

**January 8, 2026 | 9 a.m.  
3012 Island Ave.  
La Grande, OR  
In-Person and virtual/Teams**

## NEACT Board Meeting Minutes

### Members and Alternates present:

Barry Murphy, Eric Imes, Brandon Hammond, Byron Smith, Aaron Palmquist, Tim Patton, Jacob Cain, Tom Fellows, Tim Simons, Commissioner Paul Anderes, Doug Wright, Kyle Carpenter, Commissioner Lisa Collier, Larry Wightman, Dani Schulte, Mavis Hartz, Kane Lester

### Guests present:

OTC Commission Jeff Baker, Andy Perry, John Barkley, John Doherty, Justin Walker, Brian McDowell, Beverly Lousignant (?) CPS, Justin Walker, Wade Rynearson, Jane Kerr, Courtney Crowell, Kim Curley, Teresa Penninger, Nick Meltzer, Jen Bachman, Abigail Gisler, Kayla Hootsman, Josh McCullough, Bryan Strasser, Sarah Morris

### ODOT Staff:

Ken Patterson, Sean Maloney, Michelle Owen, Angie Jones, Vicki Moles

### Opening Meeting:

- Commissioner Paul Anderes called the meeting to order
- Roll call of voting members – Quorum present
- Announcements: N/A
- September Minutes: Motion made by Commissioner Anderes to approve, Seconded by Tom Fellows. Approved.

### Public and/or Shareholders Comments:

#### Comments from Commissioner Baker:

- The governor announced a hold on moving forward with HB 3991, the referendum passed with appropriate number of signatures.
- There is an open commissioner position and a new ODOT director position.
- He looks forward to working with Lisa Sumption, interim ODOT director, and says she will add a nice dimension to ODOT.

## Northeast Area Commission on Transportation (NEACT)

- Cost for the Interstate bridge details are coming into view the Oregon journalism project reports a cost of \$14 billion, another outlet reports \$17.5 billion.
- Commissioner Baker will stay put as far as being Region 5 liaison. He has also been added to the Interstate bridge tolling committee.

## Presentations:

- Regional Transit Strategy for Baker, Union and Wallowa counties - Nick Meltzer, Kittleson & Associates, Inc., Abby Gisler, ODOT R5 Planner
  - One provider across three counties (CCNO) and recognition that the counties are interconnected. Identify improvements that can be funded through existing grant sources.
  - Full presentation available upon request.
- Capital Investment Plan - Sean Maloney, ODOT
  - NEACT's role in the CIP – identify needs and investment opportunities that are high-interest to NEACT; ACTs to update every two years.
  - For our March 5 meeting, we will focus the meeting on our list, to be submitted to OTC in April 2026.
  - Suggest NEACT members: talk with community – what do they support; are there local leverages to these projects; are there possibilities for locals to contribute funds; are there ways to combine projects?
  - Full presentation available upon request.

## Standing Items & Reports:

### Region Updates – Ken Patterson, Region 5, ODOT

- Request by Gov. Kotek to repeal HB 3991 – recommend redirecting agency funding to help offset budget gaps, tackle more sustainable funding, pursue other funding avenues for ODOT.
- New positions in ODOT:
  - Interim director, Lisa Sumption, coming from Oregon Parks and Recreation Dept. – will be planning a trip to R5, when this happens Ken will share information for a meet-n-greet opportunity.
  - Interim Division Administrator, Tova Peltz.
  - New Chief Engineer – Omar Ahmed.
  - New Chief Maintenance Engineer – not yet hired, to replace Galen McGill who is retiring.
- Trends

## Northeast Area Commission on Transportation (NEACT)

- Region 5 now making salt brine to treat roads, replacing magnesium chloride – applying brine at the same rate, approximately 30-40 gal. per mile; cost is ~ \$.50 /ton (this includes a rust inhibitor; cost w/o is \$.10/ton); cost of mag-chlor is ~ double, at \$1/ton.; level of service will not change.
- I-84 closures – three reasons for extended closures 1) crashes 2) hazardous material clean-up 3) criminal investigations.  
We are seeing a trend in commercial motor vehicle insurance being cancelled and operators are running without insurance; when it comes to a crash and cleanup is required, those clean-up businesses tend to get stuck with the bill and have difficulty getting reimbursed, they are laying off and not responding to these clean up calls; we do have some businesses in Tri-cities and Boise who are able to respond, however their response will be delayed; sometimes ODOT gets stuck with cleanup funds.
- Hiring: we are behind in our maintenance hiring for winter operations; for project delivery we have not filled positions for approximately one year. For vacancies around the state, we are strategizing where to fill positions to balance staffing with minimal operating...
- Centralization: starting February, we will begin our central operations efforts; we will see Right of Way, Geology, Hazardous Materials and Hydraulics being managed out of the region, however we will still have staff in these disciplines reporting to the region.

