

# ***RVACT*** *Rogue Valley Area Commission on Transportation*

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**To:** Members, Rogue Valley Area Commission on Transportation

**From:** Kathy Helmer, RVCOG

**Re:** Minutes of March 8, 2005 RVACT Meeting, Grants Pass City Council Chambers

**Date:** March 10, 2005

**Members in Attendance:** Arthur Anderson, ODOT; Russ Groves, Eagle Point; Jim Raffenburg, Josephine Co.; Skip Knight, Medford; Vicki Bear, Phoenix; Marian Telerski, Talent; Royal Gasso, Gold Hill; Leonard Frick, Cave Junction; Rich Fahey, Grants Pass; Dale Petrasek, Jackson Co.; Scott Chancey, RVTD; Michael Quilty, MPO Policy; Reeve Hennion, Stacey Kellenbeck, Mike Montero, Richard Smith and Jeff Hunter, private sector representatives from Jackson and Josephine Counties.

**Members Absent:** Central Point; Ashland, Butte Falls; Jacksonville; Rogue River; Shady Cove; David Straus and Craig Stone, private sector representatives from Jackson and Josephine Counties.

**Staff:** Mike Baker, Lisa Cortes, Paul Mather and Gary Leaming, ODOT; Kathy Helmer, RVCOG.

**Other:** Laurel Samson, Grants Pass; Sherry Young, Gold Hill; Jim Wear, Phoenix; Robert Weber, Josephine Co.; Alan De Boer and Paula Brown, Ashland; Phil Messina, Central Point; John Vial, ODOT; Alex Georgevitch, Medford Public Works; Steve Hodge, Josephine County Public Works.

## **1. Roll Call**

Co-Chair Jeff Hunter directed that the roll call be conducted at 9:05 AM. A quorum was present. Jeff noted that Alan DeBoer had expressed an interest in being a Jackson County private sector alternate. Mike Montero moved, and Marian Telerski seconded, the appointment of DeBoer to that position. The motion passed unanimously.

## **2. Approval of Minutes**

Members identified no corrections to the minutes of the November 9, 2004 meeting. Richard Smith Fahey moved, and Mike Quilty seconded, their acceptance as written. The motion passed unanimously.

## **3. Public Input**

There was no public comment.

#### **4. Recognition of Retiring Board Members**

In a gesture of appreciation for their volunteer service on the RVACT, Mike Montero presented awards to Alan DeBoer and Larry Parducci. Tom Anderson, Sue Kupillas and Lindsay Berryman were not present to receive their awards. Mike Montero noted that just 7-8 years ago, the idea of having local advisory boards was a new idea. RVACT was the prototype for ACTs across the state and it has proven effective.

#### **5. Letters of Support**

Art Anderson noted that since the last meeting, RVACT had received a request from the state for new letters of support for funding for the Fern Valley Interchange. Very little lead-time was provided. Since the organization had previously sent a letter of support, a new letter was sent without communicating about it with the members. In like fashion, a request for a letter of support for the South Medford Interchange had come from the state. The project has increased in cost due to out-sourcing bridge design. There was also very little lead-time to respond to this request and a letter was sent without consulting with members.

Art asked the group to provide guidance on how they wanted these situations handled in the future. Mike Quilty noted that the co-chairs were elected and thus trusted to do the right thing. Skip Knight said that if there were general support for an issue, it would be fine to move ahead with sending a letter. If there were a question about support, however, there should be a vote by phone to ensure a majority rule. Marian Telerski noted that it was good to have a paper trail for decisions. It was also good to know about rising project costs. The cost of the South Medford Interchange project is now estimated at \$56 million.

Skip Knight moved, and Mike Quilty seconded, that these situations be handled by contacting members for a phone vote. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **6. Transportation Planning Rule**

Referring to two memos in the meeting packet regarding revisions to 660-012-0060, Mike Baker explained expected changes to the Transportation Planning Rule. These changes are related to interpretation by the courts of what the rule meant regarding the relationship between land use impacts and the timing of related transportation improvements. Provided was a set of actions that local government can take to balance land use and transportation. The Land Conservation and Development Commission (LCDC) will hold a public hearing on these changes on March 16.

In response to questions about the impact of the changes, Mike Baker said that it was now easier to understand what is expected of government. The changes may lead to some increase in congestion levels, since mitigation may occur within the planning horizon. Governments must also identify a funding mechanism for improvements.

#### **7. Oregon Transportation Plan (OTP)**

The OTP is the state's over-arching multi-modal plan. It deals with a wide range of issues, including fuel use, air quality, demands on the transportation system, security issues, etc. The planning horizon is 2030. Plan completion is expected in 2006.

