

Rail Advisory Committee (RAC)

Tuesday, December 20, 2022

9:00 a.m. – 12:12 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

Attendees, *RAC Members*

Bruce Carswell, Chair

Johan Hellman, Vice-Chair

Aaron Hunt

Ivo Trummer

Chase Kitchen

Paul Langner

Toby Van Altvorst

Introductions and Committee Business

- Quorum Confirmed
- Review of meeting conduct and today's meeting agenda.
- Introduce new RAC member Toby Van Altvorst.
- Previous Minutes (June) - Motion to approve minutes as presented, minutes approved.

Review of Statewide Area Commissions on Transportation & Modal Advisory Committee Chairs' Meeting – Bruce Carswell

- Summary of Meeting
 - Meeting Goals
 - Gather modal committee chairs, public transit, and chairs for the area commissions on transportation to solicit feedback.
 - Provide update on the state of the system, and the strategic outlook for the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT).
 - ODOT funding crisis due to inflation, lower gas tax revenue.
 - Focusing on addressing funding for operations and maintenance.
 - Potential for Future Revenue Sources - Road Usage, Medium Duty Mileage Tax, Tolling, Carbon Tax, Local Options, and Multimodal Funding Sources.
 - State Highway Fund to dip into a negative cash balance by the end of the next biennium.
 - High level of unknowns in 2023 Legislative session due to 30% turn over in the legislative assembly
 - ODOT's 2023 Legislative Agenda
 - Interstate Bridge Replacement Program
 - Rose Quarter - requirements slowing down development progress
 - Less emphasis on Connect Oregon this round compared to previous rounds is likely

Oregon State Rail Plan Implementation Plan – Bob Melbo

- Review of history of the plan's development - November 2021 to January 2023
- Review of the Plan
 - Introduction | Purpose & Goals
 - Plan has involved looking at ODOT policies/plans/goals, and stakeholder input
 - Purpose of OSRP-IP - to provide a process for:
 - Enacting state policies
 - Efficiently prioritizing rail transportation projects
 - Key Goals of the Plan
 - Develop a prioritized list to advance the state's investment priorities
 - Collaborate with Oregon communities to identify opportunities for rail improvements
 - Identify projects that could be aided by ODOT

- Streamline and standardize the process of rail project tracking/prioritization.
- Leverage federal, state, and private funds to maximum possible
- Strategies for implementing the Plan - 49 identified, but 15 prioritized
 - Workgroup seeks RAC input on whether this priority set needs revision
 - Request 1E - (Coordinating with local jurisdictions and industries) be added to priority list for Goal 1 (Maximize benefits and foster public understanding of rail's importance).
 - Per Karyn Criswell's request, in reference to Goal 1/1F, Erik Havig provided insight into past and present guidance provided for land use authorities.
- Rail Needs Inventory and Operational Framework
 - Project Identification, Evaluation, Ranking and Filtering, Ongoing Administration
- The Rail Needs Inventory and Evaluation Tool
 - Used to support Project Ranking and Filtering
- RNI Scoring Status
 - Overall the criteria and scoring methodology are working well
 - A few projects have documentation scoring gaps
 - Refinements to be finalized in January 2023
 - The committee discussed efficacy of "No Score" for not applicable scenarios - for instance omitting Bicycle Level-of-Stress scores from projects that don't have bicycle crossings.
 - Group would bring other instances back to committee for guidance if they arise and criteria would need to be clearly defined.
- Next Steps and Schedule
 - Development of RNI Intake Form
 - Distribute final draft of OSRP-IP
 - Complete RNI Scoring
 - Complete online map of RNI projects with details about each project
 - Form RAC Workgroup to affirm rail project priority list by DEA
 - Complete Appendix B Funding
 - Distribute final OSRP-IP
- Feedback
 - It is critical to be able to identify projects by the RNI Scoring in time for upcoming legislative session.
 - Critically important to ensure shortlines can apply for CRISI Grants, elimination of small rail for shortlines is an example of critical need.
 - Recommended the use of the RNI Intake Form for shortlines.

Regional Mobility Pricing Project Briefing – Zoie Wesenberg

- This is a toll project as a part of the Urban Mobility Strategy.
 - Approach is to make every day travel safer and more efficient for the PDX metro region.
- Urban Mobility Strategy Map - shows several core projects that ODOT has identified.
 - I-205 Toll project - Congestion Improvements and Seismic Upgrades
- Responding to legislative Direction
- Three major issues the Urban Mobility Project aims to address
 - Safety
 - Congestion
 - Increased Cost and Lack of Funding
- The Regional Mobility Pricing Project

- Project has been under development since House Bill 2017, starting with feasibility analysis, planning, and now into the environmental review phase.
- Official purpose is to use congestion pricing to reduce traffic in the Portland Metro area in a manner that will generate revenue for transportation system investments.
- Proposed Action
 - Tolls based on location and time of day
 - Tolls based on a set schedule
 - Toll payment made through electronic collection system
 - Toll rates would be monitored and adjusted based on traffic actual data
- Public Comment Period - November 18, 2022 to January 6, 2023 - seeking commenting on three key topics
 - Proposed Action
 - Draft Purpose and Need Statement
 - Topics to be evaluated during the environmental review
 - Comments welcome on any other related topics
- Next Steps
 - Close public comment period and study comments
 - Continue engaging with partners throughout NEPA process
 - Release a draft environmental assessment for public comment in late 2023
 - Earliest tolling could begin is late 2025
- Questions
 - Concern was raised that tolling would divert traffic to Marine drive, which would clog up an interchange heavily used by freight.
 - There was concern around how the tolling will impact freight, and Zoie acknowledged that the group would definitely be studying this, and would share its results with the RAC.
 - The intent of congestion pricing is to reduce congestion by discouraging unnecessary traffic during peak travel times and to minimize rerouting.
 - Freight often cannot choose their travel times.
 - Tolling revenue has the same limitations as gas tax revenue.
 - Rail projects that could improve congestion in the proposed tolling area are prohibited from receiving funding due to the constitutional limits.

