
Meeting Minutes

Central Oregon Area Commission on Transportation COACT January 11, 2007

Members:

Dennis Luke (Deschutes County), Bill Bellamy (Jefferson County), Lynn Lundquist (Crook County), Bill Friedman (City of Bend), Ron Wortman (BLM), Alan Unger and Joe Mansfield (City of Redmond), Jim Mole (City of Prineville), Robb Corbett (City of Prineville), Jeff Monson (Commute Options), Mike Morgan (City of Madras), Lonny Macy (Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs) and Gary Farnsworth and Bob Bryant (ODOT - Region 4).

Guests:

Nick Arnis (City of Bend), Peter Russell (Deschutes County), Dan Lovelady (City of Prineville Rail), Wayne Schnuiz (Citizen), Mike Lovley (Bend MPO), Stu Martinez (City of La Pine), Peter Murphy, Rex Halloway (ODOT), Charles Kettenring (ODOT Rail Division), Jason Hale (City of Madras), and Mike Schmidt (Bend Chamber).

Staff:

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

Call to Order and Introductions

Chair Luke called the meeting to order and introductions were made.

General Public Comment

Chair Luke announced that Dan Lovelady of the City of Prineville will provide a brief presentation on a proposed rail legislative bill. Mr. Robb Corbett referred to a handout which summarized the House Bill, supported by Representative Chuck Burley, which is being submitted to the Legislature. The Bill requests that the State sell lottery bonds to generate funds for rail initiatives, several of which will directly impact Central Oregon. Mr. Corbett read the bulleted items from section three of the handout:

Projects eligible for funding under this 2007 Act could include:

- a. Up to 75% of the switching costs and capital improvements for track upgrades for new customers under a comprehensive pilot project proposal
- b. Completion of a local multi-modal trans-load warehouse facility designed to increase multi-modal shipping capacities in the region.
- c. Capital improvements to tunnels which currently limit the ability of carriers to haul double stack containers over a main trunk line along the Deschutes River.
- d. Up to \$500,000 for long term community studies in cooperation with the Oregon Department of Transportation to explore options for addressing the safety and freight mobility concerns over at-grade crossings through congested urban and rural areas.

Mr. Corbett asked for COACT to consider supporting the House Bill. Mayor Alan Unger said that the bill is supported by the Central Oregon Cities Organization. Chair Dennis Luke asked why the railroad does not take more responsibility. Mr. Dan Lovelady answered that at this point the BNSF railroad does

not have specific interest in shipping containers into Central Oregon. He explained that the City of Prineville Rail and other interested parties are trying to promote container shipping into Central Oregon. The Bill would generate funds to enlarge the tunnel(s) and allow access for the double stacked containers.

After further discussion, Mayor Unger moved that COACT support the Bill introduced at today's meeting. Motion was approved by consensus. *M/S/C Unger/Morgan/Consensus*

Chair Luke closed the Public Comment portion of the meeting.

Meeting Minutes

Minutes of November 9, 2006 meeting were approved by consensus.

Regional Transit Survey Scope and Process

Mr. Mike Schmidt mentioned that at the November COACT meeting the Central Oregon Mobility Consortium presented a brief overview of their activities in hope that COACT would adopt transit as one of its priorities for regional planning. He explained that in an effort to respond to the concerns expressed by Judge Scott Cooper, the Consortium has talked to two consulting groups who have now provided bids on the comprehensive regional transit market analysis. Mr. Schmidt further explained that funds are now being raised to cover the costs of this survey. Mr. Schmidt distributed a copy of a letter that has been circulated around Central Oregon businesses. The letter has already generated contributions from Cascade Healthcare Community, Brooks Resources, Ochoco Lumber, White Branch Consultants, and the Bend Chamber of Commerce.

Mayor Alan Unger pointed out the list on the left hand side of the handout, noting that individuals have come together monthly to work on creating viable transportation alternatives. He explained that the efforts of the Consortium are focused on a proactive approach to public transit. Mayor Unger added that the Consortium is excited about COIC offering to be the staffing entity to oversee the regional decision making body. Mr. Robb Corbett added that the City of Prineville also supports the concept and supports moving forward to explore if this is something that can benefit the region.

