

Highway Asset Data

Consistency equals reliability — here's one way to get it

ODOT staff often voice concerns about the availability and trustworthiness of asset information on state highways. Historically, the most reliable data has been found in pavements, bridges and ITS equipment. But having access to accurate information is critical for everything ODOT does: planning, STIP development, scoping, design, construction, maintenance, and more. Reliable information on signs, traffic barriers, and culverts, for example, could help the finance office, biologists and safety staff, just to name a few. But in most cases in ODOT's past experience, data collection efforts had to start anew each time someone needed to know something about these and other assets.

Soon, that will be but another ODOT memory.

Asset Management efforts are working agency-wide to ensure that data is collected a single time for multiple uses. This is a much more efficient way to take care of the transportation system; it benefits employees, taxpayers and system users alike!

Meeting the challenge

The Asset Management Pilot in 2006 first identified the extent of ODOT's information gaps and activity redundancies. Several years of research have resulted in ongoing efforts throughout the agency to create an up-to-date database of ODOT's assets. One new methodology has emerged, termed *Features, Attributes and Conditions Survey*, or *FACS*.

The idea behind FACS is to provide project scoping teams and project development teams with information about highway features, attributes and conditions currently available to assist them and to weave continuous threads of data about ODOT highway assets across many ODOT processes. In other words, get the right data one time and then keep the data current anytime a process touches it.

FACS aims to ensure that asset information is provided to

all that need it and to adjust existing practices so that data collection occurs in a way that is coordinated and combined instead of newly initiated at each step. This will improve the quality of data as well as make collecting data easier. Consistency in the process and the data will mean that, in the future, data will continue to be reliable and collection efficient.

Starting with success

Beginning with the data already available and adding new asset inventories collected in the recent past provides a great place to start. Pavement and bridge needs are routinely available, but newly available data about needs or sub-standard features can now be included. Failed signal loops, signs that are no longer retro-reflective, gaps in sidewalk or bicycle facility systems, sub-standard traffic barriers and known needs for ITS equipment can now be incorporated. Staff are currently doing inventory on culverts, retaining walls and fish passage, and this information will be added to the database.

This weaving together of highway asset data can be accomplished by building on the successful processes already in place, as well as by seizing opportunities that might appear. The STIP Scoping Tool, for example, provides an opportunity to integrate asset information into one application. Scoping allows us to validate current asset data in the field; that updated information can then be added to the database. Then design and construction staff report what will be added, changed or replaced. The Asset Management team is currently researching how best to incorporate this activity into current processes, and the goal is simplicity. A simple process means that existing processes will simply be adjusted "and no one will need to take on extra, time-consuming tasks."

Looking ahead

Over the next year, staff will be enhancing the STIP Scoping Tool to allow for asset information collection on scoping forms. The target for this effort is early 2010 so staff can take advantage for the next STIP scoping cycle.

If you have questions or comments on this project, contact Laura Wipper at (503) 986-4092 or Steve Lindland at (503) 986-3557.

ConnectOregon I transit project celebrates grand opening

For community members who use the public transit system in the small eastern Oregon community of La Grande, December 1 was a date to celebrate. That day, the doors opened on the new \$1.7 million Northeast Oregon Public Transit Building, located next to the senior center. The facility is home to the local bus service operated by Community Connections, the Greyhound Bus and a community conference room. A *ConnectOregon I* grant of \$893,000 helped make the project possible.

"I believe this hub is exactly what the Legislature had in mind when it created *ConnectOregon*," said Michael Ward, ODOT's Public Transit Division Administrator, joining the more than forty people at the ribbon cutting ceremony. "It supports the multi-modal concept, and it's also important to economic development by connecting employers and employees."

State Sen. David Nelson, R-Pendleton, and State Rep. Greg Smith, R-Hepner, also spoke.

Nelson noted that with the involvement of Greyhound, the project is a good example of what can be accomplished when public entities and private businesses work together.

Smith added that Nelson was instrumental in making sure projects covering public transit were included in the *ConnectOregon* program. Smith also noted that legislators from both sides of the aisle made *ConnectOregon* possible, and

that spirit of cooperation continued in 2007 when the Legislature approved a second round of funding.

"It has bipartisan support and it's so neat to see the fruits of that," Smith said.

Proponents of the new transit facility wanted to bring the Greyhound Bus service closer to the city center. Several years ago, the bus depot moved three miles out of town into and inadequately sized office at a local truck stop, creating challenges for many transit users.

"Bringing that transportation back into the community was a big part of what this project was all about," said Union County Commissioner Steve McClure, who also serves as chairman of Community Connection's board of directors and is a member of the Northeast Oregon Area Commission on Transportation.

The Community Connections bus service, which offers fixed bus routes in the La Grande area and connections to other local communities, will provide more than 80,000 rides this year throughout the area.



The newly completed La Grande Transit Center was partially funded through *ConnectOregon I*.

McClure added that the hub would not have been built if not for the strong alliance formed by officials at the city, county and state levels.

"It typifies what cooperation means," McClure said.

ODOT NE Area Manager Frank Reading agreed, praising local leaders, NEACT and community members for support. One example of outstanding community support came from La Grande Public Works Director Norm Paullus, who designed the building on his own time, free of charge. His contribution reduced the project costs by between \$60,000 and \$70,000.