## **8. Transportation Enhancement (TE) Projects**

The state had asked RVACT to prioritize the set of proposed TE projects from our region. Given the quick turnaround, the group had decided to delegate the task to the JJTC. Art Anderson noted that concerns had been expressed about how the process had gone with the JJTC. Some felt it had pulled members apart, rather than bringing them together. There had been some consternation about it. Art asked the group what they thought and if they wanted to prioritize the projects in the future.

Reeve Hennion asked if their prioritization had really made a difference. Skip said it made sense for RVACT to prioritize, since they understand the projects and local needs better than anyone else. Laurel Samson said that it was not a good process. It had come down to a Jackson County vote and a Josephine County vote. Mike Montero suggested that it would be better, in the future, if the group knew far enough in advance, and there was sufficient time for the technical staff to do their work. Art noted that it had been a quick turnaround and the group could ask for more time in the future. Vicki Bear said she had not known that it was occurring. Royal Gasso said he had not been notified of the JJTC meeting. The state criteria were different from local criteria; maybe local input wasn't good for that reason.

Mike Montero moved, and Skip Knight seconded, that if the ODOT TE program wanted RVACT to prioritize TE projects in the future, ODOT would need to provide a clear set of criteria, adequate lead time for the RVACT technical staff to craft a recommendation and for RVACT members to vote on that recommendation, and, ODOT would need to assure RVACT that it would follow RVACT's recommendation.

Mike Montero moved, and Vicki Bear seconded, that a letter to ODOT be drafted, communicating the group's perspective on its participation in prioritizing future TE projects. The motion passed unanimously.

## **9. Highway 199 Safety Initiatives**

John Vial provided a PowerPoint presentation on this topic. He focused, in particular, on two areas, Siss' Gap and the urban section of Hwy 199 south of Rogue Community College. Siss' Gap has a crash rate of .45; with 12 fatalities, the percentage of fatal crashes is unusually high at 17%. From 1994 to 2003, there were 46 crashes, although the number of crashes and fatalities is now dropping. ODOT has undertaken a variety of improvements, including restriping, intersection reconstruction, and this summer, a \$700,000 safety project will be executed with sight posts, guardrails, etc. Regarding the urban section, the crash rate is 3.5, seven times that of Siss' Gap. There have been 8 fatalities along this strip of highway in only 1.5 years. Improvements to this 3-mile strip of highway is the focus of the Highway 199 project which just recently held a well-attended public Open House. John said that ODOT and RVACT should continue to advocate improvements to Siss' Gap and Highway 199.

Richard Smith inquired about the idea of using frontage roads and John responded that there was indeed a need to address access management on the highway and that was one answer. Jim Raffenburg asked if they had looked at lowering the speed limit and John answered that it had been lowered last summer. Alan DeBoer thanked John for the report and said it was very helpful to learn about all that ODOT was doing.

Stacy Kellenbeck said that more attention should be called to the lowered speeds; people are not noticing the changes. Maybe red flags could be placed by the signs. Robert Weber said that apart from improvements to the physical conditions, enforcement and education were very important. The driver's responsibility is significant. Art Anderson noted that RVACT had been instrumental in getting the funds allocated to address the problems on Highway 199 and deserved a pat on the back for influencing the process.

#### **10. Fern Valley Interchange**

The City of Phoenix needs funds for a local match to build the interchange. Skip's suggestion is that the MPO allocate some portion of an available pot of \$2 million for that purpose. There have been several meetings among Phoenix officials, developers and ODOT to discuss the funding issues. Skip noted that they would expect a 1:1 match by Home Depot for MPO funds. Skip said that the interchange was crucial for Medford and Talent, not just Phoenix, and that it would be a win-win for all involved. Art Anderson said that the question before RVACT was whether or not to provide political support to the MPO in this process.

Vicki Bear said that meetings had occurred with Sen. Bates and Rep. Buckley and Home Depot over the previous two weeks. The city is in the process of determining System Development Charges and will soon know exactly what percent Home Depot will have to contribute. Phoenix has already contributed \$1 million for the Environmental Assessment. The city is looking at a variety of avenues to contribute to the process and appreciates the MPO's assistance.

Mike Montero said that this was typical of how funding would happen in the future; there will need to be leveraged funding from private, public and state sources. He commended the MPO for this leveraging of funds. Mike Quilty noted that a vote might not occur until the April meeting; it would probably be approved, but it was not already a sure thing. Laurel Samson wanted to be sure that the MPO contribution would not decrease the Home Depot contribution. Mike Quilty assured her that it would not. Vicki Bear said that Home Depot would be asked for \$2.5 million; the MPO match would be above and beyond that.

Art Anderson moved, and Skip Knight seconded, that RVACT send a letter of support to the MPO regarding this action. Jim Raffenburg said he was concerned about what impact that might have on future spending or allocation of funds. Art Anderson responded that this was MPO money, so it wouldn't affect the RVACT. There was a unanimous vote in favor of the motion.