## Local Projects – Michelle Owen, ODOT

- Small City Allotment Program
  - Currently 9 open projects.
  - Remember new timeline for grant applications is March-April this year.
  - Max award is \$250,000.
  - For small cities of under 5,000 people.
- HB 2017 projects
  - Closing out Baker City Cedar Street project.
  - Columbia Development Authority road is under construction.
  - Hermiston N1st Place project is more than halfway completed.
  - Port of Umatilla's road project is constructed and ready for close-out.
- Local Bridge projects
  - Holbrook, Caudle Lane and City of Union projects are in design.
  - Thorn Hollow bridge on CTUIR is constructed with final paving in the spring.
- Immediate Opportunity Fund
  - New project in Echo for their industrial park road development
- Other

## Northeast Area Commission on Transportation (NEACT)

- The Travel Information Council (TIC) has a project to update the Oregon Trail Interpretive Kiosks at 12 rest areas along I-84; in design now but look for updated panels in the kiosks soon!

### Current Construction Projects- Sean Maloney, Area Manager ODOT

- Construction is slow right now for the winter; there are a few ADA curb ramp projects that are active.
- Upcoming projects for 2026 include:
  - [Tower Road Interchange Bridge over I-84](#).
  - [I-84: Eastern Oregon Durable Striping](#).
  - [I-84: Rieth Interchange and Umatilla River Bridges\\*](#).
  - [I-84: Roadway Illumination project](#).
  - OR 11 chip seal.
  - [I-84: Bridges over North Spruce Street \(La Grande\)\\*](#).
  - [Pole Line Lane Rail Crossing \(Haines\)](#).
  - [I-84: Farewell Bend - N. Fork Jacobsen Gulch](#).
  - [OR 86: Guardrail Upgrades Final Phase](#) (continues from 2025).

\* These two projects will be constructing crossovers for highway traffic in 2026 with construction in 2027

### City/County/Tribal/Transit Updates-City/County/Tribal/Transit Representatives *Regional Solutions Team-Courtney Warner-Crowell, EORST*

- Kudos to ODOT and the DMV for their rural DMV bill prioritizing rural tests; Courtney and Lisa Collier (Wallowa) meet with DMV next week.
- Upcoming meeting next week or the week after with ODOT and the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department for the Wallowa lake bridge.
- Highway 20 wildlife crossing project working on potential signage and adding locations to Google Maps.
- Ash Grove visit, Courtney attended a ribbon cutting in December to celebrate a low-carbon mill that will produce 20% more cement w/o increasing emissions.
- Meeting with big businesses in the region next week with Brian McDowell (Business Oregon) to find out how the state can help support big businesses.

#### *City updates*

- Tim Simons, Pendleton – they are planning road overlay projects this summer; also working on subdivision projects (Rees-Goad property), this includes the area around 15th and Oregon 11; the bid is finished with a pre-con meeting today (Jan. 8).

#### *County updates*

- Union County – Doug Wright reports they are prepping for summer; they have a chip seal project scheduled and looking at bridge maintenance; in addition airport projects runway 12/30 is up and running they are also looking at \$7,000,000 for a project in the

Northeast Area Commission on Transportation (NEACT)

27-30 biennium.

Water sewer project at the fairground in La Grande, pipes will run over the river and not under, working through all the details at this time.

- Umatilla County – Tom Fellows reports they are excited about the Thorn Hollow Bridge project nearing completion; they are also preparing for summer; in June they plan to oil roads in preparation for some chip seal.
- Wallowa County – Larry Whiteman reports they are brush cutting along roads and tree clearing from previous windstorms and preparing maintenance equipment, also reporting for Wallowa County Lisa Collier mentions Senate bill 9 (prioritizing requests for driving tests in rural areas), which is meant to alleviate hardships.

*Confederated tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR)*

- On the planning end of things, James Hosheit is running point on some small projects, one specifically is for rockfall.  
In the process of hiring a road foreman and a bus driver.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:16 a.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for March 5, 2026.

Respectfully submitted, Vicki Moles, R5 Community Affairs Specialist