

OREGON FREIGHT ADVISORY COMMITTEE



Susie Lahsene
Port of Portland
Chair

Martin Callery
Oregon International
Port of Coos Bay
Vice Chair

January 23, 2009

Oregon Transportation Commission
355 Capitol Street NE, Room 135
Salem, OR 97301-3871

Re: Oregon Freight Advisory Committee 2008 Annual Report to the
Oregon Transportation Commission

Dear Chair Achterman and Commissioners Nelson, Wilson, Brown and Lohman:

As stipulated in the Bylaws of the Oregon Freight Advisory Committee (OFAC), as adopted by the Oregon Transportation Commission in May 2005, the OFAC is pleased to provide the Transportation Commission with its 2008 Annual Report.

Members of the OFAC and its subcommittees were fully engaged in a far-reaching array of freight mobility-related activities during calendar year 2008, as the group continues to focus on critical freight issues, growing infrastructure needs and other aspects of Oregon's multimodal transportation system. The OFAC met four times during the year; March, June, September and December.

During 2008 the OFAC provided input to the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) on the following:

- **2010-2013 Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP)** – The combined OFAC Policy and Projects Subcommittee reviewed and commented on the freight-mobility aspects of projects proposed for the 2010-13 STIP and provided a report to the OFAC. The OFAC then provided comment to the OTC via a letter from the OFAC Chair. Additionally, the OFAC distributed a letter to all Area Commissions on Transportation (ACTs) and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) describing and explaining the process through which the OFAC evaluates and ranks the freight mobility aspects of projects proposed for the STIP.
- **ConnectOregon II** – The Policy/Projects subcommittee reviewed the list of projects referred to the OFAC and ranked them in terms of those that best satisfied the defined OFAC freight mobility criteria. The subcommittee presented the ranked list to the OFAC, which then forwarded its recommendation to the OTC. Several OFAC members also served on the *ConnectOregon II* Final Review Committee.

- **Federal Authorization of the Surface Transportation Bill and the OTC Policy on Project Earmark Recommendations** – The OFAC was provided several updates on the status of Federal Authorization and the OTC’s Project Earmarks Policies. After review of proposed project lists from the ODOT regions and input from the OFAC membership, the OFAC Chair forwarded an endorsed project list to the OTC that the OFAC membership believes best serves the freight mobility needs of the State.
- **Oregon Senate Bill (SB) 566** – The OFAC provided comment to the OTC on the specific provisions of SB 566 as they relate to the ODOT’s efforts to reduce traffic congestion, improve freight mobility and enhance safety, and in identifying projects of statewide significance that are capable of beginning construction during the next two biennia. The OFAC then sent a follow-up letter to the OTC with a recommendation that a more comprehensive list of needed road and highway projects should be developed. The following is an excerpt from that letter.

“The OFAC membership, after considerable discussion, believes that the project lists developed by the ODOT regions represent a good sampling of the overall infrastructure gaps now existing on the state highway system and exemplify a portion of the funding required to meet current system needs, as well as future system demands.

However, the OFAC membership also contends that a much more comprehensive list of needed road and highway projects must be compiled and used as a state-wide planning tool to insure that the most cost-effective and beneficial projects are included in all efforts to improve the state highway system.

The OFAC looks forward to providing additional review and comment on the project lists as they move forward and are better defined and integrated into ODOT development plans.”

The membership of the OFAC also received numerous briefings and continues to provide feedback to various divisions of the Oregon Department of Transportation on a variety of freight-related topics, including:

- **The Oregon Freight Plan and the Freight Plan Steering Committee and its Working Groups** – The OFAC has communicated the increasing importance of improved freight mobility to the appropriate ODOT staff and will continue to do so. Various members of the OFAC are serving on the Freight Plan Steering Committee and the Working Groups, and the OFAC plans to play a leadership role in this critical process.

- The **Statewide Rail Study** – The membership of the OFAC is focused on better understanding the needs and benefits of the State's rail system and the role it plays in providing efficient and effective intermodal linkage for Oregon's traded-sector economy. The OFAC will continue to provide comment to the ODOT Rail Division on the rail study.
- The **Columbia River Crossing** – This project is critical to the economic viability of Oregon's traded-sector economy and the OFAC will continue to advocate for a timely solution to this challenging west coast bottleneck.

The OFAC also has been briefed about, discussed and been involved with many other important statewide freight mobility-related projects, including:

- North American West Coast Port Container Capacity; presented by the Port of Portland.
- The Interstate 5 Corridor Study between Interstate 84 and Interstate 405.
- The Union Pacific Railroad's efforts to reopen their Cascade Line after the January 2008 landslide near Oakridge.
- Dredged Material Management Plans for the Willamette River; presented by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Portland District.
- The Transportation Policy Institute program for Oregon legislators and other elected officials at Willamette University in Salem.
- National Strategies for Efficient Freight Mobility; presented by the Pacific Northwest Waterways Association.
- The status of the West Coast Corridor Coalition.
- The Oregon Strategic Port Plan; presented by the Oregon Economic & Community Development Department.
- Progress reports on projects funding through *ConnectOregon I*.

It must be noted that members of the OFAC are involved with and participate in many key planning studies and transportation organizations statewide, including the Portland Metro area Regional Transportation Plan and its Freight Plan, numerous Area Commissions on Transportation and Metropolitan Planning Organizations, and many regional and local transportation advocacy groups.

The OFAC is pleased that a high percentage of the projects the membership advocates for has been included in the most recent STIPs, however much more needs to be done to maximize the viability of Oregon's multimodal transportation system. It is critical that there be increased support of the State's highways, railroads, ports and airports.

However, the OFAC membership realizes that more must be done to improve the Oregon multimodal transportation system and strengthen the economy of the state. There are several specific areas that require improvement:

- Oregon needs a long-range investment strategy to support freight mobility.
- The State must address severe freight mobility bottlenecks now.
- ODOT must develop high-quality data and better analysis methods in order to evaluate the viability of transportation system investments.
- ODOT, working with the Oregon Legislative leadership, must integrate a multi-level outreach program in order to educate Oregonians about the needs and economic benefits of transportation investments.

As the membership of the OFAC looks ahead to 2009 and beyond, the membership expects to be heavily involved in the following:

- Governor Kulongoski's Jobs and Transportation Act for 2009;
- Funding opportunities for Oregon's Transportation System through the proposed Federal stimulus program;
- Freight discussions during the 2009 Oregon Legislative session;
- Continued interaction with the Freight Steering Committee on freight mobility action elements for the 2009 legislative session, as well as foundation work for a long-range freight vision for Oregon; and
- Development of a long-range strategic plan for the Oregon Freight Advisory Committee and its subcommittees.

Finally, the OFAC thanks the ODOT Freight Mobility Section – Jack Lee, Michael Bufalino, Lloyd Fobi, Teddie Baker and Patty Penick, and Jerri Bohard, Administrator Transportation Development Division – as well as many other ODOT staff personnel for their ongoing support of the work of the OFAC.

Sincerely,



Susie Lahsene, Chair
Oregon Freight Advisory Committee

Cc: 2009 Legislative Assembly
Jerri Bohard, Administrator, ODOT Transportation Development Division
Jack Lee, Freight Mobility Manager