

**Meeting Minutes**

**Central Oregon Area Commission on Transportation  
COACT  
January 10, 2008**

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**Members:**

Dennis Luke (Deschutes County), Lynn Lundquist (Crook County), Lonny Macy (Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs), Dan Lovelady (City of Prineville), Carrie Novick (City of Redmond Airport), Bill Friedman (City of Bend), Alan Unger (City of Redmond), Dana Cork (BLM- Prineville), Jeff Monson (Commute Options), Brad Boyd and Eileen Stein (City of Sisters), Mike Morgan and Gus Burrell (City of Madras), Christine Nelson (City of La Pine), Bob Bryant and Gary Farnsworth (ODOT).

**Guests:**

Chris Doty (City of Redmond), Nick Arnis (City of Bend), Judy Duncan (Guest), Heather Ornelas (City of Bend BAT), Scott Aycock (COIC), Rick Williams (ODOT), Penny Keller (Crook County), Darrell Newton (Region 4 ODOT), Mike Schmidt (Bend Chamber of Commerce), Tom Blust (Deschutes County), Scott Smith (City of Prineville), Eric Porter (City of Sisters), Mike Callavano (City of Redmond), Tyler Deke (Bend MPO), Jack Evans and Michael Bufalino (ODOT) (by phone).

**Staff:**

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

**Call to Order and Introductions**

Commissioner Dennis Luke called the meeting to order in Chair Bellamy's absence, and introductions were made.

**General Public Comments**

Commissioner Luke asked for public comments. No public comments made.

**Meeting Minutes**

The November 8, 2007, meeting minutes were approved by consensus.

**Regional Representation on the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC)**

Commissioner Luke added to the agenda a discussion regarding openings on the Oregon Transportation Commission. He said that there are currently two open commission seats, and Gail Achterman's term ends in June. He suggested that COACT provide a letter recommending that at least one of the openings be filled by a candidate from Central Oregon. Mayor Alan Unger suggested that the letter should support specific candidates, and said that the Central Oregon Cities Organization has submitted a letter recommending Ed Fitch and Oran Teater be appointed. Commissioner Luke said that the City of Bend and Deschutes County provided letters recommending Kirk Schueler's appointment, since he was the only one that asked for a letter of support.

Bob Bryant said that the Commission plans to act on the openings at their February meeting, so there is an immediate need to submit a letter. The COACT members agreed that since time is short, the letter should support Central Oregon candidates without naming a specific candidate. Commissioner Luke

requested that Andrew Spreadborough draft a letter from COACT requesting the appointment of at least one candidate from Central Oregon.

### **Consider Endorsement of Recommended Modernization Funding Reduction**

Gary Farnsworth provided background information regarding the approximate \$70 million deficit for funding the 2008-2011 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) modernization program. He explained that the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) has directed ODOT staff to help address the funding deficit by cutting \$70 million statewide from the modernization portion of the STIP. Region 4's portion of the reduction would be approximately \$7 million.

Gary Farnsworth explained that staff developed potential options for meeting the reduction target and presented those options to various stakeholders last November, including the COACT and the South Central Oregon ACT. Based on that review and input, a list of recommended projects was developed and distributed to the COACT members for review and comment. Today's objective is to provide a final recommendation by late February for submittal to the OTC.

He said that staff had developed criteria for the reductions, including: maintaining projects primarily funded by sources other than the STIP (for instance, the South Y project in Madras); focused on development projects for reductions (as directed by the OTC); within development projects focused on right-of-way and utility relocation phases of projects as lower priorities; and focused priority on project development for US 97 over other highways. As a result of these considerations, a recommended reduction option was developed (illustrated within attachment B2). The proposed cuts in B2 would result in the targeted overall STIP reduction of \$7 million for Region 4.

COACT reviewed and discussed the Region 4 proposal for modernization reductions. Bill Friedman said that this is an unfortunate process because freight mobility funding was originally put into Cooley Road intersection, but then it was moved into the STIP. Now, the STIP funding will be reduced by a third. He said that he won't oppose this proposal because he sees no other options. He said he hopes for flexibility in the future as they look to fund the project.

Alan Unger asked how permanent the cuts are, and asked if more funding becomes available will these projects be added back into the STIP? Bob Bryant said that the cuts are not intended to be permanent; the next STIP update for the 09-13 period will include the reintroduction of these cuts. ODOT will soon be initiating the update. He said that he is optimistic that there will be more funding for projects, possibly through the 2009 legislature.

