

**Northeast Oregon Regional Solutions
Advisory Committee Meeting Notes**

Representing Wallowa, Baker, and Union Counties

November 2, 2015

3:00 pm- 5:00 pm

Regional Solutions Center Conference Room, 233 Badgley Hall, EOU
One University Blvd, La Grande

Members Present: Tim Seydel, Convener/EOU; Mark Davidson, Union County; Dennis Sands, Joseph; Dianne Ellingson, Leo Adler Foundation; Nils Christoffersen, Wallowa Resources; Mike Key, Baker City

Other attendees: Peggy Lynch, League of Women Voters; Dan Stark, Union County Economic Development Corporation; Dana Kurtz, EOU MBA student; Craig Sipp, ODOT; Melisa Drugge, OBDD; Shanna Bailey, IFA; Lena Varley, RARE Participant; Scott Fairley, Regional Solutions

General Action Items

1. Business representative should be identified by the next meeting.
2. Advisory Committee – identify 2-3 of the biggest challenges and opportunities for the region and send to Scott to be forwarded to Jeremy Rogers, Oregon Business Conference, for possible discussion at the December Leadership Summit. Also send proposed topic panel members.
3. The Advisory Committee requested a longer discussion on regional priorities with regional economic information at our next meeting to be held in January-February at Baker Technical Institute.

Oregon Business Conference Leadership Summit Update--Jeremy Rogers, Oregon Business Council

The Summit will be held December 14 at the Portland Convention Center. Focus will be on the upcoming legislative session. The theme will be *Keeping the Momentum Moving Forward*. Topics will include discussions on regional priorities, industry sectors (forestry, ag, tech, bioscience, aviation/unmanned aerial systems, etc.) International trade, education, natural resources, and transportation.

Business Retention and Expansion Update - Melissa Drugge, Business Oregon

Purpose of the effort is to identify what businesses need to expand and locate in the region. Melisa met with 26 businesses to learn about their businesses and service needs, build relationships, and determine opportunities for state and other assistance. The most common challenges identified were potential \$15 minimum wage, concerns about carbon taxes, workforce development, access to raw materials, and difficulty working with government contracts.

Rails and Trails – Dana Kurtz, EOU MBA Student

Dana presented on her MBA Rails and Trails project for the 63 mile stretch of the Union/Wallowa Railroad from Elgin to Joseph. The project was intended to provide information on the interest and viability of a trail system in conjunction with the existing rail system for WURRA consideration. The project was determined to have positive economic impact on the region and is generally supported. The next step is a presentation to the WURRA board.

Project Updates

- Baum Industrial Park Priority Project, Mark Davidson – Union County is working with IFA on developing a scope of work and contract for infrastructure installation and could begin work as early as 2016.
- Forest Projects Update, Nils Christoffersen – Decisions on Lower Joseph and East Face projects are expected within five months. Projects represent over two years of “pipeline development” and could result in significant forest product and employment increases. Federal forest health investments look good. Collaboratives are facing challenges including fears that agreements will be scaled up inappropriately, maintaining confidence in the collaborative system, and keeping stakeholder relationships strong. Forest sector workforce development surveys are underway with a report expected this spring.
- Career Technical Education Update, Tim Seydel – Information on high wage/high demand jobs in the region was distributed to regional CTE partners to help inform CTE grant applications. Need to continue regional effort to connect workforce training with employer needs. The Baker Technical Institute provides a model the region can learn from.

Area Commission on Transportation Update - Craig Sipp, ODOT

Connect Oregon VI will include \$4.5 million for Region 5 projects. Regional Solutions Team will be asked to provide information on whether or not proposed projects address regional priorities. A kick-off meeting, including a presentation by the Governor’s Transportation Vision Panel, is scheduled for January 25 in La Grande and projects will be presented April 7 in John Day. Advisory Committee members are welcome to participate. Craig will provide specific meeting information.

Regional Priority Review

The Advisory Committee requested that our next meeting focus on a thorough discussion of regional priorities including additional information on the state of the region backed up with data from regional economists.

Our next meeting will be held in late January/early February at the Baker Technical Institute and will include a tour of BCI and an in-depth discussion of regional priorities.