – Hwy 361 Sidewalk & Beautification project, and #48 - Madras – US-97 Sidewalk & Streetscape be the top two recommendations from COACT. Councilor Krueger seconded. Approved by consensus.

Mr. Morgan moved that project #101 - US Forest Service - US97 Wildlife Fence & Underpass Landscape and # 105 - US Forest Service – Oregon Birding Trail: Maps, Site Markers, Website & Marketing also be recommended as secondary priorities, with the Wildlife Fence & Underpass project recommended higher than the Oregon Birding Trail project. Chair Bellamy seconded. Approved by consensus

Other Business

Mr. Farnsworth said that the draft STIP update process will be starting, and that he will be asking the COACT Executive Committee to help coordinate this effort for the November COACT meeting. Councilor Friedman offered that the Bend City Council could host a public hearing as well. Other cities expressed interest in hosting public hearings; ODOT staff will follow up to schedule.

Commissioner Luke moved that Chari Bellamy be authorized to sign a letter of support on behalf of COACT for the Federal Earmark Project Recommendation. Mr. Morgan seconded. Approved by consensus.

Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.