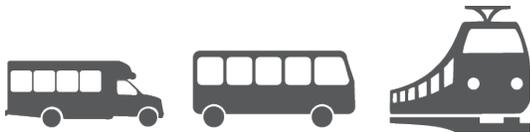


November 1, 2016



DRAFT Outreach Summary

2016 Listening Meetings and Online Open House



Outreach Summary

The project team conducted outreach during fall 2016 to solicit feedback that will inform the development of policies and strategies for the Oregon Public Transportation Plan (OPTP). The project team participated in five listening meetings throughout the state and solicited feedback via an online open house. More than 100 people attended the in-person Listening Meetings and more than 200 people have responded to the online open house.

NOTE: Summary results of the Online Open House will be added after it closes on November 5.

Listening Meetings

ODOT invited the public to review the plan's draft vision and goals and discuss the challenges and opportunities for public transportation around the state. In September and October, ODOT hosted five public meetings. Locations for each meeting included:

Meeting 1: La Grande

September 14, 10 a.m. to Noon
ODOT Region 5 Headquarters
3012 Island Avenue
La Grande, OR 97850

Meeting 4: Portland

October 13, 10 a.m. to Noon
ODOT Region 1 Headquarters
123 NW Flanders Street
Portland, OR 97209

Meeting 2: Bend

September 21, 10 a.m. to Noon
ODOT Region 4 Headquarters
63055 N. Highway 97
Bend, OR 97701

Meeting 5: Salem

October 18, 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.
Chemeketa Center for Business and Industry
626 High Street, NE
Salem, OR 97301

Meeting 3: White City

September 27, 10 a.m. to Noon
ODOT Rogue Valley Area Office
100 Antelope Road
White City, OR 97503

Format

The Listening Meetings were structured as small group discussions, with a presentation at the beginning and a large group report out at the end. Participants were given a number of handouts regarding the project (all handouts can be found in **Appendix A**), including:

- Fact sheet about the project
- OPTP public involvement summary
- Draft vision and goals
- Draft opportunities and challenges table
- Listening Meeting comment form

ODOT staff began each meeting by introducing the meeting format and agenda and providing a quick overview of the project. The presentation reviewed the vision and goals of the Oregon Public Transportation Plan, as well as opportunities and key trends influencing public transportation throughout the state. The majority of the meeting centered on small group discussions. Participants were divided into groups of five and were given around 45 minutes to discuss three main questions. The questions were:

1. What are the key barriers people face in using public transportation in these areas?

- *Mobility*
- *Accessibility and Connectivity*
- *Equity*
- *Safety and Security*

2. What are opportunities you see to address those barriers?

3. Of your group's ideas today, what do you think are the three most important to consider in the OPTP?

The purpose of these questions was to elicit specific feedback that may assist with developing policies and strategies for the OPTP. All themes and suggestions below will be considered, but all may not be included in the plan and other ideas from other sources and plan development activities will be considered too.

General Themes

Participants mentioned common barriers or challenges to those using public transportation. The following challenges (in bold) were discussed at several of the listening meetings. Below each challenge are some of the most common opportunities to address the challenge offered by participants at the five Listening Meetings.

- **Challenge: Need for additional agency collaboration and mobility management strategies**

Opportunities:

- Coordinate human service transportation, such as non-emergency medical transportation, and transportation brokerages working with Coordinated Care Organizations (CCOs)

- Identify programs for hiring and training drivers, with special emphasis on safety and customer service
- Frequent and consistent coordination between agencies at state, regional, and local level on issues like planning and regional connectivity
- **Challenge: Lack of transportation services and funding for them in rural communities with dispersed populations**

Opportunities:

- Consider resources for low population and rural counties
- Improve connections to existing services (which may be far away from stops and stations)
- Identify creative and effective ways to serve older adults and people with disabilities to meet community medical ride needs
- **Challenge: Perceptions of safety on public transportation and lack of “culture of transit”**

Opportunities:

- Need for incentives to create new riders
- Improve community education on how to use transit and the importance of the system
- Create public information and marketing to specific rider groups (e.g., older adults and youth)
- Ensure the system is accessible for those with limited English proficiency (LEP)
- Work to ensure all riders feel safe using public transportation

- **Challenge: Lack of infrastructure connecting people to public transportation services**

Opportunities:

- Infrastructure (e.g., sidewalks, biking facilities) bridging the “last mile”
- Provide safety/accessibility improvements, such as sidewalks connecting to bus stops, and weather protection at stops – shelters, lights, etc.
- Greater coordination between land use planning and public transportation would result in more closely coordinated infrastructure investments

- **Challenge: Limited and inconsistent funding is a barrier**

Opportunities:

- Increased funding desired – stability is key
- Identify ways to reduce “Siloing” of funding, which can result in service inefficiencies – many agencies (with different mandates), many programs, and many funding sources

Listening Meeting by region

Each listening meeting brought differing perspectives to the role of public transportation for each ODOT region. Below are some of the key points discussed at each meeting for the four goal areas discussed in a small group. All comments and notes collected at the Listening Meetings can be found in **Appendix B**.