Mr. Friedman asked Mr. Schmidt if this committee is the one that at one time had a representative of a private bus company from Pennsylvania attending the meetings? Mr. Schmidt confirmed that it is, but noted that the bus company has subsequently dropped out to avoid a conflict of interest when bids are being sought. Mr. Friedman replied that it is hard to deny any effort that explores multi-model transportation; however he expressed that in his opinion there are a couple of challenges:

1. If this is being based on the premise that traffic will be reduced, he stated that this can not be done due to the fact that buses will only take a few chunks out of the increase in traffic that Central Oregon will experience.
2. He is not aware of any funding model that will cover this sort of effort. It has always been his opinion that a transportation district is the only viable means of achieving guaranteed long-term funding, and without which he is strongly opposed to supporting this effort.

He further explained that in his opinion this is not something that one can do on an experimental model basis and then stop. He said that it is encouraging that there is a group of individuals from throughout the Central Oregon region who are willing to put in the time and effort into the initial exploration.

Mr. Schmidt commented that the survey is an effort to better articulate what the expectations are, to determine potential ridership, and to provide a much clearer understanding of the market place. Chair Luke mentioned that La Pine has a new bus system that will be running from La Pine to Sunriver and Bend and that it will be interesting to see its progress.

Mr. Gary Farnsworth asked for an explanation of the methodology of the survey. Mr. Schmidt answered that the two consultants under consideration to perform the actual survey are both highly experienced in transportation surveys. The methodology is that once the funding is lined up, the team will meet to review the broad objectives within the two proposals received, and then the team will refine that down to what is needed for the Central Oregon survey. The Consortium, in an effort to have this process remain a public/private process, would like to have the input of the COACT Executive Committee. Once the team is happy with the questions, goals and objectives then the consultant will move forward with the survey and then report back to the Consortium.

Mr. Farnsworth said that last fall there was a sub-committee of COACT that met to formulate the feedback and answer questions. Mr. Farnsworth asked if there is an expectation that the sub-committee should continue to meet, or should the Consortium provide feedback directly to COACT. Chair Luke surmised that there is a lot of cross-over between the two groups and that as long as the feedback is being provided to COACT, there should be no need to continue to hold the sub-committee meetings too.

COACT Bylaw Modification

Commissioner Bellamy moved to modify the COACT bylaws to include a member from the City of La Pine. Motion was approved by consensus. *M/S/C Bellamy/Morgan/Consensus*

Coordinated Human Services Public Transportation Plans

Mr. Andrew Spreadborough referred to Attachment "C" of the meeting packet and provided a brief overview. He explained that beginning in FY 2007, as a condition of Federal assistance, the ODOT Public Transit Division must certify to the U.S. Secretary of Transportation that projects selected for public transportation funding derive from locally developed coordinated plans. Also in 2007, Oregon statute requires that Special Transportation Fund (STF) agencies (counties and Tribe) must complete a STF plan for their programs. To meet these new planning requirements, STF agencies must complete a single coordinated plan that meets the state and federal requirements.

Mr. Spreadborough provided an explanation of the purpose of the coordinated plan and explained the funding sources affected. He further explained that ODOT Public Transit Division has contracted with the Association of Oregon Counties to coordinate the planning process statewide. AOC in turn has contracted with local transportation planning organizations to work in regions to assist the STF agencies in meeting their planning requirements. COIC will be responsible for facilitating the planning process in Crook, Deschutes and Jefferson counties. Mr. Spreadborough provided an overview of the tasks that COIC will complete as well as the timeline that will be followed. The tasks will include:

1. Planning and managing the required public involvement processes;
2. Gathering and analyzing data;
3. Facilitating needs identification and prioritization;
4. Writing the draft plan;
5. Facilitating, gathering and analyzing comments regarding the draft plan; and
6. Finalizing the plan for adoption by the STF Agency.

