

IV. Next Steps

The preceding chapters of this report provide an overview of Oregon's freight transportation system and some of the concerns and issues affecting freight movements currently and into the future. While the discussion is extensive, it does not cover all the concerns and issues influencing freight transportation in Oregon. Nor does it identify opportunities for additional work. Rather it is an introduction to a better understanding of the freight transportation system and issues faced by shippers, carriers, and others involved in moving goods from origins to destinations.

Chapter IV thus addresses a variety of topics that would refine and extend existing work on freight transportation in Oregon. Topics on the following pages have been identified through work done for the preceding chapters in this report, conversations with transportation specialists and other knowledgeable persons, and participation in freight conferences and meetings. In general, the next steps represent opportunities to

- refine and implement policies and actions in existing transportation plans,
- fill gaps in information,
- identify freight transportation needs and concerns, and
- address other selected topics.

Moving forward with the next steps may include partnering with other groups to continue existing work or pursue new initiatives, addressing issues identified by the Oregon Freight Advisory Committee, and further developing information presented in this report.

The following discussion presents possible next steps. Further discussion and action regarding the next steps include the identification of resource requirements to implement activities and work efforts associated with one or more of the steps. Further discussion also could include prioritizing the steps for implementation within or outside ODOT, or in partnerships between ODOT and other groups. The next steps should be considered a fluid list in that ideas and topics will emerge as our understanding of issues and concerns evolves.

Policy and Planning

State Freight Policy

Update freight policies and actions as needed in the Oregon Transportation Plan. As discussed in Chapter 1 and shown in Appendix 4, the *Oregon Transportation Plan* is the key document addressing freight transportation policy in Oregon. As such, the OTP identifies a broad range of freight policies and actions to implement the plan. Some of the policies and actions in the OTP appear to be stated too generally to enable their monitoring or progress toward implementation. This suggests a review of the policies and actions may be appropriate, along with recommendations for their improvement. The Oregon Freight Advisory Committee could assist with this review.

Consider developing a State Freight Policy. The U.S. Department of Transportation has developed a set of principles to guide federal freight transportation policy and describe the federal role in freight transportation (see Appendix 3). ODOT, through the Oregon Transportation Commission, may want to consider developing an overall freight policy statement and/or a set of guiding principles similar conceptually to those identified at the federal level. The policy and or statement might be a stand-alone piece similar to the federal policy, or it might be incorporated into the *Oregon Transportation Plan*. The Oregon Freight Advisory Committee could assist in developing a state freight policy statement and/or principles.

Aviation Plan

Continue working to address air freight issues in the Aviation Plan. Oregon's statewide aviation policy plan is currently under development. Development of the plan to date includes freight policy language pertaining to access to markets and integration with surface transportation modes. Addressing air freight issues is a relatively new task for ODOT and would benefit from input by persons knowledgeable about the air freight industry. The Oregon Freight Advisory Committee along with other organizations such as the Portland Air Cargo Association could provide valuable input for aviation planning activities.

Highway Plan

Assist in implementing policies and actions in the highway plan. The Oregon Transportation Commission adopted the *Oregon Highway Plan* in March 1999. As shown in Chapter I and Appendix 6 of this report, the plan includes a number of policies and actions pertaining to freight. The plan also includes performance measures that will need to be monitored over time. The following are among the actions that will require planning staff work to implement and/or monitor.

- 1C1. Apply performance standards appropriate to the movement of freight on freight routes.
- 1C2. Prepare a statewide freight study to address the role of trucks and other freight modes in Oregon's economy, freight mobility and accessibility issues, current, near-term and long term needs, and other topics.
- 4A1. Identify roadway obstacles and barriers to efficient truck movements on state highways. These include bridges with load limits and geometric constraints that prohibit the travel of legal size vehicles. Set up a process through the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program to systematically improve the highway segments that hinder or prevent freight movements.

This report (*Freight Moves the Oregon Economy*) implements Action 1C2 and helps to implement Actions 1C1 and 4A1.

Rail Plan

Update ODOT's rail freight and passenger plans. The OTC adopted the *Oregon Rail Passenger Plan* and *Oregon Rail Freight Plan* in 1992 and 1994 respectively. To maintain a six- to eight-year cycle for updating modal plans, the rail passenger and freight plans should be updated within the next couple years. Current ODOT management and staff thinking is that the update should combine the passenger and freight discussion into one rather than two plans.

