

RVACT *Rogue Valley Area Commission on Transportation*

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To: Members, Rogue Valley Area Commission on Transportation

From: Pat Foley, RVCOG

Re: Summary of January 9, 2007, RVACT Meeting, ODOT Conference Room,
100 Antelope Road, White City

Date: January 11, 2007

Members and Alternates in Attendance: Arthur Anderson and John Vial, ODOT; John Morrison, Ashland; Jim Lewis, Jacksonville; Russell Groves, Eagle Point; Frank Bosshardt, Josephine County; Alex Georgevitch, Medford; Betty Wheeler, Talent; Laurel Samson, Grants Pass; Jim Wear, Phoenix; Mike Quilty, MPO Policy; Craig Anderson, RVTD; Tony Paulson, Cave Junction; Alan DeBoer, Craig Stone, John Watt, James Lowe, Richard Smith, Jeff Hunter and Mike Montero, private sector representatives from Jackson and Josephine Counties.

Members Absent: Butte Falls, Central Point, Gold Hill, Jackson County, Rogue River, Shady Cove, MPO Policy; Reeve Hennion and Stacy Kellenbeck, Jackson and Josephine County private sector representatives.

Staff: Brian Sheadel, Gary Leaming ODOT; Pat Foley, RVCOG.

Other: Eryca McCartin, Earl Wood, Dan Moore, Jeff Griffin and Keenan MontsDeOca

1. Roll Call

Mike Montero

Chair Mike Montero asked all participants to introduce themselves. Roll was taken. A quorum was present.

2. Approval of Minutes

Mike Montero

Mike Montero asked if there were any changes to the November 14, 2006 minutes. Art Anderson asked for the following changes: 1. Page 8 - The Bylaws do not stipulate that the *alternate* private members need a recommendation from a governing body. 2. Page 9 – If you *don't* have to have an endorsement you wouldn't automatically appoint an alternate to the primary position. The minutes were approved with the above changes.

3. Public Input

Mike Montero

There were no comments from the public.

4. Oregon Freight Advisory Committee Project Priorities

Art Anderson

Handouts: Oregon Freight Advisory Committee letter dated November 30, 2006

Oregon Freight Advisory Committee 2008-2011 STIP Project Prioritization Spreadsheet

Art Anderson started by reminding the members that when we were wrapping up the projects for the 2010/2011 STIP we had pulled together our list of projects at the same time the OFAC was going over their project priorities. The OFAC came out with a list of their priorities after the modernization projects were selected. The RVACT decided that they were going to sit tight with our program and not make changes. However, the OFAC still put together overall list of priorities for the State. OFAC (*handout*) sent out a letter that included a section on ODOT Region 3; “The only pending Tier 1 project is completion of the OR 140 Freight Extension project from OTIA III, estimated at \$3.1M. We recommend that, if returned OTIA funds are not used to complete the project, it be included in this STIP for completion. There are no Tier 2 projects requiring funding. We commend the Region for committing Motor Carrier, Bridge, Operations and Safety (as well as Modernization) funds to complete or advance 18 OFAC recommended projects in this STIP cycle”). Referring the OFAC project prioritization spreadsheet, Art said that there are 11 Jackson/Josephine county projects listed on the spreadsheet. Art feels that as a region our roll-up of freight projects is very good.

Art feels that the comments in the letter shows that Region 3 stands out with a lot of positive inputs. Art recommended that when we work through the next STIP cycle that we use this freight list as background information as we bring forward further freight projects in the region.

Mike said that OFAC uses this RVACT as the pick of the litter because we understand the whole transportation equation more comprehensively than others.

5. Transportation Enhancement Project Finalists (Information Item)

Art Anderson

Handouts: Spreadsheet with Region 3 projects under consideration

Art presented the latest TE list of projects (pending final approval from the OTC). Four local projects are on the list: 1) No.38-Jackson County, Bear Creek Greenway Trail: 7 Oaks IC – Upton Road, 2) No. 51-Medford, Evergreen Mixed-Use Area: Crosswalks and Streetscape, 3) No. 63-ODOT Region 3, District 8, I-5 and OR-199: Welcome to Oregon Signs at California Border, and 4) No. 65-OPRD (Rogue River), Rogue River Greenway Trail: Valley-of-the-Rogue SP Section. The final list of selected projects will be available later in the year.

