

RVACT *Rogue Valley Area Commission on Transportation*

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To: Members, Rogue Valley Area Commission on Transportation

From: Pat Foley, RVCOG

Re: Draft Summary of March 10, 2009, RVACT Meeting
Grants Pass City Council Chambers, Grants Pass, OR

Members and Alternates in Attendance: John Stromberg and Mike Faught, Ashland; Donald Moore, Cave Junction; Tim Cummings, Grants Pass; Linda Meyers, Jacksonville; Mike Kuntz, Jackson County; Dwight Ellis and Rob Brandes, Josephine County; Cory Crebbin, Medford; Arthur Anderson, ODOT; Bob Lewis, Phoenix; Julie Brown, RVTD; Margaret Bradburn, Shady Cove; William Cecil and Jay Henry, Talent; Mike Montero, Stacey Kellenbeck and Earl Wood private sector representatives from Jackson and Josephine Counties

Members Absent: Butte Falls, Central Point, Eagle Point, Gold Hill, MPO Policy, Rogue River and private sector representatives Alan DeBoer, Craig Stone, Reeve Hennion and James Lowe

Staff: Paul Mather, ODOT; Pat Foley, RVCOG

Other: George Fekaris, FHWA; Robert Maestre, ODOT; Mark Knox, Talent; Herb Carter, Gerald Fitzgerald

1. Roll Call
Mike Montero

Roll was taken. A quorum was present.

Mike asked that the record show that Reeve Hennion is undergoing medical procedures and is therefore excused. Pat also received notice from Alan DeBoer and John Watt regarding their inability to attend the meeting.

2. Approval of Minutes
Mike Montero

The January 13, 2009 RVACT minutes were approved as submitted.

3. Public Input
Mike Montero

There were no public comments.

4. Josephine County RVACT Co-Chair

Mike Montero

The RVACT By Laws state that RVACT meetings will be presided over by a Chair. Co-Chairs from Jackson and Josephine counties will be nominated from and elected by the membership on alternating two-year cycles. Mike opened the floor for nominations for the Josephine County Co-Chair position.

Dwight Ellis made a motion to nominate Stacey Kellenbeck. Art Anderson seconded the motion. There were no other nominations. The motion was passed unanimously to elect Stacey Kellenbeck as the Josephine County Co-Chair.

5. Replacement of JOCO Private Sector Members

Art Anderson/Stacey Kellenbeck

Art Anderson led the discussion on selecting two Josephine County Private Sector Members. Each County is represented by four members from the private sector. There are two vacant positions open in Josephine County. Art referred to the two applications (*handouts*) that were provided for RVACT review: Robert McCraley and Stan Wolfe submitted applications.

Dwight Ellis said that the Josephine County Commissioners discussed both applications. We are putting both applicants forward and feel they will do an excellent job.

Dwight Ellis made a motion to appoint Robert W. McCraley and Stan N. Wolfe to fill the Josephine County private sector positions. Tim Cummings seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Dwight Ellis will notify the applicants of their selection.

6. FHWA Forest Highway Program Presentation

George Fekaris, FHWA Transportation Planner

George Fekaris has worked with Federal Lands for twenty years. His presentation goal is to discuss the program, what we do, how we operate specifically regarding the Forest Land Highway (FLH) Program.

There are three field divisions in the United States. The Vancouver, WA office covers this area. The three field divisions are responsible for program development, transportation planning, environmental analysis, project coordination, road and bridge design, construction supervision and program and project management, conditions assessments, technical assistance and various other transportation-related activities. FLH does work for other federal land management agencies, i.e. Parks Service, Forest Service, US Fish and Wildlife, etc. We act like the Department of Transportation in that we take projects from each section through design and environmental compliance and construction and then turn them over to the owner/agency.

Forest Highways (FH) are a network of roads that have been identified as important to National Forests. Typically they connect the National Forest with the mainstay transportation network. Oregon currently has the largest Forest Highway Program in the nation. The formula for project

selection is based on timber harvest, acres of federal land and miles of road. Oregon receives approximately \$20M a year for projects.