La Grande Listening Meeting

A total of 14 people participated in the small group discussions during the La Grande Listening Meeting. The key points discussed included:

Mobility

- **Challenges**
 - Regional interconnectedness - lack of public transportation options in rural areas
 - Lack of predictability and stability of funding
 - Demand is increasing for medical trips and veterans' services
 - Need for broader service hours to accommodate non-traditional work schedules
 - Public knowledge lacking about public transportation services and how to use the system
 - Need for improved walkability to public transportation, especially to rural stops
 - Lack of coordination between hours of service for public transportation and human services
 - Transferring between services can be cumbersome – more direct routes needed

- **Opportunities**
 - Create a one-stop information and referral location for information on public transportation
 - Create better connections to social services during the times that services are available
 - Increase coordination between land use planning and public transportation
 - Encourage collaboration and partnerships between cities, counties, and non-profits
 - Develop strategies for broadening service hours to accommodate non-traditional work schedules

Accessibility and Connectivity

- **Challenges**
 - “Last mile” connections needed; improve access to public transportation stops generally
 - Need better ways to provide technical assistance and resources to small providers
 - Dispersed rural population makes connections difficult

- Public transportation may not appear inviting and can be seen as a social service – need to “change the culture”
- Perception that public transportation is only serving riders’ needs, not their “wants”
- **Opportunities**
 - Great opportunity for mobility management which can provide public education about the availability and use of public transportation
 - Education and marketing to improve attitudes toward public transportation – “change the culture”
 - Coordination to match up with current demand, especially for medical service providers
 - Increase convenience and comfort through amenities like wifi, stop comfort (e.g., shelters) for people who have long wait times
 - Improve timing for connections and increase service frequencies

Equity

- **Challenges**
 - Spanish and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) populations are growing – resources limited for marketing/producing materials in other languages
 - It is difficult to serve rural residents on outskirts of the area with limited resources
 - Transit is needed to support “aging in place” and connect older adults to services
- **Opportunities**
 - More funding and resources to help with marketing transit in different languages
 - Develop policies to help improve public transportation services specifically for older adults
 - Provide education on public transportation’s role in economic prosperity in communities to foster community support for public transportation

Safety and Security

- **Challenges**
 - Public transportation can be perceived as unsafe due to experiences with crime
 - Need for skilled vehicle mechanics that are local
 - Regular and affordable driver training is difficult
 - On long distance/rural routes, assistance is often far away if an incident occurs
 - Rural bus stops lack amenities like shelters
- **Opportunities**
 - Increased driver training for safety, maintenance issues, rider needs, and weather

- More security infrastructure, like in-vehicle cameras or at bus stops, to improve rider perceptions of personal safety
- Potential state role in ensuring mechanics/trained maintenance personnel are available in all areas of the state

Bend Listening Meeting

A total of 20 people participated in the small group discussions during the Bend Listening Meeting. The key points discussed included:

Mobility

- **Challenges**

- Dispatch system (for disabled/older adults) is difficult to use, especially in rural area
- Lack of sidewalks is a barrier to reaching public transportation stops (condition, maintenance, accessibility)
- Limited community knowledge about how to use the system
- Lack of staff capacity, difficult to hire qualified drivers
- Existing service is not convenient with regard to timing, connections, routes, and destinations

- **Opportunities**

- Improve materials so they are easy to read, in different languages, and in large font
- Educate and inform users about intermodal connections by creating a central public transportation information hub
- Prioritize infrastructure improvements (e.g., sidewalks) that support public transportation
- Mobility management as a solution for providing cost-effective transportation, improving coordination
- Helping local communities support public transportation

Accessibility and Connectivity

- **Challenges**

- Need to match public transportation service hours with user needs - frequency of service is limited
- Demand response public transportation is not easy to use and is expensive to fund
- Current funding system does not meet all rural public transportation needs
- Regional accessibility – health care is centralized, meaning dispersed populations have difficulty accessing health care (and are expensive for providers to serve)
- “Siloing” is a barrier – for example, human service and other agencies have specific missions, lack funds to address issues outside that mission, and can miss coordination opportunities