Eileen Stein asked if the Bend-Sisters Refinement Plan project is in the STIP. Gary Farnsworth replied that it is funded through the State Planning Research program. Gus Burril requested that attachment B2 be modified to say "South Y" rather than North Y. Bill Friedman said that he hoped that the new OTC composition will lead to better partnership with the jurisdictions.

**Bill Friedman moved to approve the Region 4 Proposal for Modernization Reductions as presented. Mike Morgan seconded the motion. The motion was approved by consensus.**

### **Rail Planning Update**

Gary Farnsworth said that the Rail Planning report is nearing completion, and he hopes to bring it forward to COACT at the May meeting for recommendations. He said that it will first go to the jurisdictions, so COACT members will be aware of it in advance. He said the plan will help determine

whether or not to pursue rail relocation. He said that the Rail Planning Committee has been spending time on this issue – participants have included Dan Lovelady, Charlie Kettenring, and Bud Prince. Dan Lovelady agreed that a lot of time has been spent on this effort, and he said that the committee is finally getting to the meat of the issues. He said that he is pleased with the progress.

Bill Friedman said that the plan should not pre-suppose solutions. Gary Farnsworth agreed, and said that the group has had lengthy discussions and considered the full range of alternatives. Alan Unger said that the committee has been looking at other areas where communities have dealt with the same issues. Gary Farnsworth said that a study has been published by the Texas Transportation Institute that looked nationwide at rail relocations. It identifies criteria for choosing relocation, and provided 15 or so examples within their evaluation. Gary said that he would send the study to COACT members.

### **Connect Oregon II – Application Review and Process Timeline**

Jack Evans, ODOT Legislative Liaison, and Michael Bufalino, ODOT Senior Freight Mobility Planner, joined the meeting by phone. Jack Evans described the current phase of the Connect Oregon II review process, stating that ODOT is conducting a feasibility review of the applications that will ensure that applications are complete and that the projects are technically feasible. The review will be completed shortly, and projects that are disqualified through this process will have 30 days to remedy. He said that the modal committees will then review the applications, starting in late January and ending toward the end of February. He said information on the modal committees will be available online through the ODOT Connect Oregon website. He said that Senator Betsy Johnson has requested that the Economic and Community Development Department review the applications to determine the economic benefit to the state.

Gary Farnsworth reviewed the Connect Oregon II timeline, and said that the COACT Technical Advisory Committee will be reviewing the applications on February 14, with the goal of making preliminary recommendations on priorities. Carrie Novick asked if the modal reports will be available by that time. Gary said that they would not, but that the TAC will build contingencies into their recommendations. Jeff Monson asked if project proponents will be allowed to make presentations to the ACT. Jack Evans said that the intent is that all applicants are handled the same. In other words, if one project proponent is allowed to make a presentation, the opportunity to present must be provided to all applicants. Gary said that this is consistent with what COACT has done in the past – that COACT will have all of the applications to review and applicants will be given the opportunity to present. Commissioner Luke said that we should ensure the applicants are notified, and that attendance should be encouraged.

Mike Schmidt asked for more detail on the economic development considerations, and how they will be applied. Jack Evans said that the Economic Development Department has developed a checklist for the review, but that the process will not be a full-blown economic analysis. Carrie Novick noted that she wished applicants had a copy of the checklist. Jack Evans agreed, stating that the direction from Senator Johnson was received very recently, after they were well into the process. Commissioner Luke asked if applicants will have an opportunity to amend their applications in response to the new criteria. Michael Bufalino said that this is not new criteria; it is a different set of people reviewing the applications.

Gary Farnsworth noted that a list of Region 4 Connect Oregon II applications was included within Attachment “C” of the meeting packet. The COACT group discussed the process at length as well as the list of projects. Jeff Monson asked about the transit project application that was submitted by Kah-

Nee-Ta Resort and Mt. Hood Meadows Ski Resort. He mentioned that the project was listed under the Lower John Day region on the project list, but could actually be listed under Central Oregon region as well. He said that Wasco County may not be familiar with the project. Gary will bring this up at the February TAC meeting.

Gary Farnsworth said that a 3-ACT meeting will be convened in April, including representatives of the Lower John Day ACT, COACT, and the South Central ACT. Crook County Judge Scott Cooper will represent Central Oregon at the 3-ACT meeting. Jack Evans was asked to confirm that the regions will be represented on the Final Review Committee. Gary will confirm the date and time of the three ACT meeting and forward an announcement out to the group.

### **Agenda Additions**

Commissioner Luke said that ODOT had asked Deschutes County to close the Wimp Way access to Highway 97 near Crooked River Ranch.