#### **11. Local Construction**

Gary Leaming provided an update overview and slide show of all ongoing construction projects in Jackson and Josephine County. Regarding the North Medford Interchange, they were removing the Fred Meyer signal, a significant change for that route. In January, concrete beams were set onto the Highway 62 bridge over Interstate 5. In Gold Hill, the OTIA project is effectively finished. The community held a ribbon cutting with the Patrick School kids to celebrate the project and the library construction last month. The first meetings for the Highway 199 Expressway CAC were held in February. There was a good turnout for last month's hearing and the public Open House held the first week in March. The Debbs Potts Bridge Dedication was held on Pott's birthday in December 2004. The Highway 62 Corridor meetings started last August. Committee members have been learning about design, traffic and NEPA. Last month,

the committees began the process of conceptual design, which will be further refined in the months ahead.

The Interstate 5, North Ashland/South Medford project ended its hiatus last month and the contractor plans to have major roadwork complete in early summer. The bridgework was postponed to next winter when traffic volumes will be lower. The next "Moving Ahead with ODOT" publication will come out on Friday.

The Fern Valley Interchange committees will start meeting again in April; they have been waiting for the completion of traffic modeling. Construction on the Talent OTIA project will start in mid-to late summer.

## **12. West Coast MPO Meeting**

Due to time constraints, this item was postponed until the next meeting.

## **13. RVACT By-Laws**

Mike Baker led this discussion of draft revisions to the by-laws. He asked the group to specify how they filled the various positions on RVACT and what kind of term limits, if any, there should be. Skip Knight said that there should be no term limits. The counties and cities should determine the length of service. Mike Baker asked about the private sector representatives and Art suggested that names should be solicited from the member jurisdictions and then RVACT would vote on them. Skip Knight said that the number of people willing to volunteer and participate was small and people should be allowed to stay on as long as they wish. Mike Montero agreed, saying that the public benefits from the institutional memory of long-term volunteers.

Reeve Hennion said that there should be a way to replace jurisdictional representatives and private sector people who do not attend meetings; that should be provided for in the by-laws. After some discussion, it was agreed that if a person misses 3 consecutive meetings, RVACT would assume that the person had resigned their position.

Alan DeBoer identified changes to be made to the by-laws, including: resignation effective with 3 missed meetings; pagination of the by-laws; clarification of the wording regarding a quorum and whether or not 50% have to be elected officials; the ability to call for a 2/3 majority vote.

Marian Telerski said that the 2/3 vote should be put back into the by-laws. She agreed with the 3-month limit on absences. Alternates should be part of the quorum. The part about the appointment of community members should be reworded.

It was noted that private sector appointments were normally made by the County Commissioners in Josephine County, while in Jackson County, interested individuals came forward to request appointment from the RVACT.

Jim Raffenburg asked for the citation that gave RVACT the authority to appoint people. Mike Baker said that the authority for the OTC to establish ACTs was in the ORS. The RVACT by-laws gave the body authority to appoint people and identified how that should be

done. Art Anderson suggested that it would be good for staff to follow up with Jim Raffenburg on this topic.

Laurel Samson suggested that the funding equity resolution should be part of the by-laws. Mike Baker said that the resolution could be referenced in the by-laws.

Staff will provide a revised draft of the by-laws at the next meeting.

#### **14. Equity Resolution**

Art Anderson said there had been a request to review this 2002 resolution, since there were several new members of RVACT. RVACT strives for a 70%/30% split of modernization funds between Jackson and Josephine Counties, respectively. Mike Montero noted that it was an attempt to institutionalize a commitment as how funds were actually distributed over time. A statistical analysis is required every 5 years. Mike Quilty asked if the resolution hampered in any way RVACT's ability to respond to pressing and immediate needs. Mike Montero responded that the resolution is stated as a goal and thus, there is some inherent flexibility.

#### **15. OTC Update**

Given time constraints, Paul Mather gave an abbreviated report on the activities of the OTC. He described the \$100 million in lottery funds that the Connect Oregon program would produce for improvements to rail, ports, airports, and transit districts.

#### **16. RVACT Chair**

Reeve Hennion nominated Mike Montero for RVACT Jackson County Chair; Russ Groves seconded the motion. There were no other nominations. The vote in favor of Mike Montero was unanimous and Mike shall be the RVACT Jackson County Chair for another 2 years.

#### **17. Agenda Build/Next Meeting**

Agenda items for the next meeting will include:

- Brief overview of projects and their costs for new members
- Review of revised draft by-laws
- Brief introduction and overview of ACTs for new members
- Self-introductions around the table
- Nomination of a fourth Josephine County private sector representative
- West Coast MPO Meeting Report

The next meeting will be held at 9 AM on May 10, 2005, at the Jackson County Public Works Auditorium in White City.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 AM.