



Oregon

John A. Kitzhaber, M.D., Governor

Oregon Transportation Commission

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April 24, 2012

To: Oregon Area Commissions on Transportation Chairs

From: Oregon Transportation Commission

Subject: Transitioning Role of Area Commissions on Transportation (ACTs)

Dear (ACT chair)

Governor Kitzhaber spoke to the Oregon Transportation Commission at its August 2011 meeting, and provided his direction for transportation policy and development.

The OTC brought all ACT chairs together in November 2011 for a vibrant discussion about the governor's direction, and the "current realities" of the transportation system and its future funding outlook.

The Oregon Transportation Commission recognizes there is need for a more comprehensive approach to transportation, including more efficient and effective system management. This is especially critical given the state's inadequate resources to continue doing business as usual. Increased ACT involvement will help evolve the way we manage and invest in the overall transportation system in Oregon. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank you and the members of your ACT personally for your service and dedication to these issues. Your expertise and input is invaluable, and your time is not taken for granted.

As you recall, the Governor challenged us to create a 21st century transportation system that best serves Oregonians. He envisions a transportation system that chooses the right projects for communities that will attract or grow business; provide mobility, reduce the carbon impacts of transportation, and transition into a truly multimodal and efficient transportation system for the State of Oregon.

Governor Kitzhaber further articulated principles that he wants us to apply when we prioritize investments and programs or begin conversations on policy direction. The following principles are keys to using our ACTs and their members' talents as we fully embrace being a multimodal transportation agency.

- *Do we have the right group of individuals at the table at the beginning of the process to define the problem and solution together?*
- *Are we creating programs that don't simply invest in the future of the transportation system but meet a multitude of community objectives?*
- *Does each decision move us closer to a sustainable, safe, lower-carbon, multimodal system?*

- *Does the decision maximize benefit for the least cost under the limited resources available?*

ODOT has made changes in organizational structure based on the Governor's direction and principles. The first key change was to create the *Active Transportation Section* within the Transportation Development Division in October 2011. There were three key reasons for this change:

- 1) *Active Transportation* is a hallmark of healthy, viable communities. By creating an Active Transportation Section, we embrace the message that walking, biking and transit are important transportation choices in Oregon communities.
- 2) This helps streamline project selection. Federal and state programs similar in function are now located in one section. Staff working on Transportation Enhancement, Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ), Bicycle/Pedestrian, Flex Funds, and Safe Routes to Schools programs now sits and works side-by-side.
- 3) Perhaps most important, ODOT is setting up the process to allocate funds for Active Transportation projects that make sense for communities more efficiently and strategically.

The ACTs have been invaluable in the selection and support of our highway focused projects, ranging from Modernization to Bridges. We now want to challenge you to think beyond our state highways and local streets, to help us think in terms of function and to prioritize those projects that support a complete system, and include all transportation modes and community interests.

The commission recognizes that an expanded and different role for the ACTS will be an important part of any success in meeting the Governor's direction, and ODOT's ability to continue doing more with less.

The Policy on Formation and Operation of Area Commissions on Transportation continues to provide us with excellent guidance: *improve communication and interaction between the OTC and local stakeholders who share a transportation-focused community of interest.*

We want you to help us figure out the improved role for the ACTS. One of the ways you can do this is to reflect on the Governor's direction and in line with changes ODOT has made. For example, the "Membership" section of the ACT Policy states: *When establishing the voting membership, an ACT needs to consider all modes and aspects of the Transportation System.* The policy goes on to reference elected officials, tribal governments, port officials, transit offices, as well as interested stakeholders such as freight, trucking, bicycle, pedestrian, and public transportation, among other community interests, as potential members.

We would like you to start this transition with a focus on the ACT membership. As the Governor asked: *Do we have the right group of individuals at the table at the beginning of the process to define the problem and solution together?*

ODOT's area managers will work with each ACT as it evaluates its composition, and as we move forward with discussions on policy, programs, and projects that go beyond the traditional role of the ACTS in the decision-making process.

While this is a transition time for the ACTs, it is also a transition time for the statewide modal committees, who have had the responsibility of selecting projects in the past. As their roles change they will want to be assured that the ACTs have the capacity to step in and fulfill their new responsibilities with a full appreciation for the nuances of modal needs. I look forward to hearing about your progress when we meet again and when we renew your charter.

The department and the commission will continue discussions involving new ways of thinking about our transportation system over the next several commission meetings, leading up to our next engagement between the OTC and the ACT chairs, which we anticipate to occur on October 16-17. I encourage you or your representative to attend these monthly meetings to hear the background that will lead to the September OTC/ACT meeting.

The Transportation Commission looks forward to working with you as we evolve Oregon's transportation system. Look for contact from the ODOT area manager serving your ACT to discuss next steps.

Sincerely,

Pat Egan
Chair