

RS EXCHANGE

REGIONAL SOLUTIONS

Weekly Report

Wednesday, October 14, 2020

Below are some highlights from the Governor's [Regional Solutions \(RS\) Coordinators](#), on behalf of the eleven interagency teams across Oregon.

Regional Solutions (RS) Director – Leah Horner

North Coast Region – Jennifer Purcell

- **Rainier 'A' Street Rail Safety Improvements Project** – This past weekend, the community of Rainier, Oregon celebrated completion of this innovative and transformational project, two decades in the making. A number of partners envisioned these important safety improvements and facilitated, coordinated and championed the project to completion. Special thanks to Senator Betsy Johnson, the City of Rainier, Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT), Business Oregon, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Portland & Western Railroad (PNWR), Port of Columbia County and local partners.

Background – The Rainier 'A' Street Rail Project is located in the heart of the City of Rainier where the Portland & Western Railroad (PNWR) track bisects 'A' Street lengthwise from West 2nd Street through East 6th Street. This eight-block section of a busy city street has coexisted with an active rail line since 1896. Trains, trucks, automobiles, bicycles and pedestrians all share the same road surface, creating significant safety hazards for all modes of travel. Economic development and increased business activity have intensified these hazards. This project has dramatically improved safety for the community and facilitated continued economic development for the region.

The primary project objective was to physically separate rail operations from street traffic. The track has been daylighted and re-aligned, roadways curbed and paved, and new rail crossing gates installed. The project also included designated pedestrian crosswalks, ADA compliant sidewalks, new street illumination, and a new stormwater system. In concurrent



Photos: (Above) Senator Johnson addresses celebrants (Below) Aerial view of the City of Rainier's new 'A' Street corridor



projects, the City of Rainier upgraded and relocated the city's utilities, added off-street parking, and improved freight movement to US30.

The biggest challenge for the project was finding the needed \$11M. Regional Solutions was instrumental in securing funding from a variety of sources, providing convening capacity and project management where needed, and coordinating agency engagement and support. Specifically, the North Coast Regional Solutions Team:

- Assisted PNWR in preparing their Connect Oregon V application to help fund rebuild the track and rail-bed;
- Secured ODOT Transportation Enhancement (TE) funds for crosswalks and ADA compliant sidewalks;
- Helped the City of Rainier secure TE matching funds;
- Coordinated with the City of Rainier to align their First Street Plaza project and utility work with the ODOT roadway project, reducing the city's costs and project complexity;
- Helped manage the Cooperative Improvement Agreement with ODOT and the Clean Water SRF Loan Agreement with DEQ;
- Took the lead in resolving access issues to two houses east of 6th St whose only access for a century had been to use the railroad right of way; and
- Actively engaged in community outreach throughout the project's life.



Photos: Before (Left) and after (Right) construction of safety improvements along the City of Rainier's 'A' Street

Mid-Valley Region – Jody Christensen

- **Santiam Canyon Wildfire Economic Recovery Team (SC WERT)** – The SC WERT held their second meeting, which included a Debris Taskforce removal overview and Step 2 discussion, roundtable discussions on gaps in community services, and a brief housing conversation in preparation for the next meeting. Areas of concerns include the need to financial and capacity support for non-profits on the front line of response and for the Mid-Willamette Valley COG, which provides planning services for the Santiam Canyon cities, and the increasing need for behavioral health services. There continues to be heightened concerns about protecting the river from debris/erosion and ensuring safe drinking water for Turner and Salem.
 - **Debris Removal preferred option is State Managed/Locally Coordinated:** After the Debris Taskforce presentation, Marion County Commissioner Kevin Cameron and Linn County Commissioner Will Tucker shared their joint-board and emergency staff discussions. Both noted that the counties would not have the ability to fund the debris removal.

- The weekly Thursday meeting is 8-9:30 AM
<https://zoom.us/j/93851096785?pwd=Sk0xdSt0emt0NERQNW1yN1JQNUJxdz09>
 Meeting ID: 938 5109 6785 Passcode: 664133
 One tap mobile +16699006833,,93851096785#,,,,,0#,,664133#
- **Mid-Valley COVID ERT** met this week to hear updates and identify concerns about the next few months. Issues included rapid testing communication and process, Coronavirus Relief Funds (CRF) expenditures/upcoming deadline; keeping up with guidance updates; and national data showing 50% hospitality jobs will be lost by December.