Questions/Comments:

James Lowe asked if the TE committee gives responses to the projects that were cut regarding potential improvements that need to be made for the next round of applications? The Highway 199 landscaping project did not make the list. Laurel said that Grants Pass did receive a letter without recommendations. She said they are available for questions and will give hints on what you might do to improve your application.

Craig Stone asked (regarding Application No. 63 – \$420,080, ‘Welcome to Oregon’ signs) how are we investing that much money in a couple of signs? He feels that this project had a lot of

support this round because it missed the last three cycles and because of the rest area. John Vial added there are a lot of architectural elements. They are large illuminated showcase signs welcoming visitors to the state of Oregon. Running power to the sites is costly.

Alan DeBoer thinks we failed in not prioritizing the projects. Two of these projects would not have been on his prioritization list. In the future he would like to prioritize the projects before they are forwarded.

Mike Montero said that in the past we have entertained prioritizing. I think this group would be well served, if we are going to prioritize project, to have the criteria that they use.

Laurel Samson feel that if prioritizing isn't going to make a difference to them, she wouldn't want to do it. If they will give some points, then we should take a look at it.

Mike Montero suggested that staff craft a letter to explain these concerns and ask if they can give us more direction. John Morrison agrees with this idea so that the RVACT has a way to make better and more informed decisions.

Alan DeBoer would like to follow this process to see what percentage of the funding is awarded to this area.

Betty Wheeler said that the projects were prioritized in the past. The process was referred to the JJTC. The only people who attended the meetings were ones who wrote applications. None of us had any incentive to give out points. So, if in fact we are going to prioritize projects, all of the communities have to participate. It was an extremely frustrating process because we were asked to work against a project that we had written.

Laurel Samson feels that prioritizing TE projects is difficult because the range is so broad. It is easier with other projects because you can focus on regional issues. With TE's we can be comparing an entry way sign with sidewalks. I think it is very difficult trying to compare these projects. I don't know how you do that.

Gary Leaming telephoned Pat Fisher and gave the group an update. \$11M will be awarded statewide for TE projects. There are no targeted amounts for each region. At least one project from each region will be selected. The committee will be meeting later this month to reduce the projects and then forward them to the OTC. TE project selection will be on their February agenda.

Mike Montero asked Art if he would follow up and ask for a copy of their criteria. Art explained that there are various levels of evaluation: 1) District and Area Managers look at projects to determine if they meet the criteria, 2) Transportation Enhancement Committee's look at the projects from a technical standpoint and another one looks at it from non-technical standpoint. Art will request information on how the pieces are they pulled together to make a whole package. Staff will follow up.

6. Scenic Byways Grant Applications (Information Item)

Art Anderson

Handouts: Oregon Department of Transportation memo dated December 2006

Art reviewed a ODOT memo which gives information for jurisdictions or agencies that are interested in applying for National Scenic Byway funds. This is a reimbursement program requiring a 20% local match.

7. Selection of RVACT Private Representatives

Art Anderson and Mike Montero

Continuing the discussion from the last RVACT meeting regarding the selection of Jackson County private sector alternates Mike Montero started by saying that each jurisdiction has a primary representative and a designated alternate. This was set up to ensure that there would be a quorum when voting decisions had to be made. The consensus in the past has been that each private sector representative would not have a 'designated' alternate. At the last meeting John Watt was elected as a private sector alternate for JACO. No further alternates were selected because the commission wanted more information regarding: 1) Because of the turnover in elections some people who have been long standing members said they would like to stay on either as a representative of their jurisdiction or as a private sector representative (A representative of their jurisdiction has to be appointed) and 2) Would an elected official serving as a private sector alternate be conceived as giving a jurisdiction two votes? (It was decided that guidance from the OTC would be sought)

Art Anderson reviewed the standing of the Jackson County private sector representatives. They are: Alan DeBoer, Mike Montero, Craig Stone and Reeve Hennion. Regarding Reeve, Mike Montero said Reeve would like to continue as a representative if possible. John Watt is the new JACO private sector alternate. A question was raised as to whether a letter is needed from a jurisdiction appointing an alternate. The interpretation of the By Laws is that a primary representative does and an alternate does not.