Chair Luke asked if the COACT Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) can provide assistance in this process. Mr. Spreadborough answered that the planning is primarily focused on identifying priorities of the stakeholder groups working with or representing special needs rider groups, but that TAC participation would be valuable. Mr. Farnsworth suggested that once drafts of the plans are developed, then the TAC could review the plan and make comment. Mrs. Farnsworth suggested that the technical committee meet in April.

Mr. Friedman asked what role the MPOs might play in this process. Mr. Spreadborough answered that the MPO should be engaged, and that MPO staff is participating in the development of the Deschutes County plan. He explained that about 85-90 percent of the public transportation funding sources are for capital type projects or maintenance grants for existing providers, which are included in the MPO plan. Mr. Spreadborough explained that this information was provided today as informational and that no action was necessary. Should anyone be interested in additional information or if they would like to participate, they would be welcomed.

Rail Planning Update

Mr. Farnsworth explained that Attachment D of the meeting packet is an update of the Central Oregon Rail System Planning Statement of Work. He explained that the sub-committee of COACT includes Bud Prince; Redmond Economic Development, Dan Lovelady, City of Prineville Rail, Charles Kettenring, ODOT Rail Division, Nick Arnis, City of Bend, Mark DeVoney, ODOT Region 4, Tom Blust and Peter Russell, Deschutes County, Robb Corbett, City of Prineville, and Steve Davis, Jefferson County Public Works. Mr. Farnsworth referred to the attachment and gave a brief overview, focusing mostly on the two general railroad related challenges in Central Oregon. He explained that the first general set of problems are those associated with at-grade roadway crossings, and the second set of problems relates to preserving and enhancing railroad freight mobility. After his overview, Mr. Farnsworth asked for comment from the group. He wanted to know if the group felt that the sub-committee is heading down the right path. His hope is that they will bring specific proposals to the March COACT meeting.

Mr. Kettenring commented on the at-grade-crossing issue, saying that either the rail line will be left where it is and slowly and eventually rail crossings will be eliminated by either going over or under the rail line, or the railroad line will be relocated. He suggested that the group make a decision on these alternatives prior to going much farther in the planning process.

Commissioner Bellamy suggested that prioritizing crossings are very important. Mr. Friedman commented that he was conceptually in favor of a regional study on rail relocation to find out what the issues are, and would like to see the group continue its efforts and see where this leads. But given the limited transportation funds available to simply maintain the roads that are necessary to keep transportation moving, he does not see this as a viable concept when it comes to implementation.

Mr. Mike Schmidt wanted to know if the Freight Advisory Committee will be involved in this work as well? Commissioner Bellamy answered that yes they will and added that he feels that what the City of Prineville Rail is trying to accomplish is important and that it will greatly impact the entire Central Oregon region. Mayor Unger suggested that Mr. Ron Wortman of the BLM be including in the sub-committee. Mr. Farnsworth agreed.

Chair Luke requested that COACT e-mail any additional comments to Mr. Farnsworth. Mr. Bryant added that this process is an effort to answer the questions that continues to come up in regard to the feasibility of relocating the railroad.

Regional Roundtable

City of La Pine: Mayor Stu Martinez commented that the 1st light has been installed in La Pine, and the congestion at Hwy 97 and 3rd Street has been brought to the attention of the community. At the south end of town a realignment project of 6th Street and Hwy 97 is being considered. He noted discussion regarding a truck route to the industrial park at Reed Road across the RR tracks to Russell Rd and back to Finley Butte.

City of Redmond: Mayor Alan Unger announced that the Hwy 97 reroute has been let out to bid and Oregon Mainline was awarded the contract in the amount of \$25 million. They should begin work early this spring. He also announced that the Maple Canyon crossing and Maple overpass have been completed.

City of Prineville: Mr. Jim Mole announced that the Crooked River Bridge project is about 60% complete. The design for the Second Street egress is almost complete and will dovetail with the Crooked River Bridge project. Mr. Mole noted a future roundabout project identified in their recent TSP. The city met with URS Engineers for the design of a new bridge on Hwy 126 on the east end of town by Les Schwab. The City also lost \$1 million dollars of federal funds for the 9th Street northern arterial project.