Marine Planning

Explore the need to develop an Oregon Marine Freight Plan. ODOT has developed statewide modal plans to address freight transportation policies on highways and rail lines, and is currently developing an aviation plan that will include policies for air freight transportation. While the *Oregon Transportation Plan* addresses marine transportation, there is no statewide marine transportation plan similar to the other modal plans. This is partly because the Oregon Economic Development Department and its associated Ports Advisory Council are the responsible groups for addressing port-related issues for the State of Oregon. ODOT's responsibilities regarding ports are outlined in *Oregon Revised Statute* 184.636 (see Appendix 9), which states that ODOT may work with OEDD to facilitate port planning and development. Thus ODOT and OEDD may want to further explore the need and desirability for developing a marine freight plan or other marine transportation policy document.

Corridor and MPO Planning

Continue assisting ODOT regions, MPOs, and others with freight transportation planning. Planning staff in ODOT's Salem central offices assist ODOT region and Metropolitan Planning Organization personnel in developing planning and other documents pertaining to freight planning and programming topics. This includes participating on MPO freight advisory committees and occasionally in partnering with MPOs and other groups on freight-related projects.

Information Gaps

Automatic Traffic Recorders

Install additional ATRs to monitor truck traffic volumes on selected routes. During the collection of traffic volume information for the 1999 *Oregon Highway Plan* and other ODOT work activities, the absence of ATRs in selected locations resulted in difficulties estimating truck volumes and tonnages. This occurred most often when the ATRs were located near the ends of a highway segment but not in the middle. Problems arose when the volumes and truck percentages near the ends were influenced by urban traffic patterns that may or may not be similar to traffic patterns in more rural areas. Additional ATRs would enable better monitoring and understanding of truck volumes on the State Highway Freight System and selected other routes.

Commodity Flows

Develop better information on commodity flows statewide. Metro and the Port of Portland are developing commodity flow information for usage in Portland area travel modeling and other purposes. ODOT is developing a statewide travel model and has completed a truck study based on motor carrier interviews at Ports of Entry for selected locations on major highways. ODOT's development of the statewide travel model to date has included only a part of surface freight movements. Uncertainty exists about what other types of information would best meet travel modeling and other needs. One way to reduce uncertainty would be to convene a workshop meeting of interested state, regional, port district, and other persons to further discuss how ODOT might proceed in developing freight origin-destination, forecasts, and other information to support modeling and transportation planning efforts at the state and regional levels.

Freight's Importance to the Economy

Further develop information on freight's importance to the economy. While Chapter I of this report discusses freight's importance to the economy, it does so in a general way based on a variety of sources. The discussion could be improved with more intensive data development for a variety of freight-related economic variables. Some of the needed information could be developed as part of an effort to further develop commodity flow information. The following are examples of indicators for which better information could be developed: freight industry employment, freight industry payroll, freight industry value to the local economy, forecasts of freight industry employment and value, economic multipliers and impacts for freight sectors of the economy, and freight's importance relative to other sectors of Oregon's economy.

Freight Research

Work with the ODOT Research Group and others to identify freight research projects. ODOT's Research Group administers federal and state funding for various types of research projects. For the current year, the Research Group's Socio-economic, Planning, Multi-modal, and Public Transit Expert Task Group (ETG) has identified "intermodal and freight" as one of four priority areas in which the group is seeking research proposals. This suggests an interest in supporting well-founded freight research proposals that meet ETG, federal, and state criteria. Some of the topics discussed here in "next steps" may be appropriate candidates for proposals and funding. Additionally, other groups such as the Transportation Research Board and National Cooperative Highway Research Program support freight research through conferences and funding programs. Opportunities to coordinate and fund Oregon freight-related research should be explored with TRB and NCHRP as appropriate.

User Survey

Consider conducting a survey to gauge customer satisfaction with Oregon's freight transportation system.

This report has identified congestion, condition, safety, and other concerns with various aspects of Oregon's transportation system. This has been based in part on survey work done for the Intermodal Management System, discussions with various knowledgeable persons, and an interpretation of data from a variety of sources. A better understanding of concerns and issues might be obtained through a survey of users of the freight transportation system. Such a survey might ask users to identify the problems of greatest concern and the locations where the problems exist. It might also seek user input on how to best solve problems identified through the survey. Combining results of a user survey with data and other information would enable ODOT and others to better target resources for addressing freight transportation issues and concerns.

Needs Identification

Columbia River Issues

Continue monitoring Columbia River issues for the freight transportation implications. Chapter III of this report discusses issues and concerns associated with deepening the Columbia River below Portland as well as lowering the river behind and at dams above Portland. The Oregon Freight Advisory Committee has identified deepening and drawdown issues as one of its top concerns to address over the coming year. Further indication of this topic's importance is the Oregon Transportation Commission's adoption of a resolution supporting efforts to develop an economically and environmentally sound plan to deepen and maintain the Columbia's channel below Portland. Monitoring could include reviewing and commenting on environmental documentation prepared for deepening and drawdown projects. It also could include more active participation on committees associated with drawdown studies and other related activities.