Projects for the FHP are jointly selected by Federal Highway Administration, State, and the US Forest Service from priority lists of projects on designated FH routes proposed by the State and Forest Service. This group is referred to as the Tri-Agency partnership.

- Within the FHP there is a section that emulates the ODOT Transportation Enhancement program: Oregon Forest Highway Transportation Enhancement program. Ten percent of available funds are set aside for enhancement projects.

Each participating agency has a specific role. The projects are almost 100% federally funded (if the project requires additional right-of-way the owner agency is responsible). The US Forest Service and the Federal Highway Administration jointly administer the FHP.

In this region the Canyonville Tiller Trail Highway is a project that has been worked on for several years. There is currently a proposal for the southern portion of this trail that has been moved forward: Tiller Trail Highway (County Line to Mile-point 44) submitted by Jackson County and the Forest Service. This project proposal is under review. One of the review steps is to get feedback from local jurisdictions/organizations/ACTs. A letter from the RVACT (support project and why: areas of concern, etc.) would be appreciated

Questions, Comments, Discussion

Art Anderson: Are Enhancement Projects taken out of the overall list? Response: This is typically done separately but we funnel projects through the agency representatives (Tri-Area).

George Fekaris added that they are drafting a Long-Range Transportation Coordination Plan for the FHP. This document will help to explain; 1) the program, 2) how the program operates, 3) program participants, 4) how projects are selected, 5) project criteria used and 6) process used to administer program. The plan will be ready for comments within the month. The document will be sent out to the ACTs for comment.

Mike Montero: One of the things that the OTC has embedded in the STIP process is to take a look at the effects of leveraging when available. If there are insufficient FHP funds to complete a project and the Area Commission says we have funds available to use on this project, will this elevate the project in your system? Response: Yes. One of the strategies that we use to extend the FHP and its effectiveness is leveraging. In reverse, FHP funds can be used as a match.

Mike Kuntz: He asked the RVACT if they could support the Tiller Trail Highway project. Approximately 2.5 miles of this trail goes from Douglas County southeast. It is the windiest, narrowest stretch of the entire highway going I-5 to Highway 62.

Mike Montero made a motion that the RVACT execute a letter of support for the project. Dwight Ellis seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

7. Local Construction Projects

Art Anderson

South Medford Interchange:

- Southbound off-ramp scheduled to open Monday, March 16th.

- Completion of full interchange is scheduled for late May
 - Completion will allow Barnett Road/Bear Creek bridge work to begin
- Work on I-5 will begin shortly thereafter.
 - Beginning Monday, March 16th, single lane in each direction between Viaduct and new interchange (for six weeks),

Highway 99/238 Grants Pass

- Contractor Copeland wants to begin construction by the end of this month.
- There is the possibility that stimulus funds may be added for additional paving work.

Stimulus Funding

- ODOT has been working with several jurisdictions regarding stimulus funding and how their projects could be tied to ODOT projects.
- The MPO has received stimulus funding. ODOT is looking at a unified/joint paving project.

Fern Valley Interchange

- Draft EA scheduled for release this spring.

Highway 62 Corridor

- Draft EIS scheduled for release this summer.

Questions/Comments:

Tim Cummings: Regarding the overlay project on Williams Highway to New Hope Road: The city's storm drain system from Harbeck Road to New Hope Road is inadequate. Is there funding for this? Response: Grants Pass received about \$700K of stimulus funding. When Art talked to Laurel Samson the storm drain project was not one of the projects that the city was considering. Art recommended that Tim talk to the staff about this issue because there is a lot of latitude on what the funds can be used for.

8. Stimulus Update

Art Anderson

There is a lot going on with the stimulus package with regard to the state system and local projects.

Jurisdictions receiving allotments are:

- Jackson County
- Josephine County
- Grants Pass
- All jurisdictions within the MPO
- Eagle Point – they participate in the MPO but they are not a member in terms of funding that they receive

There are dollars that have not been divided up yet. There is approximately \$5M statewide for small cities, e.g. Shady Cove, Cave Junction, and Rogue River.