The list of potential JACO private sector alternates include; Kay Harrison, Tani Wouters, Skip Knight, Marian Telerski, Earl Wood and Wade Six. Art asked if either the Talent or Medford city councils have discussed having Marian or Skip serve on the RVACT. Betty Wheeler said there has not been discussion on this matter. Alex Georgevich said he is not aware of any discussion.

Alan DeBoer made a motion to appoint Earl Wood as a JACO private sector alternate. He feels that if we have two alternate positions filled that is fine for now. We can check with the others later. John Morrison seconded the motion.

Discussion:

Craig Stone asked if these people are representatives of the general citizenry or are they representatives of the private sector business community. Art Anderson replied that they are a combination thereof. They can't be jurisdictional. It has to be private sector. Craig went on to say that it seems to him that they ought to have a private sector focus. Craig appreciates the work the public sector folks have done but when their tenure is done it ought to be up to the jurisdiction to determine whether they want to them to continue. If the jurisdiction decides to

appoint a new representative he does not feel that we should be sliding former elected officials into private sector slots.

Earl Wood said that he has no standing with the City. He is an individual that has been working throughout the Rogue Valley and his interest is in transportation issues. Craig said that this comments were not directed toward Earl specifically but as a general proposition.

Laurel Samson said that it was determined in the past that alternates do not automatically become private sector representatives. She feels there is a different role for the alternates. What we need are people with knowledge of transportation issues. She appreciates bringing in new folks but feels it would be difficult to bring in somebody new and ask to them be a listener for three meetings. She cannot imagine that somebody would want to do that. Or we have somebody who has enough background so that they can step in and know how all the pieces fit together. Laurel thinks that Craig's points are good for the private sector representative but she feels that it is different for the alternates.

Alan DeBoer added that as a former elected official the passion is still there for being involved. He feels that having two alternates is fine for now. Alan said that he will take on the job in JACO to coordinate the alternates to make sure that four people from JACO show up.

Craig Stone said that the distinction that Laurel pointed out between permanent members and alternates is good. He asked if we have anything in the policy that deals with the migration of an alternate to permanent slots? Art Anderson said no. The only policy we have is that alternates can fill in when the primary is absent. An alternate does not automatically become a permanent representative. Permanent representatives have to be appointed through this process and get support from a jurisdiction.

Mike Montero said there is one issue that he doesn't feel has been answered. Can an elected official sit as a Private Sector Representative? This is a question that we need answered for future reference to give us guidance. Regarding comments by Craig Stone and Laurel Samson, Mike said that the hallmark of this group has been that we look at what the person can bring to the table; Do they have the commitment and do they have the institutional knowledge? He feels that when an elected official leaves office they become a private citizen. If they show that they can represent the regions interest then he has no reservations.

Mike Montero said the motion and second is on the table to appoint Earl Wood as a JACO private sector alternate. A vote was taken. The motion was passed unanimously.

Art said that ODOT will look into the issue of an elected official serving as a private sector representative.

8. Break

9. RVTD Update
Craig Anderson

Craig reported that last spring RVTD was facing a \$1.2M shortfall. RVTD operates buses as well as 25 para-transit vehicles through Valley Lift Service. Valley Lift has been increasing hard for RVTD to continue given the fact that the cost per ride is \$20 and RVTD can only collect \$2

for fare. We were looking at an \$18 direct hit to RVTD's overall operating budget for every ride that we were providing with Valley Lift. RVTD looked at how they could make up the \$1.2M shortfall. We made four serious cuts to services; 1) Changed the Valley Lift Service area which previously included the entire district. The service area was changed to what ADA requires which is service within ¾ mile of each transit route, 2) Doubled the bus fare from \$1 to \$2 throughout the district, 3) Renegotiated our service agreement with the city of Ashland which resulted in the city eliminating Route 5 which is a circulator route in the city that provided 15 minute service as opposed to the current 30 minute service. This service agreement resulted in changing the bus fare from free to \$0.50 and \$1 for Valley Lift Service, and 4) Cut Route 4 which serves the Rogue Valley Medical Center. This resulted in tremendous public outcry and people wanted to know about RVTD's business plan: Was there such a plan? What is the timeline for completion of a business plan? At that time we had begun a long-range 10 year plan.

