

## SUMMARY OF STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT INTERVIEWS

### BACKGROUND

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As part of the sustainability program development, interviews were carried out with key stakeholders within ODOT. The purpose of the interviews was to gather input to help shape the program; specifically, to learn about the stakeholders' individual roles, to collect information about existing programs, to learn about stakeholders' needs and expectations, and to garner advice on effective ways to set up the program.

Thirty-two interviews were carried out between January 24 and February 23, 2006. Interviewees were selected to represent all pertinent sections in most divisions, within the constraints of available time and budget. Most of the interviewees were located in Salem, although representatives in the Highway Division regions were also interviewed. All interviewees were at the management level, including the Director and most of the executive staff through to specific program managers. One Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) representative was interviewed.

Most interviews lasted for one hour, although a few were shorter and a few were longer. Typically, the first twenty minutes was spent talking about the interviewee's role and responsibilities. The remainder of the time was spent gathering input on the sustainability program. The interview format was organic and flexible, although a number of standard questions were asked, including:

- What is your vision for, or expectation of, a Sustainability Program?
- What do you need from the program to do your job better and to have your support?
- What are the potential train wrecks or needless processes that you can see?
- How do you want to be kept in the loop?
- Who must be involved for the program to be successful from your group? From other groups that affect you?
- What existing projects, programs or measurements should be included?

### KEY MESSAGES HEARD

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Below are snapshots of some of the key messages heard during the interviews, roughly divided into four distinct areas.

***(1) When You Say Sustainability I Think About...***

**Long-term:** The sustainability program should address long-term issues, as these aren't being looked at elsewhere. Think about the big-picture, less tangible goals. What big picture things are out there that may be overlooked by other programs with a more focused mandate? A long-term planning exercise, such as a 100-year visioning, could be very useful. However, be cautious not to get stuck in a long-term, nebulous, unpractical approach.

**Life cycle approach:** A shift of thinking to a life cycle approach would reap huge rewards for the department. Talking about sustainability in this way is nonpartisan and allows buy-in from all sides. ODOT is already quite experienced at thinking about the life cycle of pavements – just in a bounded way with a limited number of variables and constraints. The sustainability program could broaden the thinking and provide life cycle accounting assistance for other programs.

**Effective decision-making:** The sustainability program should facilitate more effective business decisions. Incorporating social, environmental, and economic factors allows for better, more inclusive decisions to be made. This feeds into the department's risk management activities and contingency planning.

**Environmental issues are key:** Environmental protection and stewardship is a huge part of sustainability. Be sure to coordinate closely with the Geo-Environmental Section. We heard the message of "ODOT as a responsible developer," improving everything it touches. A long-term goal may be to become a "self-regulating agency."

**Sustainability is not just environmental:** Be sure that the environmental piece is balanced with other elements of sustainability, such as community building and improved functioning of the system. Address the economic efficiencies that can be gained. This is not just about "liberal do-gooding." Stay non-partisan and avoid the political left vs. right.

**Land use/transportation interaction:** The land use/transportation interaction is huge. This interrelationship is becoming more accepted. The roadway system should be seen as the skeleton of healthy communities. All projects should "leave it better."

**Social issues:** Social issues will become more and more important. An example of this internally is the recent increase of retirements due to PERS and baby boomer issues, resulting in the need to develop the "workforce of tomorrow," addressing diversity and training needs. Externally, an example is the need to provide mobility to an increasingly aging population.

## ***(2) Where to Connect Within ODOT***

**All divisions:** Make sure the program address all divisions, not just Highway. Be sure to recognize the differences between the divisions. Provide a common definition, but articulate how it relates to each division. Make it tangible to each audience.

**Regions:** Be sure to do outreach to the Highway regions. Region Managers are important, as are District Managers and Area Managers. Get face time in the regions to facilitate buy-in and understanding. Be aware of major differences across the state – be appropriate to different ecosystems, geography, climates, cultures etc. The connection to regions is more important now the department has decentralized.

**Oregon Transportation Plan (OTP) update:** Use the OTP as guidance – refer back to the policy language. A good vision is already in the OTP update, and the ODOT mission supports sustainability. Make sure that new policy language in the OTP update is followed up. It will need to be translated and brought down into the divisions – the sustainability program can help set goals for other programs to work towards. Ensure accountability to the OTP.