The state of Oregon received approximately \$334M. The funding is divided up as follows:

- Transportation Enhancement program \$10M
- State stimulus \$224M
- Local agencies \$100M

All of the \$334M has to be allocated by June 17, 2010 with fifty-percent being allocated by June 17, 2009. The state went before the OTC with a list of approximately \$190M worth of projects.

The OTC approved \$122M. Over the next ten days the OTC will be deciding on projects for the remaining \$68M.

The State is looking at several projects:

- Highways 99/238
- I-5 paving in the vicinity of Ashland
- Old Highway 99
- Highways 62/140
- North Medford project
- Highway 140 repave first eight miles

Questions/Comments:

Cory Crebbin: It is my understanding that you didn't have to bid a project by June 17th but you must have it obligated. Response: June 17th is the "obligation date" which means the package has been sent to Salem. Salem has received funding approval from Federal Highways. June 17th is the bid let date.

Mike Montero: Just to be clear, the project has been published and advertised, does that mean it has also been awarded? Response: The bid(s) have been opened. There is still a period where bid(s) can be accepted or rejected.

9. Break

10. Tolling and Pricing in Oregon

Robert Maestre, ODOT Long-Range Planning Manager, Co-manager Transportation and Growth Management

The Transportation Growth Management grants applications are due this Friday. We have one-hundred thirty pre-applications.

The OTC said a couple years ago that tolling and pricing should be looked at seriously.

- Tolling is charging a price to use a bridge, road or tunnel.
- Pricing is changing the level of the toll to affect the behavior.

The state legislature passed policies which gave the OTC authority to set tolls or price a state road.

In 2007 the OTC received a study on future tolling and pricing possibilities in Oregon. This study (White Papers) was done by Cambridge Systematics. As a result of this study the OTC said we need to look into the framework in more detail: 1) What are the logical questions, 2) What is the technical framework, 3) What would potential users have to think through (what evidence and information would they have to give), 4) If tolls are going to raise a certain percentage of project costs, how are the additional costs going to be paid and 5) Should a project that is going to raise some money from tolling get boosted in the priority list and get funded?

In Oregon there is very little tolling history. In the east there is a lot of history. The kind of tolling that happens in the east is single facility tolling, i.e. a bridge or major highway/freeway.

It is usually not congestion pricing. In fact there is no system wide congestive pricing going on in the country at this time. There are toll facilities that vary their prices by time-of-day.

Tolling and pricing could/should do:

- Promote Transportation Demand Management
- Look at peak period pricing
- Develop new funding methods
- Provide equity among users, payers, beneficiaries, providers and regions
- Fund projects through public/private partnerships
- Provide information and education
- Make publicly-funded transportation investment decisions transparent to the public
- Examine mechanisms to expand the beneficiary pay concept
- Examine mechanisms to fund major capacity adding and related transportation facilities

Related policies indirectly applying to tolling/pricing

- Development of an integrated multimodal system
- Equity, efficiency and travel choices
- Relationship in interurban and urban mobility
- Management of Assets
- An integrated and efficient freight system

Related policies most directly applying to tolling/pricing

- Address critical levels of congestion
- Support livability and economic opportunity
- Consider tolling projects
- Utilize HOV lanes, consider HOT lanes
- Manage demand
- Move SOV travel out of peak period
- Investigate effectiveness, feasibility and impacts of tolling and congestion pricing
- Move freight efficiently

There are three main objectives for tolling and pricing: 1) congestion relief, 2) economic growth and 3) improve the environment. The apparent objectives are: 1) funding with tolling and 2) congestion relief with pricing. The implementation strategies are: 1) accelerate building highways, 2) improve other parts of the system and 3) avoid building new highways.

Potential tolling applications include:

- Traditional projects; new toll road, bridge or tunnel
- Toll managed lanes: HOT lane
- Express toll lane
- Truck only lane
- Toll existing corridors or systems

Because the OTC wanted more detail regarding tolling and pricing seven 'White Papers' were developed. The 'White Papers' do not take positions. These 'White Papers' are scheduled to be posted on the ODOT website within the week.

White Paper #1: Could tolling or pricing make a substantial difference in greenhouse gas emissions in the state? In order to accomplish this: 1) a reduction in the vehicle miles travelled is necessary or 2) have fewer cold starts. The results showed that in the most part the answer is no.

