

# Meeting Minutes

Central Oregon Area Commission on Transportation  
COACT  
July 10, 2008

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## Members:

Bill Bellamy (Jefferson County), Dennis Luke (Deschutes County), Lynn Lundquist (Crook County), Lonny Macy (Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs), Dan Lovelady (City of Prineville), Thelma Krueger (City of Culver), Gus Burrell (City of Madras), and Gary Farnsworth (ODOT).

## Guests:

Bud Prince (Redmond E.D.), Chris Doty (City of Redmond), Tom Blust (Deschutes County), Bill Zelenka (Crook County), Tyler Deke (Bend MPO), Nick Arnis (City of Bend), Scott Smith (City of Prineville), Mike Lovely (BMPO-CAC & SBNA), Jeanne Newton (North Corridor CAC, Mt. View Association), Bill Zelenka (Crook County), and Mary Meloy (David Evans and Associates).

## 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**

There was no public comment.

## **Project Updates**

O'Neil Highway: Mr. Tom Blust explained that there is a length restriction on the O'Neil Highway and a weight restriction on the Crook County route making it difficult for hauling in that area. The group discussed options for improving truck routes. Mr. Gary Farnsworth mentioned that ODOT will be reviewing whether the interchange at the north end of the Redmond Re-Route will have an effect on some of the travel patterns. Chair Bellamy suggested that the issue of truck traffic in and around the residential areas of Central Oregon is a regional issue and should be looked at as such. Mr. Farnsworth agreed that this is an important topic and will continue to be looked at.

Redmond Re-Route: Mr. Farnsworth explained that ODOT is still working with the railroad on issues as well as working with the City of Redmond on landscaping needs, but overall the project has gone very well. Mr. Chris Doty added that the City of Redmond downtown merchants would like to express their appreciation for taking the heavy truck traffic off its downtown streets. Commissioner Luke asked if downtown traffic counts were available. Mr. Doty replied that they will not be available until the connection from South Canal to 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> is completed. Chair Bellamy asked when the speed limit will be increased from 35 MPH. Mr. Farnsworth replied that the change will be fully made within a couple months.

## Old Business

### Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Luke moved to approve the minutes of May 8, 2008. Chair Bellamy seconded. Minutes were approved.

### Rail Planning Update/BNSF Visit Follow-up

Mr. Farnsworth said that David Evans and Associates completed rough draft cost estimates on the rail relocation option. Mr. Farnsworth distributed a handout on the rail planning project, and reviewed the section regarding the rail relocation feasibility (rough draft) cost comparison in detail. He explained that the following comparisons assumes no at-grade crossings with all options.

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Construction</u>	<u>R/W*</u>
Relocation Option A (Bend-Redmond):	<b>\$617M</b>	\$607M	\$10M
Grade-separate Existing (Bend-Redmond):	<b>\$386+M</b>	\$313M	\$73M+
Relocation Options B (Redmond)**	<b>\$176M</b>	\$169M	\$7M
Grade-separate Existing (Redmond):	<b>\$182+M</b>	\$160M	\$22M+

\*Does not including cost to purchase existing BNSF R/W as an option, estimate forthcoming

\*\*Does not address alignment option northeast of Redmond to avoid County property impacts

Commissioner Luke asked if the estimates include costs for the county land use process. Mr. Farnsworth replied that they do not include environmental review or land use process costs. He said that they have not yet answered the question about what you would do with the existing rail line if the relocation takes place. BNSF wants to retain ownership, so the right-of-way would need to be purchased. He also pointed out that hazardous materials would likely be present on the existing right-of-way.

Mr. Nick Arnis asked if there is an Option C – a Bend-only bypass. Mr. Farnsworth replied that there was no interest at COACT for looking at that option, and that the current study represents the direction from COACT.

Mr. Farnsworth said that this information will be presented to the Bend and Redmond City Councils and Deschutes County Board of Commissioners. Mr. Farnsworth mentioned that the recommendation from the rail work group is to discontinue efforts on the reroute option, since it is significantly more expensive than the other options.

The question was asked if the continuation of the study on the existing route would include the area between Madras all the way to La Pine. Mr. Farnsworth answered that yes that is part of the next steps, and from there the study will focus on prioritizing the removal of at-grade crossings. The working group will also develop suggestions on a decision making strategy so that so that the region is positioned should funding become available. The other advantage to having priorities developed, it will help in negotiating with the railroad. Mr. Dan Lovelady said that a study or the freight mobility issues is also a next step in the process. The working group has been discussing options for developing a regional freight depot, and the group would like to develop a single option.