RVTD also had to look at how to deal with the passengers on Valley Lift service, particularly those who were eliminated as a result of cutting Route 4. RVTD was able to accommodate most, if not all, of the people who had previously been using Valley Lift to access the Rogue Valley Medical Center. Also the Board has been pursuing alternative funding sources. There have been discussions in the past of a possible payroll tax and that is probably a main contender for future revenue service. As it is RVTD is limited by a relative stagnant funding situation. If we are not able to come up with a new revenue source we will be looking a further cuts.

Craig summarized the cuts in terms of ridership and fares. The statistics from July – December show:

	Ridership F/R (total)	Ridership F/R (w/o Rts 4&5)	Ridership Valley Lift	Fares, Tokens, Passes
2005	638,931	570,470	48,879	\$206,870
2006	482,793	482,793	27,191	\$348,029
% Change	-24.44%	-15.37%	-44.37%	68.24%

RVTD's finances are looking good at this point. Craig does not feel that RVTD will be looking at further cuts next year but it a possibility. RVTD is in the middle of doing a long-range plan which will look at the next ten years. It is estimated this plan will be completed in May 2007. Public meetings have been held. Several critical sections have been completed. Now we are looking at future service levels and how to fund those.

RVTD is active in projects even though there are operational funding issues. We are still pursuing federal grants (90% funding ratio). If we are able to get grants we will use the funds for capital equipment, etc. We have five outstanding CMAQ projects. These have been around for 3 or 4 years because RVTD was unwilling to matching funds. This has recently changed. RVTD has match money identified and are moving forward with those projects. RVTD also had a diesel bus replacement project funded that will replace three 1980 vintage buses. We are working with the city of Ashland, ODOT and JACO on park and ride facilities and with RVCOG on a passenger rail study.

Jim Lewis thanked RVTD for transferring the trolley to the city of Jacksonville.

10. Local Construction Projects

Gary Leaming

Highway 62 Corridor Project – The consultant is writing the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. The DEIS will be done this spring.

Fern Valley Interchange – The Crossing Diamond Interchange was presented to the group in December by Brian Sheadel and was well received. Next month the group will be going through the evaluation criteria on the remaining alternatives. Hopefully by spring there will be a couple of alternatives to take into the draft environmental assessment.

Highway 199 Corridor Project – The Draft Environmental Assessment is at the printers. There will be a comment period from January 22nd to February 22nd with a public hearing on February 8th. ODOT met with the ACCESS group. This group has an alternate design. This design will be considered during the comment period.

Illinois Valley Bridges - Gary showed an overhead of the beam set that occurred last week on the West Fork Bridge (18 beams, 140' long, 60 tons apiece). This is the third bridge to have the beams set. We still have the East Fork Bridge to do. The four bridges will be finished by this summer.

Seven-Oaks Interchange – A lot of the work being done now is bridge work. Gary showed overheads that depicted the surcharge on the east side of the bridge and the CORPS seawalls for the bridge structure that will go in between the existing bridges.

Talent project is in the punch work phase. Mail boxes have to be set and other incidental work on the side of the road has to be done.

South Medford Interchange – Aerials are taken every month to show the progress. The west side has been excavated and they are working on the over-structure. The beams over the Larson Creek Bridge have been set.

North Medford Interchange – The project is nearly finished. The pavement flushing on Highway 62 is being worked on to determine the reasons for this happening. Word is expected by the end of month on why there is some bleeding.

New cameras: There are two new Trip Check cameras located at Siskiyou Summit/Crowson Road.

11. Crossing-Diamond Interchange

Brian Sheadel

Brian explained that the Crossing-Diamond (CDI) is a new interchange design concept. It is also known as the Diverging Diamond Interchange. ODOT is in the process of evaluating how well the CDI would operate at Ashland's Exit 14 (southbound) and the Fern Valley Interchange. To date there are no CDI's in the United States. The state of Missouri will start construction on a CDI in 2007. Brian showed a simulation developed by the state of Missouri which demonstrates how the interchange operates.