South Valley/Mid Coast Region – Sarah Means

- **Lincoln City Bay Walk Sidewalk Project** – The City of Lincoln City is working to design and construct a portion of sidewalk along Highway 101 on the south side of the city that will complete a gap in the pedestrian system on the highway. The project is complicated from an ownership, land use, geotechnical, and design perspective. At the request of the City, RS has been engaged in the conversation to find solutions in partnership with ODOT and the City. This week, RS, ODOT and the City met to discuss the process, design and timeline moving forward. The need for creative solutions to the geotechnical challenges is needed. The City is working closely with ODOT to understand what the solution may be with an immediate next step to have appropriate geotechnical engineers discuss acceptable design concepts.
- **Blue River Water/Wastewater** – Prior to the Holiday Farm Fire, the RST has been engaged with the community of Blue River and Lane County on the topics of water and wastewater. Blue River does have a water district, but the fire destroyed/damaged much of that infrastructure. The community has long talked about formation of a community wastewater system. The RST is engaging in conversations with community representatives and Lane County on the path forward following the fire. A significant amount of funding will be necessary for both water and wastewater infrastructure rebuild/build. Additionally, there will need to be a significant amount of coordination with state, county, and community representatives should the project move forward.
- **SVMC Wildfire Economic Recovery Team** – Note that this team will be focused on the Echo Mountain and Holiday Farm fires in Lincoln and Lane/Linn counties respectively. The team heard from the Debris Taskforce on the ash and debris removal process. The team provided feedback on what was presented. Counties were in agreement that a state managed, locally coordinated approach to debris removal is an appropriate option moving forward. Counties are asking for written agreements moving forward to help provide clarity and confirmation of what is being agreed to.
 - The weekly meeting time will be Thursdays at 3pm via zoom.
 Join Zoom Meeting
<https://zoom.us/j/99061672153>
 Meeting ID: 990 6167 2153
 One tap mobile
 +19292056099,,99061672153# US (New York) 12532158782,,99061672153# US
 +(Tacoma)

Southern & South Coast Regions – Alex Campbell

- **Southern Oregon Regional Wildfire Economic Recovery Council** – The first meeting of the Southern Oregon Regional Wildfire Economic Recovery Council was held this week. The body includes representatives of the communities impacted by the Almeda, South Obenchain, and

Archie Creek fires, with a particular emphasis on the many seniors, disabled, and Latinx residents displaced by the Alameda Fires.

- Meeting highlights:
 - Community representatives emphasized the strong interest of survivors to be able to remain connected with their community and Phoenix-Talent School District.
 - Representatives of the local governments expressed support for the Debris Task Force’s recommendation of a state-led, county coordinated effort for Phase 2 of the debris cleanup process.
 - Commissioner Hoyle shared her and Treasurer Reid’s concerns about the state’s ability to finance the cleanup cost through the period necessary for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) reimbursement of those costs.
 - Jackson County representatives suggested that a possible role for the body would be coordinating private philanthropic activities supporting interim and long-term housing redevelopment.
- Rogue Disposal, Inc., which operates the Dry Creek landfill in Jackson County, has begun testing debris from the fires. The majority of test have found the presence of heavy metals, but very few above the levels that could be handled by the landfill. Rogue Disposal is setting up a lined “cell” that can accept debris that does test positive for asbestos contamination.

Metro Region – Raihana Ansary

- **Metro Wildfire Economic Recovery Team (WERT):** Representatives Mark Meek and Anna Williams co-convened the first Metro WERT meeting. They reviewed the charter and scope of work with team members and Clackamas County provided an overview of their preliminary damage assessment. The Team also heard from the Debris Management Taskforce on the ash and debris removal process. Clackamas County looks forward to a state managed, locally coordinated approach that results in an expedient cleanup and conforms to FEMA guidance. However, they look forward to clarifying roles and responsibilities and would like to use their existing debris-monitoring contractor. The Team provided feedback on issues/needs/gaps including the following:
 - Ongoing case management needs related to individual assistance, housing, health care, and providing basic essentials to those that have been displaced, have damage to their homes and property.
 - The need for a statewide standard for private property clean up, especially for those who plan to clean up their own property and acceptance standards for landfills. Concerns about local dump/waste transfer station capacity.
 - Challenges reaching underserved populations including for those whom English is their second language about evacuation orders, resources and information.
 - Those who are undocumented may not be eligible for certain types of assistance and may be fearful of applying for federal assistance programs.
 - The weekly meeting time will be Wednesdays from 1 – 2:30 PM via zoom.
Join Zoom Meeting
<https://zoom.us/j/93798772230>
Meeting ID: 937 9877 2230
Passcode: 712578
One tap mobile +12532158782,,93798772230#,,,,,0#,,712578# US (Tacoma)

