Oregon Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan Listening Meeting Summary

Introduction

This report provides a high level summary of the most common themes identified at five listening meetings held in each of the five ODOT regions in August and September of 2014. A virtual meeting was also conducted during this time to gather input from those unable to attend a meeting.

The purpose of the listening meetings was to gather feedback from local residents and agency professionals on issues and opportunities that will inform policies being developed for inclusion in the Oregon Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. Meeting attendees were asked to identify their top safety concerns related to bicycle and pedestrian use in their community, opportunities for improving connectivity, and other items of interest that they would like covered in the Oregon Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. Meetings were held in Bend, Eugene, Medford, Portland, and La Grande. A total of over 200 people participated in the five listening meetings and an additional 143 people filled out the virtual meeting survey.

Comments from the listening meetings will be used to inform policy recommendations that will be included in the Oregon Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.

Common Themes

Roadway design, and its relationship to safety and connectivity, emerged as a common important topic area. In the “safety” category, engineering was consistently ranked as a top priority, and in the “system connection” category, roadway characteristics were consistently ranked one of the top priorities. Roadway characteristics included, but was not limited to, width of lanes, speeds of motor traffic, and presence or lack of sidewalks and bicycle facilities. People commented that without pedestrian and bicycle facilities, many people will not feel comfortable using the road to walk or bike to access destinations. Engineering and roadway characteristics are closely related and were often discussed together. In addition, when the “interaction with other modes” and “vulnerable users” categories were discussed, many participants brought up the separation of modes, which is directly related to engineering and roadway characteristics.

Safety Discussion

Top Themes

In the "safety" category, a majority of people ranked engineering as one of their top three priorities. Common themes in this category included maintenance, designing for the most vulnerable users, and separation of modes. When participants discussed these themes, they emphasized making roadways safe and comfortable for all users, including children who are walking or biking. The "vulnerable users" theme generated discussion of school siting and safe routes to school in Regions 4 and 5, along with safe crossings and walk signals timed for slower pedestrians in Region 3. The discussion about vulnerable users in Region 2 included concern about motorists speed, and desire for separation of modes when speeds are higher.

Regions 3, 4, and 5 stressed maintenance, discussing the need for consistent standards across jurisdictions. Maintenance issues included sand and gravel removal, bike-friendly drain grates, and funding.

Education and enforcement was discussed in terms of safety. Regions 1 and 2 suggested better enforcement of motorist speeds and distracted driving. Region 2 recommended police force training and cameras for enforcement purposes. Region 1 suggested additional education and encouragement in the form of transportation demand management programs provided by employers. Online respondents suggested increased education for both bicyclists and motorists about rules of the road and interaction between modes.

System Connections Discussion

Top Themes

In the "system connections" category, a majority of people ranked access to destinations, roadway characteristics, and intermodal connectivity as equally important priorities. Regions 1 and 5 mentioned schools as important destinations, and Region 5 added shopping centers and parks as important destinations that they would like to access by walking or bicycling. Region 4 emphasized access to trailheads and increasing awareness of recreational bicycling facilities. Intermodal connectivity was important when discussing region-wide access, with participants discussing safe pedestrian and bicycle connections to transit stops.

Regions 1, 2, and 4 stressed project coordination, with participants suggesting that bicycling and walking should be included in every project, and these modes should be brought into the mainstream instead of considered alternative transportation modes.

Region 5 brought up safe routes between rural destinations. Participants mentioned that rumble strips are can deter cyclists, and non-highway routes should be developed. Some participants also suggested that "Share the Road" signs should be replaced with "Bikes on Roadway," and "Cyclists Stay to Right." Region 3 echoed these thoughts with a desire to enhance rural bicycle facilities, with an emphasis on

tourism. Regions 1, 2, and 3 mentioned safe facilities on important links like bridges and tunnels, suggesting signs and flashers where adding a bike lane or wider shoulder is not feasible

Open Ended Discussion

The open ended discussion was included to give participants an opportunity to bring up other issues that were not discussed in the “safety” or “system connections” categories.

Participants desired more funding for bicycle and pedestrian projects, either through flexibility of existing funds, increasing existing funding, or adding new funds. Regions 1, 2, 4, and 5 also cited the economic benefits of bicycling, with Regions 3 and 5 including economic benefits from tourism. In Regions 1 and 2 (plus the virtual meeting), participants discussed opportunity for innovation - fewer “cookie cutter mandates about design and width” and more opportunity for context sensitive solutions and pilot projects.

Region 1 discussed the issue of other forms of transportation, such as e-bikes and skateboards, and suggested the plan find a way to address other modes that may use bicycle and pedestrian facilities.