Commute Options: Commute Options for Central Oregon is continuing work on intercity public transportation in Deschutes County, as well as bicycle safety education and the safe route to school projects. With the concerns of employee retention and recruitment, there has been a great deal of interested received in the corporate outreach vanpool program.

City of Madras: Mr. Mike Morgan announced that the city has adopted its updated TSP, which included a single-line drawing of its truck bypass as well as a double-line drawing and general location for the reconstruction of the J Street Hwy 97 intersection. The city has been working with ODOT on its first try for an OTIP loan. The city now has its second roundabout completed and is in the process of including art work in the center of each. The city has grown 8 ½ percent and Mr. Morgan commented that he is grateful that the city had the foresight to build additional streets before the full impact of growth occurred, and that the city built its roundabouts large enough to withstand multiple vehicles at one time. Lastly, Mr. Morgan noted a threat: the state legislature is considering amendments to eminent domain laws. He explained that under the public use condemnation provisions it is being proposed that in instances when the city offers its best estimate of public fair market value and the offer is not accepted by the property owner, if the city loses in court then the city would have to pay all legal fees plus five times the amount offered.

Deschutes County: Mr. Peter Russell announced that he is no longer with ODOT and is now with Deschutes County as their Senior Transportation Planner and is working on the county's transportation plan update.

City of Bend: Mr. Bill Friedman commented that the COACT group has increasingly been able to effectively work together to identify the most important priorities of the region, noting the importance of

Highway 26/97 improvements in Madras and Redmond. He summarized recent transportation activities around Bend, including the completion of the Newport Bridge construction, and the opening of the Bend Area Transit (BAT). He noted the likelihood of adding three two-lane roundabouts. He said the city is considering options for forming a transit district, since the BAT system is costing the city general fund about \$1 million annually.

BLM: Mr. Ron Wortman said that a lot of the BLM's time is being spent on traffic issues associated with destination resort development. Discussions have begun internally in regard to potential public transportation needs.

Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs: Lonny Macy said that there is an employee shuttle that runs from Warm Springs to Mt. Hood Meadows that operates Wednesday – Sunday. Over the summer there was an employee shuttle from Warm Springs to Kahneeta that was very successful and they hope to have that running again this summer. They are also working on establishing a fixed route Monday through Friday system in Warm Springs. There is a transportation group that meets monthly and they have been focusing on coming up with more of a multi-model transportation component to their system.

Crook County: Commissioner Lynn Lundquist said that a lot of the County's transportation focus has been on the destination resort issues. He mentioned that at the state level in regard to Connect Oregon II, there has been a bit of unrest on how funds were distributed during Connect Oregon I, and that some want to see a greater impact throughout the state.

ODOT: Mr. Bob Bryant said that there is a project under development for the south end of Bend that will separate the south and north bound lanes of traffic, and that it will be combined with a paving/resurfacing project. Mr. Bryant also noted the significant impact issues related to the destinations resorts in Crook County, and especially the Hidden Canyon Resort, which will be located in Powell Butte and will have a population roughly equal to that of the City of Madras. Mr. Bryant mentioned that during the course of this winter there has been an increase in the number of fatalities in and around Central Oregon compared to recent years, which emphasizes the need for implementing safety improvements. Chair Luke requested that at a future meeting, ODOT staff provide an update on Lave Butte South and Wickiup junction as well as any other transportation planning projects they would like to bring forward.

Mayor Alan Unger said that with the increased number of destination resorts springing up so quickly around Central Oregon, there is not always sufficient time for the neighboring cities to keep up on their transportation planning needs. He said that the City of Redmond, using the information based on the traffic model supplied by the Remington Ranch located in Crook County, requested that \$750,000 in SDC charges be paid to ODOT for improvements on HWY 97 / city street connections in Redmond.

Meeting adjourned.