- **Opportunities**

- Encourage stakeholders to “buy into” regional public transportation by demonstrating its value
- Leverage services like vanpools, TNCs to fill empty seats and increase usage
- Use land use policies to encourage infill near public transportation and increase density
- Tie funding to infrastructure improvements at transit stops – leverage funding
- Stronger communication and coordination between transit providers and human service agencies

Equity

- **Challenges**

- Older adults and people with disabilities spend a disproportionate amount of income on public transportation
- Some perceive a social stigma around using public transportation
- Barriers around readability of materials (language, text font, colors, etc.) on schedules
- Users are getting removed from buses due to their disability/mental/physical health
- Need for vehicles that can transport individuals regardless of disability
- Lack of night and weekend service hurts low-income communities who rely on the bus most

- **Opportunities**

- Social media as an education and marketing tool – can help change perceptions
- Collaborate with community partners on cultural sensitivity training
- Support for environmental causes (like reducing greenhouse gas emissions) can be leveraged to support public transportation
- User friendly technology can encourage ridership
- Encourage private investment in technology solutions
- Provide group passes for employees, low-income fares, student fares

Safety and Security

- **Challenges**

- Perception of some riders that public transportation is unsafe
- Riders are exposed to the elements while waiting for buses
- Drivers feel unsafe driving in some weather conditions
- Difficult to find resources for driver recruiting and training
- Speed, number of cars, and traffic crashes affect public transportation operations

- Dispersed land use means people travel long distances to access basic services/shopping
- Current traffic conditions makes it difficult for wildlife to safely cross roadways
- **Opportunities**
 - Find grants that help fund shelters for weather protection and safety
 - Increased use of public transportation (which is very safe compared to driving) is an opportunity to increase overall transportation system safety
 - State safety policy/programs must recognize the operational cost of on-going security
 - Improve public transportation vehicle driver training and training for car drivers on how to interact with buses on the road

White City Listening Meeting

A total of 18 people participated in the small group discussion during the White City Listening Meeting. The key points discussed included:

Mobility

- **Challenges**
 - Lack of bike/pedestrian infrastructure connecting to public transportation – for example, crossings on busy roadways
 - Funding is often dependent on the will of voters, making it unstable
 - Service of available public transportation are limited
 - Driving a car is very convenient – how do agencies incent use of public transportation?
- **Opportunities**
 - Need for stable funding
 - Coordination with human service agencies
 - Incentives for development near existing and future public transportation routes
 - “Mobility training” (travel training) and education
 - Foster transportation demand management programs like vanpooling and bike share to complement public transportation

Accessibility and Connectivity

- **Challenges**
 - Lack of connections to smaller communities
 - Lack of safe “last mile” connections
 - Access to jobs/housing is limited on public transportation
 - Intermodal connections between buses and bikes are needed

- **Opportunities**

- Opportunity for better connections within and between communities
- Partnerships with other agencies and organizations to improve service
- Coordinate non-medical services with other services such as Non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT)/call centers
- Better signage would make public transportation easier to use

Equity

- **Challenges**

- Need better service in low-income communities
- Urban/rural tensions in provision of service – needs are different and sometimes competing
- Need to ensure the system is easy/intuitive for LEP communities – for example, signage for Spanish speakers
- Technologies, like mobile phone apps, can be a barrier for older adults
- High fares and restrictive fare transfer policies can mean that some riders effectively pay twice for one-way trips

- **Opportunities**

- Opportunity to prioritize funding to serve low-income areas
- Create programs in communities to lower fares, like fare subsidies
- Demand response public transportation can serve some areas more efficiently than traditional fixed route service
- Collaboration with local governments, state on funding assistance

Safety and Security

- **Challenges**

- Perception of safety, especially during the evening, is a deterrent to “choice” riders
- Need better “last mile” connections and information once off the bus
- Staff/employees cannot access or get to jobs via public transportation (location, hours of service)
- Aging population is dispersed and often not located near existing public transportation routes
- Bus stops need to be placed in convenient locations and provide better lighting

- **Opportunities**

- Create fun public events, free rides and buddy rides – to improve familiarity with the system and promote culture of public transportation use
- Create a statewide public relations campaign: public transportation is safe

- Apps for public transportation information, next bus arrival
- Partnerships between public transportation and community organizations
- Prioritize funding for “last mile” connectivity

Portland Listening Meeting

A total of 31 people participated in the small group discussion during the Portland Listening Meeting. The key points discussed included:

Mobility

- **Challenges**
 - Congestion impacts public transportation reliability and operations
 - Lack of fare reciprocity (rural and urban) makes connections difficult between communities
 - Intercity connections are lacking
 - Hours of service – late night service is limited. Creates difficulties for those working non-traditional schedules, such as service workers
- **Opportunities**
 - Provide amenities to make public transportation more attractive (e.g., comfortable seats, quieter vehicles, wifi)
 - Streamline connections among and between different services so they can be marketed as one system
 - Create a mechanism to encourage regional connectivity (beyond service boundaries)

Accessibility and Connectivity

- **Challenges**
 - Safe crossings, sidewalks, and curb ramps to bus stops are lacking
 - “Hub and spoke” system doesn’t serve people efficiently (requires transfers for those not heading downtown or vice-versa)
 - Make sure rural public transportation districts can connect to urban systems
 - Lack of easily accessible info about public transportation options
 - Difficulty transferring between different providers
- **Opportunities**
 - Regional pedestrian corridors should also be focus of public transportation
 - Improve cross-town routes for trips not centered on downtown
 - Improve collaboration between urban and rural services
 - “Outside the box” thinking on funding for tourism services – look to examples like the Mt. Hood Express/Columbia Gorge services
 - Encourage more density around public transportation and transit centers

- Flexibility around ODOT grant criteria can assist in funding infrastructure and pilot programs

Equity

- **Challenges**

- Resources limited for marketing/producing materials in other languages
- Fares can be unaffordable for certain populations – older adults, homeless people, etc.
- Lack of public transportation service coverage in transit-dependent communities in outer neighborhoods
- Need more driver training on cultural sensitivity

- **Opportunities**

- Community-based education targeted at users and that is culturally appropriate
- Develop more, high-quality language translations of materials
- Create a statewide youth pass program and increase service to target students/schools
- Develop one seamless statewide fare, including bike and car share, etc.
- Provide incentives to coordinate private sector services, especially in Transportation Management Areas (TMA) areas
- Create an older adult rider program to help bring riders to social services (meal sites, for example)

Safety and Security

- **Challenges**

- Conflicts between public transportation and bikes
- Not enough outreach on available services and how the system is accessible for people with disabilities
- Lack of bus shelters in rural areas and along highways
- Shortage of bus drivers and mechanisms to hire qualified drivers
- Perception among some that public transportation is for “undesirable” people
- Lack of data/analysis to help agencies choose the best public transportation options for different communities – i.e. urban vs. suburban

- **Opportunities**

- Invest in next generation transit signal priority and other intelligent transportation system (ITS) technologies
- Increase the commuter rail service in highly congested corridors
- Develop policy that instructs the state to improve public transportation infrastructure on state owned highways

- Create a statewide one-stop hub with 24-hour call center for travel info
- Add children to the priority seating area population

Salem Listening Meeting

A total of 33 people participated in the small group discussion during the Salem Listening Meeting. The key points discussed included:

Mobility

- **Challenges**
 - Bus stops are missing infrastructure and have poor pedestrian access
 - Need better policies related to the intersection of housing, transit, development, and land use
 - Meet broader needs with more frequent service and expanded days/hours of service
 - Lack of interconnectedness throughout the region/state
- **Opportunities**
 - Identify ways to partner with the private sector for investment in the public transportation system
 - Prioritize infrastructure and connections to transit stops
 - Develop standards for ticketing coordination across different ticket fare systems

Accessibility and Connectivity

- **Challenges**
 - Costly to cover areas on the fringe of the urban region that have dispersed populations
 - Stops are not located next to services and shopping
 - Inconsistent user interfaces (maps, apps, icons) makes system hard to use
- **Opportunities**
 - Focus on developing better downtowns, with walkable streets and built density
 - Develop policies to incentivize development of services in existing pedestrian locations
 - Communication between public transportation and state funding entities, schools and city planning to improve location of public transportation service
 - Provide consistent format/interface of public transportation materials

Equity

- **Challenges**
 - Lack of public transportation service on weekends makes it difficult for community members to get and retain jobs, including service oriented jobs

- Need a better understanding of who uses public transportation and who needs public transportation
- Remote neighborhoods/communities need more and better service
- **Opportunities**
 - Coordination between public transportation agencies and refugee resettlement organizations
 - Use market studies to inform public transportation planning and service decisions
 - Seek to leverage funds creatively

Safety and Security

- **Challenges**
 - Need critical mass to increase popularity of bus – potential riders want to know others are using it as well
 - Many do not feel safe waiting at stops or stations
 - Station and stop infrastructure is needed and important (lighting, shelters, sidewalks)
 - Kids need to ride the bus to create future riders – helps with changing rider perception
- **Opportunities**
 - Driver training to foster culture/perception of safety on bus
 - Identify key regional transit hubs to increase ridership
 - School programs on bus safety can show that the bus is part of the community