

**Cascades West Area Commission on Transportation  
Biennial Report  
Presented to the  
Oregon Transportation Commission**

**April 20, 2005**

The Cascades West Area Commission on Transportation (CWACT) received its charter from the Oregon Transportation Commission in October 1998. Since that time the organization has operated under the following mission statement:

*The concerns of the Cascades West Area Commission on Transportation (CWACT) shall include issues that affect the regional transportation system and its links to areas beyond the region. The Commission recognizes that developing and improving the transportation system is a long-term process. Therefore, CWACT strives to build and sustain the consensus and support for project priorities, plans and policies that benefit the region's transportation system.*

This report summarizes the structure and activities of the CWACT that are aimed at fulfilling that mission.

### **Organization**

The CWACT area includes the three Counties of Linn, Benton and Lincoln. Each jurisdiction within those counties is eligible to participate as a CWACT member. The current membership includes nineteen cities, three counties, two port districts, one tribe, two private sector members and the ODOT Area Manager. Representatives of jurisdictions are elected officials (alternates may be staff members). Ex officio members include all state legislators that represent portions of the three counties, neighboring Area Commissions on Transportation (ACT), Oregon Coastal Zone Management Association (OCZMA), the director of the Corvallis Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO), and chairs of the Cascades West Senior Services Advisory Council and the Cascades West Disability Services Council.

Although the membership is large, the group has generally been effective at reaching consensus for major decisions. For those instances when it is not possible to reach consensus, a motion must receive 75 percent of the votes for passage.

The organizational structure is outlined in the bylaws (Attachment 1) that were adopted in April 1999, and amended in 2001 and January 2005. That structure includes a seven-member Executive Committee and a Technical Committee.

The CWACT uses videoconferencing technology for several of its bimonthly meetings. The videoconference connects members at the Cascades West Council of Government (CWCOG) offices in Albany with members attending at the Toledo office of CWCOG. There are also meetings when all members meet at one location within the area.

In the past year, meetings have been held in Corvallis and at the Siletz Tribal Center in Lincoln County.

CWACT meetings are well attended. Typically, 18-20 voting members will be in attendance with an additional eight to ten people including alternates, staff and guests. These are strong attendance levels for a region that extends from the crest of the Cascades to the central coast.

### **Geographic Boundaries**

Linn, Benton and Lincoln Counties are linked in several regional organizations, including the CWCOG, and by a major transportation corridor. Prior to the formation of the CWACT, jurisdictions in the three counties worked on transportation issues through the CWCOG's Transportation Advisory Committee. Much of that committee's work focused on improving US 20 which extends the entire length of the area. The gradual upgrading of that highway over the past 20 years has strengthened the linkage of the counties.

The CWACT area also corresponds to ODOT's Maintenance District 4 and Area 4.

### **Coordination of Activities**

The CWACT coordinates its activities with other regions and organizations on a variety of levels. On an official level, neighboring ACTs, the OCZMA and the CAMPO Executive Director are ex officio members of the CWACT. There are also overlapping memberships, which strengthen coordination. The current CWACT chair serves on the Local Officials Advisory Committee (LOAC), and members of the CAMPO Policy Board also represent their communities on the CWACT. CWACT staff maintains contacts with staff of other ACTs, Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) outside our area, and ODOT staff. OTC member Randy Papé, has participated in meetings of the CWACT and the Executive Committee and served as a valuable link to the OTC.

### **Activities and Initiatives**

The CWACT has been involved in a wide variety of transportation activities and issues that include:

- Developing and maintaining an inventory of transportation projects/issues for the three county area;
- Hosting public meetings that allow interested citizens to be involved in the process of setting Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) priorities;
- Prioritizing projects/needs for each STIP update, including active participation in ODOT Region 2 regional STIP prioritization process;
- Coordinating the local process for identifying and prioritizing projects for Oregon Transportation Investment Act (OTIA) funds;
- Advocating to the Oregon Congressional delegation for earmarked funds for the US 20 Pioneer Mountain – Eddyville project;
- Providing input on ODOT and OTC proposals/policies to ensure that the interests of the CWACT area are considered. Representative proposals/policies include the recent

proposal to designate additional freight routes, the proposed designation of OR 34 between Lebanon and Corvallis as an expressway, criteria for selecting OTIA projects, STIP funding goals, and the Policy on Formation and Operation of ACTs;

- Developing a protocol for coordinating CWACT activities with the CAMPO;
- On-going education about transportation issues in general, and about ODOT programs. CWACT members have visited with David Cox, the regional director of Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and had presentations about the Freight Advisory Committee, the Oregon Transportation Plan update process, the Transportation Enhancement Program, and issues related to widening I-5.

The CWACT Technical Committee (TC) has a key role in the activities of the organization. Composed primarily of public works staff from the member jurisdictions, the committee often reviews and comments on issues before they are seen by the CWACT. The TC's comments and recommendations are important considerations when the CWACT makes its decisions.

### **Public Involvement**

The CWACT outlined a process, in the attached bylaws, to ensure that the public has ample opportunities to be involved in CWACT activities and deliberations. Each meeting includes a period for public comments. The videoconferencing technology allows the public to be involved without the need to travel long distances.

### **Conclusions**

The Cascades West region has benefited through the formation of the CWACT and its participation in transportation issues. Those benefits include:

**Regional System Improvements:** When the CWACT was formed in 1998, the major transportation issue for the group was the need for improvements on US 20. In the seven years since then, most of the US 20 improvements were completed or are in progress. The CWACT consistently maintained US 20 as a priority and ODOT and the OTC provided the support to address the problems. In addition to US 20 improvements, the CWACT region benefited from OTIA funded improvements throughout the three counties.

**Greater Knowledge about Transportation:** Most of the CWACT members did not have extensive knowledge about regional transportation issues when the group was formed. Through participation in the ACT, the members now have familiarity with the STIP process and a better understanding of ODOT operations and OTC policies.

**Stronger Regional Ties:** Many of the current CWACT members have served on the group for several years, and developed working relationships with other members from throughout the three counties. Sharing information about the transportation issues their communities face has helped the members develop a sense of the regional nature of the transportation system.

**Broader View of Transportation:** Highways are the largest component of the CWACT regional transportation system, and the CWACT focuses the majority of its efforts on highway related issues. But, the CWACT members appreciate that the transportation system is

multimodal, and there is a role for elements such as railroads, public transit and transportation demand management.

In addition to the US 20 corridor, the CWACT is establishing priorities for projects on other portions of the regional system. The members look forward to working with the OTC and ODOT to meet the priority needs.

Attachment