Mr. Farnsworth said that the working group recommends no further work on the full relocation option, and would defer to the City of Redmond regarding continuing to consider a Redmond relocation option. He said that the working group will consult with the jurisdictions directly affected before recommending action by COACT.

Mr. Arnis questioned the recommendation to prioritize at-grade crossings regionally; he pointed out that the City capital improvement plan and the MPO plan already contain priorities. Mr. Farnsworth said that the goal is to identify priorities regionally so that the region has leverage with the BNSF. The proposal is for cities and counties to work together to develop a single, united priority list. Chair Bellamy said that Bend's priorities would remain, but the regional list would identify how they relate to other priorities in the region. Commissioner Luke said that we want to get credit for any at-grade crossings that are removed.

Ms. Mary Meloy with Evans and Associates presented a demonstration of the Google Mapping Tool, which is an interactive internet-based mapping tool. It illustrates the existing and proposed rail alignments, as well as rail crossing locations. The user can access costs for removing each crossing, as well as other engineering data. Right-of-way costs and photo images will eventually be added as well.

#### BNSF Visit

Mr. Dan Lovelady summarized the BNSF visit that took place in June. He said that the BNSF government affairs representative, lobbying firm and operations staff participated. He said that he asked the BNSF group how we will get freight service in Central Oregon. BNSF answered that we need to consolidate all customers at one depot. It could be Prineville – BNSF favors rail spurs. They said that they would need a full train – 235 containers – to add new freight service. There is a possibility to take on smaller train size, if there was a single destination. BNSF said that they have two Central Oregon customers currently that they will continue to serve, but they are accepting no new customers until there is a hub location. Mr. Lovelady said that he requested trackage rights – for the Prineville rail line to use the BNSF rail to move freight within the region, as a means to pick up and consolidate freight. BNSF was not open to that possibility.

BNSF said that if there is a freight hub, the mainline switches need the ability to hold an entire train. Mr. Lovelady said that the estimated cost for developing a rail siding is \$2.3 million per mile. He said that BNSF is going to longer trains with single destinations; stops decrease velocity. He said that he also discussed the COACT rail study and possible relocation of the rail line. BNSF said that once an alternative is selected they will provide feedback.

Commissioner Luke said that the O'Neil junction area is a possibility for a freight depot, but it is designated EFU land. He said that if there is interest in pursuing a legislative bill to allow for this land usage that COACT could help get the bill through. Mr. Farnsworth said that the rail work group is looking into grants to do an economic analysis and feasibility study on the location of the freight hub.

#### Oregon Transportation Commission Roundtable Planning

Mr. Farnsworth said that the OTC roundtable is scheduled for 3:00 to 5:00 on August 20 at Eagle Crest. The agenda will include a series of reports in the morning, and meeting with the ACT in the afternoon. He said that it is up to COACT on what information is presented. He said the OTC is interested in hearing collectively from COACT, as well as from members individually.

Chair Bellamy said that the Executive Committee will work on topics for the presentation. He asked COACT members to contact Mr. Farnsworth or Mr. Spreadborough with topic suggestions. He said the Executive Committee will meet on August 14.

Chair Bellamy said that the OTC may want to hear how projects are proceeding in the region. Commissioner Luke suggested presenting information on development problems resulting from highway intersection issues. He identified the La Pine signal problem that is affecting the shovel-ready industrial park as an example of this problem. Chair Bellamy said that everyone on COACT will be invited to participate in the OTC meeting.

#### Federal Earmark Project Recommendations

Mr. Travis Brouwer, ODOT Federal Affairs Advisor, joined the meeting by conference call. Mr. Brouwer was asked what the expectations are for the ACT review of projects submitted – does the ACT need to rank or provide letters of support? Mr. Brouwer answered that COACT will not need to rank projects. ODOT will be looking for a list with up to five projects from the ACT area. He said the types of projects that should be on the list would be ones that have regional significance, statewide significance, and/or impact freight mobility. He said the list should be constrained; local governments and/or the STIP must fund the match.

Mr. Brouwer said that projects should be scalable or phased; if a portion of the amount requested is received, the project still needs to be delivered. Projects that lead to construction are preferred rather than right-of-way or planning project. He stressed that there is nothing to prevent jurisdictions from submitting projects directly for earmark. Commissioner Luke asked who is responsible for taking the list to the congressional delegations. Mr. Brouwer answered that it would be primarily ODOT's responsibility, though ODOT would also look for local support.

Mr. Brouwer said that any projects that are entirely local should not be submitted to this list, unless they are truly a regional/ACT priority. Mr. Farnsworth said that Region 4 staff can identify priorities and coordinate with the jurisdictions to develop a list. He said that the list will be drafted and brought to COACT in September.

#### Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.