

RVACT *Rogue Valley Area Commission on Transportation*

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To: Members, Rogue Valley Area Commission on Transportation

From: Kathy Helmer, RVCOG

Re: Summary of May 11, 2004, RVACT Meeting

Date: May 17, 2004

Members in Attendance: Arthur Anderson and John Vial, ODOT; Hank Williams, Central Point; Paula Brown, Ashland; Steve Hodge, Josephine Co.; Jerry Mathern and Jim Lewis, Jacksonville; Lindsay Berryman, Medford; Jim Wear and Larry Parducci, Phoenix; Betty Wheeler, Talent; Tom Anderson, Shady Cove; Dale Petrusek, Jackson Co.; Russell Groves, Eagle Point; Laurel Samson, Grants Pass; Reeve Hennion, Stacey Kellenbeck, Craig Stone, Mike Montero and Jeff Hunter, private sector representatives from Jackson and Josephine Counties.

Members Absent: Gold Hill; Cave Junction; Rogue River; RVTD; MPO Policy Committee; Butte Falls; David Straus and Richard Smith, private sector representatives from Jackson and Josephine Counties.

Staff: Mike Baker, Gary Leaming and Paul Mather, ODOT; Kathy Helmer, RVCOG.

Other: Cory Crebbin and Alex Georgevitch, Medford Public Works; Sue Densmore, private citizen; Jim Brock, Josephine County Commissioner; Richard Smiet, private citizen; Dan Moore, RVCOG; Del Robertson, private citizen.

1. Roll Call

Co-Chair Mike Montero directed that the roll call be conducted at 9:05 AM. A quorum was present.

2. Approval of Minutes

No corrections were suggested to the minutes of the March 9, 2003 meeting. They were unanimously accepted as written.

3. Public Input

There was no public input.

4. Freight Advisory Committee Recommendations to OTC

Art Anderson referred to the report in the meeting packet from the Oregon Freight Advisory Committee. RVACT had sent a list of projects, in an effort to be included. The result of that

effort was that several Region III projects were included in the Tier 2 and Tier 3 lists, although none were placed on the Tier 1 list. The OTC is now reviewing this report. Given the fact that the OTC must concern itself with regional equity, there may be some adjustments to the lists. The ranking by the Freight Advisory Committee was technical. Art Anderson will keep RVACT posted on this process.

Lindsay Berryman asked when Region III projects would be in front of the OTC. Art Anderson did not have a specific date.

5. Out-of-Cycle 08/09 Modernization Project Submittal

John Vial presented information on the US 199, Expressway Upgrade Phase 1 Grants Pass, a joint submittal by ODOT, Grants Pass and Josephine County. It aims to improve a safety corridor on the Redwood Highway beginning near the “Y Interchange” and extending past Rogue Community College (RCC). John Vial noted that there have been a series of serious accidents and 5 fatalities on this stretch since July 2003. The problem has to do with vehicles crossing traffic, high speeds, and the difficulty drivers have estimating closing distances. The proposed project attacks these problems by combining engineering, enforcement and education efforts. John Vial reviewed the improvements, referring to maps of the proposed new frontage road and revised access. The total request is \$5.3 million.

Reeve Hennion asked if there would be any access changes at the main entrances to RCC. John Vial stated that the left hand turn movement was still going to be allowed.

Laurel Samson stated that Grants Pass City Council was excited about making the project happen; it already had part of the project funded. She noted that the design was a “moving target” and that there was a range of other approaches to consider. She stressed the desirability of keeping the project moving, given that nearby residential developments wanted a date certain. John Vial said that details could be worked out, if the project were approved. Laurel noted that the developers couldn’t wait 2 years.

Lindsay Berryman thanked Arthur Anderson for sending along the information on the project. She said she was glad that the project was being considered and that it was a horrible strip of roadway that she often travels. She asked if the same criteria were used for this project as for the others and if there were a match. Art Anderson answered that the same guidelines were used. The City has allocated \$350K for the first part and some \$200K for the phase in question.

Jim Polk said he appreciated Art Anderson meeting with the Josephine Co. Commissioners on the issue. He expressed that the project set the stage for work on a fourth bridge and emphasized that there is some flexibility with the actual design. John Vial agreed, saying that RVACT approves concepts, not final designs.

Mike Montero noted that this project illustrates the leverage concept. The already approved Allen Street project provided leverage to this one.

Reeve asked if the fourth bridge, Y Interchange, and Redwood Highway projects/concepts were all integrated, so that down the road, there would not be a problem. John Vial said that these improvements were necessary and that they would work together. He also noted that access to

the fairgrounds was something to be worked out. Craig Stone noted that the parking would be bifurcated. Arthur Anderson noted that ODOT was roughing out ideas regarding the Y Interchange and this project should help to develop those ideas.

Lindsay Berryman said she assumed that other projects would have to be bumped down in order to accommodate this project. Mike Montero agreed that out-of-cycle projects create the need to readjust the list. He noted that the group had shown itself responsive to such special issues in the past.

6. Recommended 08/09 Modernization Project Priorities

Mike Montero and Art Anderson referred the group to the “Straw Man Modernization Project Recommendation” sheet in the meeting packet. The sheet showed the proposed ranking of the top four projects: 1) US 199 Expressway Upgrade Phase 1, Grants Pass; 2) OR 62 at Owens Drive in Medford; 3) N. Ross Lane: Rossanley to McAndrews in Medford; and 4) Kirtland Road at the Blackwell Road Intersection in White City. The US 199 Expressway Upgrade had been adequately explained in the previous meeting discussion.

