



Research Notes

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Multimodal Transportation Funding: The *ConnectOregon* Program

The Oregon Department of Transportation Research Section recently funded a project summarizing the *ConnectOregon* Program. The *ConnectOregon* Program provides grants and loans to support air, marine, rail, and transit improvements on projects that are not eligible for highway gas tax funding. The \$100 million program was authorized by the Oregon Legislature in 2005 (*ConnectOregon* I). In 2007, the Oregon Legislature provided another \$100 million for *ConnectOregon* II, and an additional \$100 million in 2009 for *ConnectOregon* III. In total, the program has received \$300 million in funding.

The study examined the *ConnectOregon* I and II project selection processes, public outreach, and the review and approval processes. Throughout the program's phases, program participants and observers have offered ideas and suggestions for improving the program. These were also reviewed as part of the study.

In looking at the project selection process, an analysis of applications submitted and approved was completed. For the \$200 million available through the first two phases of *ConnectOregon*, public- and private-sector applicants submitted a total of 181 requests for funding. Of these, the Oregon Transportation Commission selected 73 for funding. Table 1, below, shows the applications submitted and approved by mode for both *ConnectOregon* I and *ConnectOregon* II.

Table 1 indicates that over the two funding cycles, Multiple Modes submitted the fewest applications. While Multiple Modes had an average success rate (applications approved / applications submitted) for *ConnectOregon* I, overall, single modes were more successful. The most successful single mode was Marine (47%), followed by Rail (43%), then Transit (41%), and Aviation (38%). Overall, there was no correlation between the amount of funds requested and the success of a particular mode.

Table 1: Applications Submitted and Approved by Transportation Mode

Mode	Applications Submitted				Applications Approved			
	CO I		CO II		CO I		CO II	
	#Apps	\$Million	#Apps	\$Million	#Apps	\$Million	#Apps	\$Million
Aviation	30	59.5	22	56.1	10	18.3	10	26.9
Marine	13	26.0	6	11.1	7	16.8	2	5.5
Rail	37	90.4	32	109.7	17	39.1	13	56.6
Transit	16	35.7	11	15.0	6	13.8	5	10.6
Multiple Modes	7	23.8	7	22.9	3	11.5	0	0
Total	103	235.4	78	214.8	43	99.5	30	99.6

CO I = *ConnectOregon* CO II = *ConnectOregon* II

ODOT has kept track of external and internal input and has provided suggestions designed to improve the program. Accordingly, *ConnectOregon II* legislation differed from *ConnectOregon I* legislation, in part due to input provided by participants in *ConnectOregon I*. For *ConnectOregon I*, ODOT identified a number of lessons learned. Examples include: having modal review groups develop their priority lists before regional review groups develop theirs, identifying consistent methods for ranking applications, and having consistent procedures for public input. Each of these was addressed in an in-house implementation plan and other materials were developed to facilitate application and review processes for *ConnectOregon II*.

ODOT staff undertook a similar effort to identify lessons learned with *ConnectOregon II*. The lessons, listed below, are in part based on comments from participants, from staff working with the program, and from other observers.

- Better understand regional interests early in the process. Consider adding an ODOT regional staff member to the *ConnectOregon* Technical Team.
- Discontinue usage of the Intent to Apply form.
- On the application form, add separate questions specific to the mode for which funding is being requested.
- Request more detail on the application form regarding project scope, schedule, budget, and management.
- In the application instructions, provide examples of completed budgets.
- Finalize reviewer instructions prior to the submittal date.
- Define and publish how considerations will be evaluated prior to the due date for applications.



- Have employees from the regions staff the regional review teams.
- Clarify whether there are separate regional and statewide “pots” of funding
- Consider moving the *ConnectOregon* review to time periods when Area Commissions on Transportation (ACTs) are not heavily involved with other responsibilities.
- To help ensure a qualified pool of applicants statewide, conduct additional outreach in some parts of the state

The *ConnectOregon* program is one of a number of sources contributing to multimodal investments in the state’s transportation system. Private investments as well as investments from other public sources are needed to address the system’s short- and long-term funding needs.



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The final report for this project will be published in August 2009 and will be made available on the Research Section web page: http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/TD/TP_RES/