

RVACT *Rogue Valley Area Commission on Transportation*

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To: Members, Rogue Valley Area Commission on Transportation

From: Kathy Helmer, RVCOG

Re: Summary of November 8, 2005, RVACT Meeting, Jackson County Auditorium

Date: December 6, 2005

Members and Alternates in Attendance: Arthur Anderson, ODOT; John Morrison, Ashland; Jim Raffenburg and Robert Weber, Josephine Co.; Tom Humphrey and Hank Williams, Central Point; Skip Knight, Medford; Marian Telerski, Talent; Laurel Samson, Grants Pass; Ken Johnson, Rogue River; Dick Bailey, Shady Cove; Ernest Garb, RVTD; Mike Quilty, MPO Policy Committee; Craig Stone, Stacey Kellenbeck, Mike Montero, Richard Smith, Reeve Hennion and Jeff Hunter, private sector representatives from Jackson and Josephine Counties.

Members Absent: Butte Falls; Cave Junction; Eagle Point; Gold Hill; Jackson County; Jacksonville; Phoenix.

Staff: Mike Baker, Lisa Cortes, Shelly Root, Gary Leaming and Bill Boyett, ODOT; Kathy Helmer, RVCOG.

Other: Craig Anderson, RVTD; Alex Georgevitch, Medford; James Lowe, Grants Pass; Kevin Christiansen, OBDP; Dan Moore, RVCOG.

1. Roll Call

Co-Chair Mike Montero asked all participants to introduce themselves. A quorum was present.

2. Approval of Minutes

Members requested no corrections to the minutes of the September 13, 2005 meeting. Reeve Hennion moved to accept the minutes as written. Skip Knight seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

3. Public Input

There was no public comment.

4. 2008 – 2011 STIP Modernization Program Applications

Shelly Root referred members to the pertinent memo from Michael Baker and the application form included in their meeting packet. Shelly and Art Anderson discussed aspects of the application form. Art referred to the handout maps of the Hwy 199 Expressway Upgrade

concepts. He noted that this was an example of how quickly the region can respond to identified critical safety/modernization needs when there is collaboration among RVACT members. Shelly Root explained the timeline, criteria, scoring and funding for the modernization program. Applications are due December 2. Projects will be presented at the January RVACT meeting. The JJTC will make recommendations to the RVACT and the MPO TAC will make recommendations to the MPO Policy Committee for Jackson County projects. RVACT and MPO recommendations will be compared to ensure consistency regarding Jackson County project priorities. Projects to be funded will be selected in March or April 2006. Then, in August 2007, the OTC will approve the STIP.

The funding is \$3 million over two years, but the OTC will be considering an increase in that amount. Mike Montero said that \$1.5 million per year is not much to work with. People will have to be creative in proposing portions of projects. He asked if the criteria in the application supplanted the RVACT's current criteria. Shelly said that they should be consistent.

Art Anderson said that he believed that the OTC and legislature were looking at ways to increase the amount of funding for modernization projects. He encouraged members to be as aggressive as possible in proposing projects. It will be better to have too many projects and a long queue.

Craig Stone asked if the group should assume a higher level of funding. Art Anderson answered that the projects should be prioritized based on merit. Mike Montero suggested that over-programming was a good idea in this situation. Art emphasized that the leverage aspect, meaning the funds that jurisdictions bring to the table, was very important.

5. October 2005 Update to the OTC

Mike Montero spoke about the October presentation of the RVACT Biennial Report to the OTC. The OTC was very positive about the work accomplished by RVACT and mentioned RVACT's leadership among ACTs in the state.

6. Connect Oregon Presentation

Julie Rodwell was unable to attend the meeting, so Mike Quilty led the discussion of the program, using handouts supplied by the state. These lottery backed funds will be used on strengthening the connections between highways and other modes of transportation. The application form will be available in November.

Mike Montero noted that the bill identifies the groups to provide input on grant awards, but the OTC would like input from ACTs. He encouraged the idea of RVACT supporting projects from our local region. There will be applications from parties through the counties in the state-defined region. Mike Quilty suggested tying projects together for synergistic effects.

John Morrison noted that trucking would continue to increase its market share in moving freight. He asked how the Connect Oregon program fit into that picture. Mike Montero said that when looking for a solution to the impact of freight on the roads, you can look at increasing capacity by building seven lanes or focus on greater efficiency. If ports, airports or rail become more economical, that can draw freight off the roads. Mike Quilty said that the hope was to create partnerships between rail and truck, rather than competition. Art Anderson said that the program was intended to be a start, not massive change.

7. Break

8. Local Construction Projects

Gary Leaming and Bill Boyett reported on ongoing construction projects. The Depot Street bridge should be open for traffic in January. It will be slid onto its new alignment. The Fern Valley Interchange project has distilled down the number of alternatives under consideration to two; both have single point urban interchanges. The Highway 199 Expressway project is also down to two different concepts. The Bybee Corner realignment is moving along well with the relocation of Jackson Creek. Four bridges in the Illinois Valley are proceeding nicely. The Hwy 140-Kershaw project is nearing completion. All major work is complete on the North Medford Interchange. The Highway 62 Corridor project will be refining alternatives into spring.