White Paper #2: Would tolling and pricing make sense in Oregon in general and if so, where and under what conditions? The conclusions are: 1) limited applicability throughout Oregon, 2) low traffic volume implies that facilities are unlikely to be financially self-sustaining – would not pay for construction of projects and 3) if there is a project where tolling is to be used, if you raised part of the money somebody else is going to have to come up with the remainder.

White Paper #3: Discusses the technical side of modeling – predicting trips and changes in travel behavior when tolling or pricing. In order for tolling or pricing to happen a case would have to show how many people would be moved off the road, it is going to save this many trips overall, etc. Even though Oregon has the two best models in the world for transportation and land use planning they were not developed with the effects of tolling and pricing in mind. These issues can be worked through but it will not be easy.

White Paper #4: What are the desired benefits of highway tolling/pricing, i.e. 1) reliability for motorists, 2) free flow conditions that will ensure reduced traffic volumes and 3) improve the economy? The complexity of addressing this subject includes what happens in the non-tolled/priced areas? Indirect effects are difficult to measure – what happens to other roads/businesses etc. The conclusions are it would be hard to do an economic analysis that address tolling/pricing.

White Paper #5: System Wide Congestion Pricing
This paper says that if you toll there are winners and losers. Some users will be priced off/priced out, others impacted by those priced off. It also says that unless you talk about how you are going to use the revenues that you generate from tolling or pricing the whole area is in general worse off. The paper does not say you shouldn't toll or price to address what you are going to do with the money. At this time there is not a paper that addresses what will be done with the money. The full social cost is a marginal social cost – the total cost to society for producing one further unit equals all the direct producer costs plus external environment and stakeholder costs.

White Paper #6: Analytical methods for assessing economic efficiency of tolling highways

- Tolling presents unique challenges to traditional methods such as benefit/cost analysis and cost effectiveness comparisons
 - Traditional benefit cost analysis prioritizes tolled project alternative, compares tolled and non-tolled alternatives. The benefits include, value of time saved, lower costs due to increased safety and lower vehicle operating costs.
 - A benefit cost analysis does not consider: changing access to multimodal facilities, delivery markets, environmental effects, labor markets, changed customer availability or project affordability.
 - Comprehensive economic comparisons of alternatives need an economic impact analysis, a financial analysis and benefit costs analysis conducted as a package.

White Paper #7: Truck only toll lanes – do they make sense in Oregon?
This paper concludes that truck only toll lanes in Oregon probably do not make sense.

Next Steps: Stakeholders will review the papers and provide input. The papers will be online with a questionnaire. There are also going to be four forums in the state where the authors of the

White Papers will be present. All feedback/input will be presented to the Oregon Transportation Commission this summer.

11. Oregon Transportation Commission/Legislative Update

Paul Mather

The RVACT is going to be asked at some point to make funding decisions relatively quickly.

Funding review:

The stimulus package: This process is in the OTC decision making mode. Next week they will likely allocate a significant amount of funding. For the remaining stimulus dollars they will have a process for allocation that will involve the ACTs. What the remaining dollar amount is or allocation details are not known yet. The remaining funds do not need to be obligated until next year so we have approximately a year to get them out.

The State Job and Transportation Act, with proposed increased revenues for transportation, is just starting to move through the Legislature. This is a \$500M annual allocation. If the bill passes the RVACT will be asked to make project decisions. This will probably happen towards July and certainly by September.

The Federal Reauthorization Bill expires this fall. At this point Congress hasn't had much of a conversation regarding this bill because of other issues they are dealing with. They will pick this up in the next several months.

Regarding a question about extra RVACT meetings Paul said the stimulus Phase 2 process probably won't be in place until May or June. There may not be a lot to do at the May meeting. But in June or July we may have meetings monthly. Our schedule may have to be adjusted to respond to the timeframe required. If the State Transportation bill passes and additional funds become available we will be asked to make quick decisions.

12. Agenda Build/Next Meeting

Stacey Kellenbeck

Next meeting is scheduled for May 12, 2009 in White City.

Agenda

- Update on stimulus funding