**Safety:** Safety is a big part of sustainability. People have already bought into the notion of safety, and so explaining the link will facilitate buy-in to the sustainability program. Help articulate how sustainability relates to both employee safety and the work of the Transportation Safety Division.

**Bridge program:** Build on the successes of bridge program, and help transfer them to mainstream ODOT. The Context Sensitive and Sustainable Solutions (CS<sup>3</sup>) approach is innovative and a good way to address sustainability in highway project delivery.

**Highway maintenance & operations:** Maintenance activities may be a bigger opportunity area than new construction, since once a facility is built the maintenance work goes on into the future. Maintenance crews are continually out on the roads and are most aware of on-the-ground opportunities. Maintenance issues should be better represented during project development – this is how we will see efficiencies over the life of a facility.

**Asset Management:** There is a clear and critical connection between sustainability and the new Asset Management initiative – both in terms of efficient management of the system and the natural resource link. The Highway Management Information System (HMIS) work also ties in. Full cooperation and integration between the programs is necessary. The Asset Management initiative should tie into other statewide natural resource databases and existing ODOT geographic information systems.

**Support Services:** Internal sustainability issues will need to be addressed in addition to external issues. Be sure to stay connected to ODOT Fleet, Facilities, and Procurement Office folks.

### ***(3) Key Characteristics of a Successful Program***

**Make it real:** Provide a clear, concise, and consistent message. Make it tangible. Generate a thirty second program description. Give sound bites. Generally, people have bought into the concept but don't know how to articulate it in a practical way.

**Practical tools:** Give examples and provide a practical approach – people need to know the “how.” Offer tangible products and practices. Include a “bottom-up” approach so that practical stuff is included from folks who are in the field.

**Document and share successes:** Document and elevate successes to demonstrate ODOT's leadership in this area. Celebrate successes to provide reminders. Keep showing people that this is not a passing fad – sustainability is here to stay. Think about a sustainability kudos program or “stamp of approval.”

**Recognize existing efforts:** Acknowledge that good things are already happening. These need to be recognized and possibly elevated as part of the sustainability program. Help integrate and develop existing efforts, adding rigor and intellectual discipline.

**Manage organizational change:** This is all about cultural change and shifting behaviors over time. But, be aware of over-investing in large-scale awareness building. Rule making may be a more effective approach for ODOT. But don't be the police – just provide the framework. Integrate sustainability issues into existing policies and practice as much as possible.

**Be a resource, not a threat:** Provide information so that people can understand tradeoffs when making decisions. Social and environmental impacts are hard to account for, and are therefore not generally included in decisions. Be a resource to folks and help provide solutions - don't dictate unfunded mandates.

**Stay at the program level:** Focus on managing the overall program and not on individual projects. Help instigate and coordinate projects, document results, and then articulate how they contribute to the sustainability program goals.

**Allow enough time for change:** Plan a timeframe for reasonable change. This is a huge initiative, and requires a slow, steady, incremental approach. Put the time in up-front to develop the program. Later, specific initiatives can be rolled out through this rigorous program.

#### ***(4) Recommendations for Specific Program Elements***

**Indicators/measures:** – Measurement is important. There may be some issues with tracking hard metrics, so qualitative measures may be needed. Provide a baseline of current performance and future intentions to ensure accountability and to be transparent. Tie sustainability measures to the existing ODOT performance measures, as well as the new performance measurement work being undertaken for the Highway Division.

**Bottom-up learning:** Develop a tool to allow staff to send in ideas, suggestions, best management practices, and concerns. This will help ensure regular two-way (“top-down/bottom-up”) communication.

#### **NEXT STEPS**

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Now that the stakeholder engagement interviews are complete, other elements of the sustainability program can be developed. We are currently working on the development of **key program messages** and program identity, as well as formulating **performance measures and indicators** for various focus areas. Customized sustainability **training materials** are also being developed.

Further out, we will address **governance** of the program by forming a council or committee as an oversight group. We will also develop the program documents, including a **Strategic Plan and Vision** and **Annual Work Plan**. These two documents will update the existing sustainability plan. The projects undertaken in the Annual Work Plan will be assessed in an **Annual Evaluation**.

Regular and clear communication is key to the success of the sustainability program. On an ongoing basis, **informational presentations and brownbags** are being given to interested internal groups. Articles addressing sustainability topics are frequently included in **Inside ODOT**. An **intranet site** providing information and resources on sustainability will be developed in the coming year.