Features of Crossing-Diamond Interchange:

- Has a smaller footprint than other interchanges which results in lower construction costs
 - Fewer lanes are needed on the bridge structure
 - Potentially less right-of-way needed
- Preliminary analysis indicates the CDI would improve safety and mobility
 - Reduces conflict points
 - i. Eliminates left turn lanes from the crossroad
 - ii. Vehicles turning left onto the on-ramps only travel through one signal
 - iii. Through movements occur at cross-over signals
 - iv. In some cases the Volume to Capacity ratio is cut in half
 - Less congestion
 - Up to 50% reduction in crashes
 - Pedestrian and bicyclists can be accommodated in a safe manner
 - Will accommodate additional growth past design year

No apparent fatal flaws have been identified regarding roadway geometry or traffic. There are challenges that will have to be mitigated.

- Driver Expectancy – Vehicles travel on the left side of the roadway which may be mitigated by:
 - Visual cues: signing, striping, etc.
 - Construct barriers to shield views of opposing traffic
- Design modifications needed to permit direct off-ramp to on-ramp movement for excess height vehicles which may be mitigated by:
 - Designing a median barrier to allow occasional movements through ramp terminals

Comments/Questions:

Mike Montero said that with this region having to go through the determination process on PM 2.5, this will allow freight movements with less congestion and cooling. He asked, “Is ODOT doing an analysis for these two components?” Brian said that he is not sure if this is part of the analysis.

12. Added agenda items:

Art Anderson and Mike Montero

a. Area Inventory

Mike Montero started by saying that some years ago the RVACT charged staff with developing a Master Transportation Plan for the two counties. Each city, county, MPO and ODOT has its own transportation plan. What was contemplated was to look at a gap analysis where modest investments in pieces of transportation roadways could be connected or improvements to existing connections that would yield additional capacity, i.e. the roadway areas that connect future growth regions, such as Foothill Road between White City/Medford or Hanley Road between Central Point and Jacksonville. The notion is that if within the RPS process they come up with a plan to handle these future transportation needs with an adopted regional plan; this would create the framework for an additional funding solution, i.e. a local gas tax. The issue that is on the table with RPS is whether DLCDC is willing to engage in an expedited goal exception process that will allow additional highway ROW to be purchased for agricultural land at a cost dramatically less than what it would be if it were inside an urbanized area. All of this feeds into what we have been doing for years.

Mike Montero added that it would be helpful for this group to have that update. The MPO is heavily involved in the transportation planning process for RPS. There is some discussion that the MPO may be the body charged with oversight of the development of the plan. It would also be helpful for Jackson County to have Kelly Madding (or somebody from planning) to walk through the land use implications involved when applying for an expedited exceptions process. Art and Mike will ask that a RPS presentation be given to the RVACT at the next meeting.

b. Earmark Funding Coordination

Art said that around eight months ago Travis Brower, who is our legislative liaison in Salem, visited the area. This visit was right after we got the final tally on what the Transportation Equity Act Reauthorization Bill was going to look like and the set of earmarks that were going to come out as a result. Every six years the Transportation Equity Act is reauthorized. Every year they also have separate appropriations. Usually these authorization bills are the big appropriations. The annual appropriations are in the neighborhood of \$500K to \$2M. During a conversation Art told Travis that he is concerned that we don't get the biggest bang for our buck in a lot of the earmarks. As an example, he cited some of the projects in Coos, Curry and Douglas counties. When the earmark list came out there were three or four of the projects that ODOT had never heard of. There seems to be a big disconnect on what the priorities are and where the money is being acquired. Is there a better way to manage that? Is there a way that we can mold the earmark process into the ACT process? Art asked the RVACT for input on this issue. He would like their comments to be incorporated into the minutes. Art went on to say that earmarks are predominately modernization projects. He knows there may be some concern from jurisdictions not wanting to be driven by the RVACT. He is not necessarily advocating that RVACT is the end all in this. Art feels that if we could set up a process where these projects are at least vetted to the RVACT and that some sort of prioritization is based on our regional freight comp plan and our future comp plans for the various areas in our RPS Transportation Integration Plan, that we could a bigger bang for our buck on these earmarks. Art asked the group for their comments.

Discussion, Comments, Questions:

John Watt asked Art what was the problem in Coos, Curry and Douglas counties? Art replied that when we see big earmarks a lot of them are driven by ODOT. Jurisdictions can also lobby congress for projects. They can get a hold of their representative or legislator and say we need something and the next thing you know you have a project that shows up where nobody but the jurisdiction knows about it. That is what happened. ODOT was not aware of some of these projects. ODOT supports them now because they are funded. John went on to ask if we have an issue in Jackson County. Art: No we haven't but I think there are two things that need to be addressed. One is to make sure we get the right projects and two, get the full support of the RVACT and the MPO.