Intermodal Management System

Continue developing the Intermodal Management System. Development of the IMS has contributed substantially to understanding freight issues and concerns in Oregon. When fully developed, the IMS is expected to provide better information about needs on intermodal connectors, including those on the National Highway System. Experience with developing the IMS has helped ODOT support FHWA efforts to meet TEA 21 requirements for an intermodal connectors condition and investment study. Maps, inventories, and other materials developed for the IMS have been used widely for a variety of activities inside and outside ODOT. Maintaining and updating IMS materials requires an ongoing effort over time.

Project Prioritization

Implement Oregon Highway Plan Action 4A1. As noted above and in Appendix 6, this action calls for ODOT to set up a process through the State Transportation Improvement Program

to systematically improve the highway segments that hinder or prevent freight movements. Setting up this process will require discussion and coordination among a number of groups with a role in identifying projects for the STIP. This would include coordinating with MPOs, Area Commissions on Transportation, and ODOT region management and staff including transportation planners involved with corridor and local transportation system planning. The Oregon Freight Advisory Committee could assist by identifying key criteria that should be considered in the process.

Other

Freight Funding Sources

Prepare a study on freight funding sources. Numerous federal, state, and local funding programs have been used to finance freight transportation projects in Oregon and other states. While numerous programs exist, there is considerable uncertainty about program requirements and project eligibility. Additionally, other states have developed innovative programs that may be appropriate to consider in Oregon. A freight funding study would pull together information about funding sources that have been and are being used in Oregon, and would identify additional programs that selected other states are using to finance freight transportation improvements.

Intelligent Transportation Systems

Continue to identify and develop ITS applications to improve freight transportation movements. Oregon has been a national leader in commercial vehicle applications of Intelligent Transportation System technologies, including the Green Light program. ODOT also is beginning to use a variety of ITS technologies to address congestion in metropolitan areas, weather-related driving conditions, and other aspects of traffic management on highways. ITS technologies are being used by other modes as well, including air, marine, and rail. To help identify future directions for ITS, ODOT in 1998 completed an *Oregon ITS Strategic Plan: 1997-2017*. The Strategic Plan identifies existing ITS usage in Oregon, a service plan for future usage, and a set of market packages to deliver ITS applications. An extension of the Strategic Plan would be the development of specific documentation on existing and potential ITS technologies for enhancing freight transportation movements. This might include further investigating the feasibility of installing more weigh-in-motion facilities with automatic vehicle identification devices in order to speed up truck traffic, reduce costs, and improve highway safety.

User Friendly Information

Develop additional user friendly information about freight transportation in Oregon. As interest in freight transportation increases, so too does the need to convey information about various trends, issues, and concerns in an easily understandable way. This includes working with ODOT's Transportation Data Section and others to develop maps and other visual materials to show various features of the freight transportation system including the locations of needs and

concerns. It also includes working with ODOT's Communications Division representatives to develop information for dissemination through various sources including internal ODOT media such as *Transcript* and *Inside ODOT*. Future development might include developing information for ODOT's Web page, such as a freight site or a freight listing with appropriate links in the Contents pull-down menu option.

Summary

Next steps represent opportunities to refine and implement existing transportation policies and plans, fill gaps in information, identify freight transportation needs and concerns, and address selected other topics such as freight funding sources and Intelligent Transportation Systems. Further discussion could include a) identifying resource requirements to carry out the next steps, and b) prioritizing the steps for implementation. Other steps may be added as ideas and topics emerge. The following summarizes actions that might be taken to move forward with the next steps.

Freight Transportation Policy and Planning

- Update freight policies and actions as needed in the *Oregon Transportation Plan*,
- Consider developing a state freight policy,
- Continue working to address air freight issues in the Aviation Plan,
- Assist in implementing policies and issues in the Highway Plan,
- Update ODOT's rail freight and passenger plans,
- Explore the need to develop a marine freight plan, and
- Continue to assist ODOT regions, MPOs, and others with freight planning.

Information Gaps

- Install additional ATRs to monitor truck traffic volumes,
- Develop better commodity flow information statewide,
- Further develop information on freight's importance to Oregon's economy,
- Work with the ODOT Research Group and others to identify freight research topics, and
- Consider conducting a customer satisfaction survey.

Needs Identification

- Continue monitoring Columbia River deepening and drawdown issues,
- Continue developing the Intermodal Management System,
- Set up a STIP process to improve highways with freight impediments

Other

- Prepare a study on freight funding sources,
- Continue to identify and develop ITS applications for freight movements, and
- Develop user friendly information about freight transportation.