Laurel Samson told members that she has been very impressed with the process used for the Highway 199 Expressway project. There has been a good deal of discussion among the CAC and PDT and lots of good information produced. Jeff Hunter also expressed his appreciation for the process and said that a diverse set of people were involved in the process. He said it was a good learning process. Jim Raffenburg said he had been surprised to see the potential impact of the project on the County Fairgrounds.

9. South Medford Interchange

At the last meeting, members had asked Art Anderson to identify other alternatives for funding the interchange, ones that would not negatively impact STIP funds. Since that meeting, the project team had applied value engineering and cost accounting principles to the design. Those concentrated efforts resulted in bringing the interchange project costs back towards the original estimated cost. Art proposed that ODOT go out for bid on the project and see what bids came in. The bid process is a low bid process, with firm fixed price.

Ernest Garb noted that the price tag at the last meeting was \$83 million and asked what the current price estimate was. Art Anderson said that it had been reduced to \$65 to \$70 million. They did that by building one bridge differently, finding other funding in Salem for utilities, and finding better ways to deal with mobility issues. Art praised the project delivery team for finding ways to bring down the price, but he cautioned members, saying that estimating is not an exact science. The bid process would be telling.

Mike Quilty asked if the changes would require a new air conformity determination. Art Anderson responded that no new determination was required because they were reducing the cost, but not the scope of the project.

Craig Stone asked if the funds saved would go back into the larger Oregon pot or remain in this region. He said that monies saved should benefit this region. Paul Mather said that those savings would come back to the region over time.

Art Anderson repeated his caution that the bids received would tell the whole story. The project goes out to bid in mid-March.

10. Oregon Transportation Plan

There will be a presentation on the Oregon Transportation Plan at the MPO Policy Committee meeting on December 13th by staff from the ODOT Planning Department. All are encouraged to attend.

Art Anderson referred members to the Russo memo included in the meeting packet which discusses the proposed amendment regarding local and/or private sector contributions to infrastructure projects. Based on the successful experience with Home Depot in Phoenix, there will be more emphasis on leverage of funds from local jurisdictions and businesses. Mike Montero said that there is a fine line between encouraging economic development and benefiting a particular business. ODOT wants to support economic development. Art said that partnering on interchanges is going to be key in the future.

Craig Stone asked how that would work and be implemented. Art Anderson replied that it would be negotiated on a case-by-case basis. Mike Quilty said that it has been an effective strategy. He asked what it would do to a city's ability to serve other transportation needs if it dedicated all SDCs to an interchange project.

Laurel Samson expressed her concern that this could lead to ODOT only doing work where there was a high match. Smaller communities with a low match might be neglected. Action 2A.6 could lay the ground work for that scenario. Art Anderson said that smaller jurisdictions could not be expected to bring a lot to the table, but they would need to look at what they can bring. ODOT will have to be reasonable.

Robert Weber said that areas within UGBs have a real advantage in receiving SDCs, while rural areas have a much more difficult time doing maintenance. Mike Montero told members to write down and send RVACT any concerns or suggestions for remedy to this Action. Stacey Kellenbeck suggested adding a new column to the scoring sheet for the feasibility of paying a match.

John Morrison said that he had found the Oregon Transportation Plan depressing. Oregon is facing a crisis over the next 25 years with aging infrastructure, increased population and traffic, and decreasing funding for transportation. He asked how specific the OTP was regarding the challenges facing the state and the changes that need to occur. Mike Montero said that people have to look at realistic revenue forecasts. The state recognizes that future revenues will not be so robust. The capacity of the interstate system built during the Eisenhower administration has been consumed. Public expectations need to be lowered. The OTP was left vague enough to allow for flexibility in approach.

Craig Stone said that he was uncomfortable with the idea that one developer pays for infrastructure and then the ones that follow him get a free ride. All properties to benefit should be assessed. Art Anderson said that Home Depot would garner something from businesses to come in the future. Craig asked why people didn't accept a higher level of congestion, rather than trying to build themselves out of the problem. The growth should be stopped if the congestion is not wanted. Mike Quilty said that the highway "pipeline" is only full half of the time. In Los

Angeles, people pay extra to unload trailers during the day. Incentives are used with shippers to encourage them to use the system during hours when there is more unused capacity. Skip Knight noted that at the national level, corporations will foot the bills when they create a need for improvements. Gas tax revenues have decreased with ever increasing fuel efficiency of vehicles. We will have to become creative to find revenues for maintenance.

11. OTC Update

Paul Mather noted that the final interviews for the position of ODOT Director had been taking place. Stakeholders and staff were involved in the recruitment process.

12. Agenda Build/Next Meeting

Agenda items for the next meeting include:

- Review of the modernization projects submitted
- Connect Oregon update

The next meeting will be held on January 10, 2006 at the White City ODOT office.

Laurel Samson welcomed James Lowe of Copeland Paving as the newly appointed private sector representative from Josephine County.

Mike Montero adjourned the meeting at 11:15 AM.