Betty Wheeler said that we have had a problem. A few years ago the Greenway Foundation went to congress and got an earmark. Then we were confronted with it initially there was a suggestion that we all were going to lose our money. That was a serious problem and the only way it was solved is that in fact congress (or somebody) finally decided that it wouldn't come from our monies. It is an issue and I think it is a good idea to be discussing this so that when some advocate group is going out to advocate for their own project there is some assimilation with the cities, transportation plans and regional transportation plans rather than just somebody's individual agenda.

Mike Montero thinks this discussion is important. It doesn't mean that we have to approve or not approve, it is just that we are aware of them. These earmarks come from two places. They come from what they call below the line which comes out of the state's allocation. He went on to explain that what happens in a region like this, we have our dollars programmed out three cycles ahead and if somebody is successful in getting a legislator's ear that says you have this great project, they get earmarked money. But what they are doing is basically earmarking money we already have already programmed. That can happen just as it did with example that Betty gave. The other side is that every time there is a reauthorization there are new monies that are above the line. When these monies are available is what Art is talking about; having a unified voice that accompanies requests from a body like the RVACT. This would give it big time juice because there a coordination of effort. We help ourselves by ensuring that there is some communication and disclosure. Also if a jurisdiction from our region has a project that they think can meet the test for the above the line dollars having unified support from this group is going to be nothing but healthy. This is not institutionalized in the ACT process now.

Art said it is not institutionalized in the mindset of the jurisdictions across the state who try to get earmarks for transportation projects. I know there will be entities that will want to do things on their own. What this also does is it will allow you to get focused on getting a substantial amount of money for a project that you definitely have under funded. A good example is the South Medford Interchange. \$3M is great but we asked for \$15M. The reason we got \$3M is because we had ten others that was asking for between \$5M and \$17M and the legislators want to spread it around. If there is some way we can help them direct their attention and buy into this within the state of Oregon where the ACT's have a good handle on prioritizing projects, they may feel a little bit more inclined toward siding with those decisions.

Alex Georgevich is concerned that this will take us down the same path as the TE grants because there is no guarantee of funding and we may start pitting one agency against another. There is no guarantee on the above and below the line funding. That is what happened with the Greenway. The anticipation was that that was above the line and then congress changed their mind that all earmarks would come out of the regular allocation. They made changes after their original decision. Earmarks are subject to whatever congress feels like. One year they could give above the line and the next year they may not. I am nervous about where we are heading with trying to prioritize individual projects.

Dan Moore said the Portland Metro and Eugene/Springfield have a pretty good earmark processes. They have been real successful in getting funding for transit and highway projects. Those are two models that may be of use.

Jim Lewis thinks there is a social benefit if we can do this in that it legitimizes the earmarking. Right now the earmarks are subject to pretty strong scrutiny. This isn't going to go away but if there is some way to make them more visible and justifiable that is good.

John Vial asked John Watt what his take is on this. John thinks that better coordination with a congressman's office is important. Quite often, particularly with our congressman who has a huge district, he is not going to necessarily know, unless somebody is keeping close touch with his transportation staff person, just exactly what is going on within this room. I think that the Greenway is a really good example of how things got clustered because there were a lot of groups involved in that particular effort, not just the Bear Creek Greenway Foundation but some Rotary clubs and groups of that nature. This is one of those things that sounded like it was a

really a great project. Perhaps if there would have been better coordination with transportation staff through the congressman's office there may have been a better understanding of what was going on. It seems to me there are some communication issues.

Art Anderson said he is advocating setting up a communication line that is formalized through the ACT process that would give transportation staffers a place go to. John explained the way the earmark allocations works is that those staff people have a deadline where the earmarks have to come in. He doesn't think they are going to go to anybody. He thinks they are going to look at how many they have and try to whittle that down to a number. Then it moves forward to the congressman. I think the input needs to come from this direction.

Mike Montero thinks it is important to understand the two models that Dan referred to. It wouldn't hurt to look at these models to see if that is something that we could have as a guide for our discussions.