Mike Morgan asked to follow up on discussion that occurred at the November COACT meeting regarding System Development Charges (SDCs). He distributed a handout on the City of Madras's SDC Charge methodology, and said that there are two types of methodologies – the reimbursement fee and the improvement fee. He pointed out that Madras's SDC fees can be used for reimbursement of impacts based on development.

Mike Schmidt noted the recent road closures due to heavy snowfall in the Cascades. He asked if ODOT has a proactive plan to mitigate snow-related closures. Bob Bryant said that closures of this sort do not occur frequently enough to justify funding an improvement. The logical solution would be a "snow-shed" over certain segments of the highway.

### **Overview of Regional Public Transportation Working Group**

Scott Aycock, COIC Program Administrator, provided an overview of the work to date of the newly-formed regional public transportation working group. The committee was created by the COIC Board, with the following responsibilities:

1. Identify ways to build on and coordinate existing public transportation resources;
2. Capitalize on immediate opportunities to expand regional public transportation; and
3. Develop a long-term approach to addressing regional public transportation needs.

He said that the purpose is to basically look at what we have, find efficiencies, and to build on services. Additionally, the work group will look longer term to determine what the region should do for a long terms solution to public transportation needs. He noted that the scope of work is broad, and they will be working on refining their scope.

Scott referred to handout #2, which summarized the current work group composition. He said that the committee will be expanded over time. The group is expected to make policy recommendations to the COIC Board, and will connect with Central Oregon's local governments, ODOT, and other relevant public transportation stakeholders, as illustrated in the handout #3. He said that he met with the COACT Executive Committee in December and asked what the relationship with COACT should be. He said that the Executive Committee indicated an interest in informational updates on the work group's activities and accomplishments.

Bob Bryant said that he would encourage a formal relationship. This makes sense because the ACT can serve as a sort of oversight board. All cities and counties where public transportation services are provided are represented on the ACT. Without the support of the jurisdictions, the working group's efforts will be less successful. Alan Unger said that informational updates make sense. With COIC's board already involved, COACT's involvement would provide too many decision-making boards. Commissioner Luke said that the Bend MPO should be involved somehow. Scott noted Tyler Deke's participation on the working group. Scott referred back to the diagram in the handout material and said that the three bottom boxes illustrate the involvement of broad, county-level stakeholder groups. He said the door is wide open to participation by all interested parties. He said the intent is to keep the formal working group relatively small, but to encourage participation at the county level. Mike Schmidt agreed that informational updates make sense, and that the working group should stay focused on reporting to one board.

Bill Friedman said that he is not sure if the COIC board is interested in Metro-type responsibilities (to fund a system), or if they are interested in coordination only. He said that the working group is composed as a technical committee, and that their knowledge is valuable. However, the group has less value without decision-makers. He said that a result of this work could be unrealistic funding expectations that COACT members will be expected to fund. He said the City of Bend has formed a committee to determine how the City will organize and fund transit in the future.

Brad Boyd said that the Lane County Transit System is able to provide services throughout the county, and suggested that the working group not "reinvent the wheel." He recommended that they look at other examples of how regional systems were developed.

### **Project Updates**

Gary Farnsworth introduced Darrell Newton, who is taking Randi Kobernik's position at ODOT. Darrell provided an update on the Culver Downtown Enhancement project, funded by the ODOT Transportation Enhancement program. He said that the transportation management group has hired a consultant to develop streetscape improvements, highway drainage, parking, and a general facelift. The project team has met with freight interests and businesses to understand their concerns, and provided forums for public input. The team has also toured Redmond, Bend, Prineville and Madras to gather ideas and concepts. The final concept plan is anticipated to be completed in April, with construction to be completed in 2010. He said the Transportation Enhancement Grant will provide \$800,000 toward the project, with other funding provided by DLCD and ODOT.

Mike Callavano, City of Redmond planner, provided a Power Point presentation on the Redmond Re-Route project. He explained the various phases of the project construction, including timelines for opening certain segments to traffic. Tentative plans are to open northbound lanes to traffic in March. The project is anticipated to be completed in September.

Gary Farnsworth distributed a handout that summarized the status of the US 97 Biggs Rapids – Sam Hill Bridge Deck Replacement project. He said that Highway 97 bridge at Biggs Junction was closed on January 2<sup>nd</sup>, and will reopened before Memorial Day weekend. A second closure is planned after Labor Day to complete the construction.

Meeting adjourned at 5:00.