The aim of the Owens Drive project is to provide congestion relief and increase connectivity. Paula Brown asked about a local match and was told that it was \$800K. Lindsay Berryman noted that this project was a regional improvement for Highway 62 circulation.

The Ross Lane project is related to the Highway 238 project that created higher volumes and a good deal of development. Craig Stone asked if the County would provide the match and Dale Petrsek said that it would, upon agreement with ODOT.

The Kirtland Road project aims to make improvements to the Seven Oaks Interchange; it is a freight route. It will complement the OTIA III bridgework and involves a jurisdictional exchange. A question was asked about how this project scored lower than the OR 99 at Hersey/Wimer (Ashland) project. Mike Montero explained that this responded in part to the desire for a direct Highway 140/Seven Oaks Interchange connection.

Laurel Samson asked if this project might be funded through freight funding and thus, free up money in this fund. Art Anderson said that the region did not have a Tier 1 freight project, but that it was still potentially possible. This particular project is currently on Tier 3 of the freight list. It is difficult for the region to compete with the rest of the state on the freight list.

Craig Stone asked how much freight would be taken off Highway 62 with the Kirtland Road improvements. A specific study has not been performed to answer this question. The route will be signed as Highway 140 upon completion.

Paul Brown noted that she respected the process, but was frustrated with the fact that the Hersey project had a high technical score, but had not been proposed for funding. The route is a freight route, but cannot be used. She said that the Hersey project is an important safety project for Ashland.

Lindsay Berryman said that the Highway 199 Expressway Upgrade was needed and the data showed its merits. She expressed her satisfaction with the ranking of the top four projects.

Mike Montero asked if the group wished to proceed with a decision or if there was any reason that the group should not move ahead with the proposal. Lindsay Berryman moved to accept the top four projects, as ranked on the “Straw Man” table.

Jim Brock suggested that the group should ask for a report back on whether or not freight funds could be used for certain projects.

Craig Stone said that the Hersey/Wimer project required a relatively small amount of funding and if .6 million dollars were left over from the top four projects, that project could be put back on the funded projects list. Paul said that the big question was whether or not they could put the signal in.

Mike Montero asked Lindsay Berryman if she would be willing to modify her motion. Lindsay Berryman amended it to say: “Move to accept the project list as shown with the provision that excess funds from this STIP be applied to the Hersey/Wimer project.”

The vote by members was unanimous in favor of the motion.

7. Project Update

Gary Leaming presented information on the various projects in the region. He noted that Vivian Payne had left for Corvallis where she will be a Team leader. Debbie Timms will head up the Highway 62 project and be assisted by Mike Arneson.

- A Record of Decision by the FHWA on the South Medford Interchange project is expected in June.
- The N. Medford Interchange northbound (NB) on ramp is finished; the NB off ramp is next. Work is proceeding on new bents on both the north and south side of Highway 62, related to the widening of the bridge.
- There is a new camera on Poplar Drive and traffic is improving.
- End panels will be poured soon and the Grave Creek Bridge will be dedicated this week. Traffic should be on the new bridge by early June, two months earlier than expected.
- The Murphy Bridge will likely be open in July.
- In Jacksonville, 5th St. is completed; work is proceeding on California St. The project is still on schedule to meet its mid-June deadline.
- Gold Hill OTIA project had its groundbreaking this week. Children from Patrick Elementary School attended.
- The Fern Valley Interchange project had an Open House and CAC meeting.
- The Talent Highway 99 project is moving ahead.

Craig Stone asked if there were any efforts by local Medford residents to block the S. Medford Interchange project. Gary Leaming answered that they had commented on the EIS and those concerns were being addressed.

8. Oregon Transportation Plan (OTP) Update

Art Anderson presented an overview power point on the OTP. The OTP provides overarching policy direction and guidelines for transportation planning in Oregon. The OTP planning period is 2005 – 2025. It should be adopted in the fall of 2005. The role of ACTs is to review all forwarded materials and comment on the draft plan. Mike Montero noted that people want economic development, but they are not willing to compromise livability for that end. Craig Stone asked if the update would include a review of mobility standards. Mike Montero responded that they were on the table.

9. 2006/2007 Pedestrian and Bicycle Grant Program

Art Anderson reviewed the letter from Michael Ronkin, which had been sent to all Oregon cities and counties and provided information on the application for pedestrian and bicycle grants. He noted that applications have to be approved by the ODOT region in question. Only one application is allowed per city or county. They must be submitted to the state by July 30. It is not required that the ACT review or approve them.

10. OTC Update

Paul Mather reported that the OTC was working on the issue of speed zones and spending a good deal of time reconciling the various lists. The OTC wants to focus on key strategy areas, rather than spreading the money out over a variety of areas. They intend to have a draft STIP out for public comment in the fall.

12. Agenda Build/Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held in July at a different venue, to be announced. Agenda items for that meeting include:

1. Status of TSPs in the region
2. Status of the area inventory
3. Status report on whether or not funds are likely to remain for the Hersey/Wimer project.
4. Review the projects that other communities are submitting.
5. Briefing on Preservation Safety Operations for District 8.

Larry Parducci thanked Art Anderson and Paul Mather for resolving the Petro lawsuit and helping to find a good solution to the problem.

Mike Montero expressed his appreciation for the jurisdictions agreement to support Josephine County's needs. He noted that the group had a history of cooperating in this way and he thanked the group for their collective work.

13. Adjournment

Mike Montero adjourned the session at 11:00 AM.