

Northeast Area Commission on Transportation (NEACT)

**March 5, 2026
9 a.m.-noon
3012 Island Ave.
La Grande, OR
In-Person and virtual/Teams**

NEACT 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 Michelle Kaseburg, Larry Wightman, Dani Schulte, Mavis Hartz, Kane Lester, Patricia Perry, Steven Burkett, Kyle Carpenter, Commissioner Dan Dorran

Guests present:

OTC Commission Jeff Baker, Andy Perry, John Barkley, John Doherty, Justin Walker, Brian McDowell, Courtney Crowell, Kim Curley, Teresa Penninger, Nick Meltzer, Jen Bachman, Abigail Gisler, Kayla Hootsman, Sandra Alexandra, Sarah Morris, Justin Northern, Darla Linker, Andy Lindsey, Kari Carper,

ODOT Staff:

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

Opening Meeting:

- 9:02 a.m. Commissioner Dan Doran called the meeting to order
- Roll call of voting members – Quorum present
- Announcements: N/A
- January Minutes: Motion made by Mavis Hart to approve, Seconded by Dani Schulte. Approved.

Public and/or Shareholders Comments:

Comments from Commissioner Baker:

- Transportation budget faces difficult decisions include cutting or redirecting funds from existing programs and leaving positions unfilled to manage costs.
- Shared a sense of hope and NEACT's recognition of respecting resources and our planet.

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Comments from Ken Patterson:

- The proposed transportation budget includes significant cuts across several areas: Maintenance reduced by \$13 million, Commerce and compliance reduced by \$2.8 million, DMV services reduced by \$8.4 million, Administration reduced by \$12 million.
- To help cover funding gaps, the state is shifting money from existing programs, including: Community Path programs, Safe Routes to Schools, Maintenance and Operations, and Lawn mower funds.
- Budget changes will impact project funding, but approved or awarded grants will remain in place, (even if not yet signed) while unawarded funds will be reallocated.

Presentations:

- 2027-2030 STIP priority list of 5-10 projects is finalized and approved. (OTC approval?)
 - Comment from Commissioner Baker: Scope creep can derail project funding; providing more time upfront, before construction, we can launch into construction with good information.
 - Projects now need to meet 'readiness' criteria in project development and design, including cost-risk analysis.
 - STIP is valuable communication tool to show what ODOT is delivering (tangible) and what is NOT included due to constraints in how funds are used.
- Capital Investment Plan for 2027-2037 project discussion- Sean Maloney, ODOT
 - Project recommendations presented by county, with a March 14th deadline for CIP submissions. NEACT will share a priority spreadsheet with voting members, who will select 5 out of 11 projects, after which lower priority projects will be added to the broader list. ODOT will support the selection process through a committee.
 - Projects Listed:
 - US395 Safety Corridor-Punkin Center to US730
 - OR 82 Adams Ave paving
 - OR 37 Thorn Curve Realignment
 - US30/10th St paving-Baker City
 - US730 Umatilla to Irrigon turning refuges
 - Milton Cemetery Bridge Replacement
 - Exit 188 Interchange Improvements
 - OR 82 Pavement improvement
 - US730 Umatilla River bridge widening
 - I-84 climbing lanes-Pendleton

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- Boardman Interchange
- Tower Road Interchange
- Exit 216 Capacity
- I-84 Truck Parking.
- The ranked list will be sent to NEACT voting members for concurrence before sending to Salem.

Standing Items & Reports:

Region Updates – Ken Patterson, Region 5, ODOT

- Winter operations have been light due to mild weather. The performance of the new deicer product continues to be effective and cost-saving. During a recent snowstorm, District 13 utilized AVI data to generate a report explaining snowplow scheduling and routes. This information was shared with the public, providing effective communication and education. Winter operations are coming to an end with winter night shifts concluding and crews returning to day shifts starting on March 16.
- Discussions regarding broadband use within the right of way are underway and continuing to develop. The Department of Justice has confirmed that broadband is not classified as a utility and is therefore required to pay for right of way permits and installations. A statewide plan has been completed to outline the structure of ODOT's network broadband usage and could potentially be traded in exchange for right of way access through contracts. Currently, there are approximately 60 active broadband related permits across the state.
- A hazardous materials incident involving a vehicle transporting uranium hexafluoride experienced an axle fire near the Hermiston state line. The situation served as a valuable HAZMAT response training exercise for ODOT and ODF responding effectively to ensure public safety and prevent escalation.

Local Projects – Michelle Owen, ODOT

- Small City Allotment Program
 - The program is delaying their application process for a few weeks. Look for more information soon. The typical application period is open March-April.
 - 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.

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- Thorn Hollow bridge on CTUIR is constructed with final paving in the spring.
- High interest from consultants on the upcoming 27-30 STIP bridge projects

Current Construction Projects- Sean Maloney, Area Manager ODOT

- No report.

City/County/Tribal/Transit Updates-City/County/Tribal/Transit Representatives

Regional Solutions Team-Courtney Warner-Crowell, EORST

- Meeting with Carcass Removal Task Group to discuss disposable and possible compost site location and operation. The Western Landowner Association has potential funds to facilitate.
- Upcoming meeting with the Greater Northeastern Oregon group, as well as a meeting focused on stewardship of the Economic Prosperity Roadmap.
- Highway 20 wildlife crossing project is moving along smoothly. Thank you for the collaboration ODOT.
- The Lake Owyhee Boat Inspection Station has submitted a request for Capital Improvement Program (CIP) funding for Malheur County.
- The Milton-Freewater Walla Walla River project is nearing completion.
- New Harney County Project addressing ground water issues.

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).
- Bryon Smith, Hermiston – Transportation System Plan (TSP) update meeting with the city council is scheduled for next week. Feedback on Project HB217 has been mixed.
- Mavis Hart, Bike/Ped representative, is advocating for increased public education on safely sharing the road with bicycles. Funding for safety initiatives may be available through the Safety Program. Additionally, a reminder to plows and street sweepers to keep the road shoulder's clear.

County updates

- Union County – Doug Wright reports they are catching up on gravel road maintenance. The Connect Oregon Project is completed, and an airport improvement project is in the works.
- Umatilla County – Tom Fellows reported the Transportation System Plan (TSP) and Safety and Security Section 4 (SS4) are nearing completion. New SS4 materials have been received, along with additional grants and funding for safety improvements.
- Wallowa County – Larry Wightman reports they are taking advantage of the mild weather and working hard at some project catchup and completion.

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- Morrow County – Eric Imes reports that crews are working on canyon widening projects and adjusting team sizes to a sustainable level while focusing on repairing and replacing non-functioning equipment.

Confederated tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR)

- Work is underway to update the transportation plan, including addressing a recent rockslide on Mission Road. The department is hiring for James Hosheit's position as Transportation Planner, with a potential start date in May.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:50 a.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for May 7, 2026.

Respectfully submitted, Vicki Moles, R5 Community Affairs Specialist