John Watt said it is worthwhile to note, at least on the House side, the House rules at this time are requiring congressmen to put their name on all of the earmarks as opposed to just being able to attach them to legislation to which they have been able to do in the past. That is going to make it a little bit more public.

Alan DeBoer thinks the new congress is going to cure the earmark thing. One of the things we have to make sure of is that congress is going to earmark anything that comes above the line otherwise it bypasses the entire process. John Watt and I went to the State Leadership meeting in Portland. Transportation was a big issue. Funding is going to be the big issue for the State. They are looking at trying to do transponders on cars and mileage. I tried to urge them to look at a two cent gas tax and to put some in for counties and cities so that you have a broad base and to stay away from the weight/mile tax that killed the last one in my opinion for truckers. Keep the system simple. He is against anything that creates a new funding source, bookkeeping system or agency.

John Watt said that some news that we received yesterday regarding spending down the Federal Highway trust fund and if that is not replenished in some way, then earmarks are not going to be a problem because there is not going to be money to use. Regarding Alan's point, at least in Oregon, I talked to Kerry Kimchuck, who works with us in Gordon Smith's office, and asked him if the Senate or Congress is going to be looking at what Oregon's willingness is to increase their tax revenues and how that would be proportionate to federal appropriations to a state. On the issue of the road user's fee tax force looking at vehicle miles traveled, I think there is going to be a move in this legislative session to ask for a gas tax. There hasn't been a willingness when a former leadership didn't want to increase any taxes but I think that there is a willingness to look at that now. I wouldn't be too concerned at this point in time that that vehicle miles traveled system is going to move ahead but the Portland business community is going to support at least an increase of five cents in the gas tax and certainly the local business community is going to look at a discussion in increasing the gas tax as well. There definitely needs to be something. He personally would be interested in this group, if someone were to increase or look at the feasibility of increasing the gas tax, one of the stickiest issues is going to be whether or not that will be indexed so that in the future the situation that we have gotten ourselves into will not happen again so that if it is attached to the CPI or some such thing as that, that the gas tax would increase as consumer expenditures do.

Laurel Samson thinks Alex brought up a good point. Would this group simply review projects and say yes it meets some threshold and is a good project and we would endorse it or would we actually go to the prioritization process. If we did just the former, that would be a more comfortable process and just as successful as prioritization. Art replied that what we can do is up to the point of what we are allowed to do on the federal side. We could prioritize all we want but if they want to take their pick they will. There has to be a happy medium. Alex Georgevich said that it may be more a letter of endorsement process.

Art Anderson said that Travis and I are going to be working to pull together information for Matt Garrett. I told him that I would present this to RVACT for comment. We have some good comments.

Richard Smith asked if it would be beneficial for a community to come to the RVACT to try to get a letter of support for a project. He also suggested that the RVACT invite the Representative's staff to RVACT meetings so they can see what we do and how we operate. There are two Representatives in this area and they both need to know that we are available. They might not even know about us. Art replied that they do know about us. The issue is we have never discussed earmarks before. Richard suggested that we request that they attend two or three meetings a year. Mike Montero agreed with this idea. That might help us arrive at something quickly if we have something to show them. He asked if staff could secure a copy of what processes are used in other areas. This is something that we could bring to the next meeting – "How do they do it?" This is something that we could adopt so that we have a basis for input to the OTC. This is something that this ACT is looking at as being arguably good for us. Who knows what that will end up being like? It could be just where an applicant comes here to let us know about their project. Until we have something to model that is working, we might be better off waiting until we got it.

13. Agenda Build for Next Meeting

Art Anderson and Mike Montero

1. Address private sector alternates
2. Follow up on earmark issue
3. Follow up on Transportation Enhancement criteria
4. Area Inventory Update
5. RPS presentation
6. JJTC Bylaws

Art gave the dates of the two next meetings: March 13, 2007 in Grants Pass and May 8, 2007 in White City. Art added that we struggle with agenda items. He asked if it was the general consensus around the table that the discussions that we have are worth having meetings for and do we want to continue on with our every other month meeting schedule format. Mike Montero said, speaking for himself, I see this group as being proactive and the only way you can do that is to be on top of things.

Jim Lowe asked if we could put on the agenda an OTIA update that includes Rogue River and other rural areas. OTIA is all about transportation.

14. Adjournment