Connect Oregon and Policy Plan Update – Erik Havig

- Connect Oregon Updates
 - Mid-Willamette Valley Intermodal Center in Millersberg is ready to begin operations.
 - Treasure Valley Reload Center is under construction and still hoping to open by late 2023.
 - Oregon City Siding Project - Union Pacific identified means to shorten project, which requires reapplication for grant funding.
 - Oregon Transportation Commission ruled on the new competitive projects in May
 - All projects have entered into their agreement with ODOT and signed their Connect Oregon agreements
- Policy Plan Updates
 - Oregon Transportation Plan draft document should be released in the spring.
 - Policy coordinating committee has been working hard on policy language
 - Policy Framework established with some controversial ideas about funding
 - Plan is multimodal, is looking at how the system works together
 - Trying to reach higher level of detail to be meaningful to project outcomes
 - Oregon Freight Plan is now up for formal public review

- Website available to provide comments
- Oregon Highway Plan amendment draft going to Oregon Transportation Commission
 - ODOT is looking for the Commission to adopt this amendment which is specifically around tolling

Membership Refresh – Kathy Holmes and Bruce Carswell

- Proposal for At-large Membership has been completed
 - Met with Office of Social Equity and will meet again in January
 - Final plan will be brought to the committee in March meeting
 - Charter to be updated after plan is approved
- Developed an Application and worked with the membership group to insure that it captured the qualifications needed for inclusion into the RAC.

Quarterly Updates - Karyn Criswell

- Public Transportation Division (PTD)
 - ODOT PTD is responsible for standing up the Great Streets program
 - Purpose of project is to look at ODOT highways that service main streets through communities, bring the land up to a state of good repair, and support multi-modal travel.
 - PTD will identify some projects in 2023.
 - PTD is recruiting of 4 community members to be part of project review team.
- Staffing Updates - Jennifer Sellers
 - ODOT hired the New Passenger Rail Program Coordinator - Starts January 3rd
- Passenger Rail – Kathy Holmes
 - Ridership and on-time performance – Kathy Holmes
 - Ridership is within 11% of 2019 numbers.
 - Service has not been fully restored in Washington which affected ridership.
 - Current equipment has less seating available.
 - On-time Performance, now tracking on customer level, still well below the 80% goal.
 - Biannual report, just submitted, has a lot more information on performance factors, will be shared with the group when available.
- Corridor Investment Plan: Service Development Plan – Kathy Holmes/Bob Melbo
 - FRA just recently approved the detailed work plan
 - Working with DEA and FRA, UPRR to resolve the modeling issue to identify projects on the line that will address on time performance issues.
 - FRA Corridor ID update – Bob Melbo
 - FRA’s Amtrak long distance train study, starting early in 2023, is forming six regional support groups to help with the study including the Northwest Workgroup which includes Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Colorado, Utah, North Dakota, and South Dakota.
 - Each workgroup will have four meetings in 2023, then the FRA will submit their report to Congress including associated costs, funding opportunities, etc.
 - Corridor ID Program
 - ODOT and Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) submitted a joint expression of interest for the Cascade Corridor for the Northern tip of Washington to Eugene.

- Both Ultra High Speed Ground Transportation (UHS GT) and Amtrak Cascades need to work together and integrate with the planning in advance of NEPA.
- ODOT has been coordinating with WSDOT, Amtrak, host railroads, and UPRR, to identify projects that would be of use to multiple parties and partners.
- The NOFO is now out, ODOT will be stepping up to proceed.
- Freight Rail Industry – Bob Melbo and Roundtable
 - Hood River railroad, dba Mount Hood railroad, bought themselves at a recent foreclosure auction, so now are more financially sound
 - Freight rail traffic is trailing last year by about 2.6% , mirroring economy
- Safety Update – Chris Malm
 - Operation Lifesaver
 - State Executive Director to give presentation at March meeting
 - Section 133 funding process
 - Allows for a surface transportation block grant program
 - Program in January 2019 awarded Oregon more than 18 million to be used for crossing improvement projects
 - Instructions to distribute to three different population groups
 - Less than 5000 - 4.3 million available
 - 5000 to 200,000 - 5.7 million available
 - 200,000 Plus - Transferred to Portland Metro NPO
 - Funds can be distributed to three types of projects
 - Signage and signage upgrades
 - Pavement markings
 - Equipment upgrades
 - Project Application is being developed, will be on rail safety website, and a specific email will be established for just this project.
 - Goal is to roll out the distribution of funds by spring of 2023.

Public Comments

- No Public comments

Agenda Build

- RAC Meeting scheduled - In Person
- Location to be the TLC
- Steve to give presentation on Operation Lifesaver
- Implementation Plan
- UHS GT presentation
 - Invite WSDOT team to partner in presentation
- Review Biennial Report on Cascade Corridor to analyze reasons for delays
- Conversation about priorities for passenger rail over the next couple years

Closing comments and Adjourn - Bruce Carswell

- Ivo Trummer announced this is his last RAC meeting. Kathy will coordinate with Port on replacement.
- Move to adjourn carried at 12:12 am.