[North Central Region](#) – Nate Stice

- **North Central Regional Equity in Recovery Council** – The North Central Regional Equity in Recovery Council held its kick-off meeting. The RERC is a regional conduit for the Governor’s Equity in Recovery Framework, including Pandemic Operations and Response and the Council on Racial Justice. It is tasked with helping to center regional recovery conversation on equity. Council members shared their hopes for the regional work: helping to improve outcomes for underserved community, focusing on migrant and seasonal farmworkers, better engaging communities of color in local and regional decision-making bodies, and ensuring that rural is not lost in state level recovery work, to enumerate a few.

Oregon Employment Department Regional Economist Dallas Fridley presented some baseline data on how COVID has affected the regional economy, focusing on impacts to communities of color and underserved populations. The council had a robust conversation about the lack of data as a starting point, especially in rural environments.

[Central & South Central Regions](#) – Annette Liebe

- **Regional Equity in Recovery Council** – The Council meets weekly; this week’s agenda highlights included an agency overview from Business Oregon Director, Chris Cummings. The group spent some time in break out groups discussing priorities and barriers to increasing diversity, equity and economic opportunity. Key themes from the discussion included: the need for more inclusive communication strategies about available resources/support. This includes translating information into multiple languages and sharing it through trusted partners and non-traditional means. Young people who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) need to be supported with internships, training opportunities to support new businesses, and access to mentors to help with paperwork for things like loans and government procurement. Business Oregon specific ideas included focusing on mentorship programs and creating diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) goals for the agency’s loan and grant programs. The group also identified the need for better data regarding BIPOC business ownership and impacts from COVID.
- **Bowman Dam Hydro Project** – The Fish and Wildlife Commission rejected Ochoco Irrigation District’s application for a fish passage waiver to support the installation of a small hydro project at Bowman Dam. The project was designed to reduce total dissolved gas for fish, but these benefits are not eligible as habitat mitigation measures because they would be required under a Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) 401 water quality certificate. Additionally, the applicant chose not to complete an analysis of upstream available habitat and demonstrate sufficient mitigation in lieu of providing passage. The RS team worked with the partners to identify applicable state requirements and funding opportunities. The RS team will continue to support creative mitigation options in the event the applicant chooses to move forward.

[Greater Eastern](#) & [Northeast Regions](#) – Courtney Warner Crowell

- **Baker Early Learning Center (BELC) Grand Opening** – Last week the Baker Early Learning Center (BELC) held its grand opening and this week they are welcoming both preschool and kindergarten back to in-person school. The BELC is the result of a multi-year collaboration between the school district, and various state agencies and community programs. The school district was able to renovate a former elementary school, convert it into combined Head Start and Preschool Promise classrooms, and move kindergarten to the building. The building also houses various community programs and wrap around services for families. Miriam Calderon was able to speak at the grand opening via Zoom about the importance of programs like the BELC.

- **Eastern Oregon Regional Equity in Recovery Kickoff** – This week we kicked off the Eastern Oregon Regional Equity in Recovery Council. This council encompasses leaders from across eight Eastern Oregon counties and has a BIPOC membership of 44%. During the first meeting, we had a presentation on demographic and economic data from our regional economist. The council had a good conversation about the need for more data but the important point that while many in the state might not think of Eastern Oregon as diverse, we have a larger percentage than the state average for both Latinx and Tribal populations. Additionally, we have three counties with more than 25% Latinx population. The council seems excited about starting to have regional conversations about racial justice as well as provide feedback to the state.
- **Wallowa County Named One of the Top Rural “Up and Coming” Communities by US News and World Report** – Wallowa County was named #4 in the Rural-Up-And-Coming Category by [US News and World Report](#). Drivers of Wallowa County's high ranking in "Rural-Up-and-Coming" category include Population Health, Food and Nutrition, Community Vitality, Infrastructure, Education and Economy. In fact, Wallowa County was ranked #1 in this list for population health! Areas where Wallowa County didn't score as high include Housing, Equity and Public Safety. Other counties in Eastern Oregon that made the list include Grant County at #38 and Baker County at #57.