

Southeast Area Commission on Transportation (SEACT)

January 29, 2026 | 10 a.m.
450 N. Buena Vista
Burns, OR
In-Person and virtual/Teams

SEACT Board Meeting Minutes

Members and Alternates present:

Dan Joyce, Bill Hart, Melissa Bethel, Jim Maret, Suzanne Settle, Haley Walker, Alesa Komning, Patty Dorroh, Dan Cummings, Brittany White, Andy Wood, Rick Paul, Roxanne Worley, Mike McLaughlin.

Guests present:

Sarah Griffin-Watkins, Sarah Morris, Phil Chang, Andrew Cutler, Barbra Kennedy, Andy Lindsey.

ODOT Staff:

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

Opening Meeting:

- Judge Bill Hart called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m.
- Roll call of voting members – Quorum present.
- Announcements: N/A.
- September Minutes: Motion made, Rick Paul to approve, Seconded by Andy Wood. Approved.

Public and/or Shareholder Comments:

Comments from Commissioner Chang:

Thinking about ODOT Funding from an Oregon Transportation Commission perspective.

- Funding for basic operations and maintenance is uncertain. May dip into emergency funds; hoping legislature would fix the funding package in 2025; sees a disconnect between the amount funded and how these funds are used; funding framework now, HB 2017, some projects still not finished; cannot move these funds; there is adequate funding to keep some projects going this winter.
- There is an issue with Public/PR on funding.
- Ken – looking locally, Region 5 provides projects on time and on budget.

Presentations:

- Rural Community DMV Drive Tests- Sarah Griffin-Watkins, East Region DMV Manager.

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- Sarah reported that Senate Bill 9 has passed and provides preference to local residents for driving tests, with particular emphasis on rural communities. The legislation affects 20 rural counties, including Wallowa County. The program has added DMV kiosks and exclusive “local only” DMV phone lines for scheduling.
- Presentation attached to email.
- Capital Investment Plan - Sean Maloney, Area Manager, ODOT.
 - ACTs role in the CIP – identify needs and scope projects that are high-interest to SEACT; ACTs to update every three years.
 - Identify 3-5 High Priority areas for our March 19th meeting, we will focus the meeting on our list, to be submitted to OTC in April 2026.
 - Identify high priority areas by using CIP goal weights which align with ACT weight: reasonability, urgency, safety, equity, state of repair.
 - Project recommendations will be discussed at the March 19 meeting; email Michelle Owen with your project ideas by March 5; she will compile and share with the group by March 12.
 - Presentation attached to email.
- 2027-2023 STIP-Sean Maloney, Area Manager, ODOT.
 - The Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) includes federal highway funds, state highway funds, and construction project funding. STIP funds do not cover maintenance or operations.
 - Major changes to funding levels and OTC allocations were noted.
 - Current project evaluations are based on cost estimates developed approximately nine years ago. The new design gives more room for project development over time, including changing conditions, cost increases, or updated designs. Discussion focused on programming funds for 2027, including current Region 5 (R5) projects.
 - [STIP online open house](#) is open 2/3/26-3/20/26, and public comment ends in March.
 - Presentation attached to email.

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:

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- 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.
- Weather this winter so far has been calm.
- Hiring: not hiring at our normal rate as we are trying to live within our budget
 - Maintenance positions: we are behind in our maintenance hiring for winter operations as compared to last 5 years
 - Project Delivery positions: we have not filled positions for approximately one year and the number of projects is down, too.
 - For vacancies around the state, we are strategizing where to fill positions to balance staffing with minimal operation.
 - Projects this winter focused on clearing ditches, vegetation removal to discourage homelessness, etc., instead of the usual winter maintenance like plowing roads.
 - 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.
 - December storms: OR 204 and Blue Mountains saw lots of downed limbs and approximately 100 trees, plus some around Enterprise; we are obtaining FHWA Emergency Repair funds to help with removal.
 - Vulnerable User Program: we have state funds for quick fixes.
 - Looking at ways to help people stay safe if vehicle breaks down and they need to park along the road – education campaign focused around the ‘slow down/move over’ law, smart parking; we’ve seen a few fatalities in places that are not expected – idea of handing out reflective materials to vulnerable populations.
- Legislative session: begins soon; decision could go either way; there are 240 bills being introduced pre-session; 18 focus on eastern Oregon.

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.

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- For small cities of under 5,000 people.
- Local Bridge projects
 - Three projects are in design.
 - One under construction.
 - Four (4) on the next STIP in Harney County
- Immediate Opportunity Fund
 - New project in Echo for their industrial park road development
- Other
 - 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.
- 18 projects this summer, including four (4) ADA.
- Upcoming projects in SEACT area for 2026 include:
 - U.S. 95 chip seal – Oregon/Idaho state line to Rome.
 - [I-84: Farewell Bend - N. Fork Jacobsen Gulch](#) – 16 miles of pavement/concrete repairs, 2 years-first year focused on constructing crossovers for highway traffic, construction in 2027.
 - [OR 451/U.S. 20: Vale Sidewalk and Rail Pedestrian Crossing](#)
 - Major Interstate Maintenance – District 14 project to patch existing concrete, tie in with I-84: Farewell Bend – N Fork Jacobsen Gulch project.

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

Regional Solutions Team – Courtney Crowell, EORST

- Highway 20 wildlife crossing project, working on potential signage and adding locations to Google Maps; portable variable message signs in Harper, Juntura.
- Upcoming Nyssa, Ontario, Vale, Adrian (NOVA) meeting.
- Grassy Mountain Mine Project – public comment period to Feb. 6, public hearing Jan. 29.

Transit Updates - Angie Jones, ODOT

- 12 routes in jeopardy of being lost if funding is redistributed.
- Planning for grant funding 5339-bus grant.
- ODOT is asking to put in vehicles only for this grant.
- Malheur county transit study.

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City updates

- City of Ontario – Dan Cummings: East Lane project-left turn issue-a change order is in place to add a concrete curb to redirect traffic to only turn right. A fund exchange is in place to also contract with Anderson Perry for design on N. Park Blvd.
- City of Nyssa – Jim Maret: New well project.
- City of John Day – Melissa Bethel: Waste and water treatment plant project underway. Strategic plan for downtown revitalization.
- Burns – Burns finishing snow removal project, purchased new truck plow.
- Hines – Roxanne Worley: nothing to report.

County updates

- Ontario Airport – Andy Wood: Airport fence project complete. Awaiting feedback from aviation team on shifting distribution of utilities grant funds more evenly across smaller airports.
- Grant County Airport – Haley Walker: Awaiting response on State Aviation Board; Connect Oregon grant for fuel project, helicopter pads, and snow removal buildings that would fund Ontario, Grant County, Burns, Baker, La Grande, and Pendleton.
- Malheur County – Brittany White: Concerns with public transit fundings. Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) revenues currently support 14 staff positions, voucher programs, and veteran transportation services. These programs and positions would be lost without continued STIF funding.
- Tribal Update – Suzanne Settle: Burns Paiute Tribe has a wildlife undercrossing project on Hwy 20 at our Jonesboro property (funded thru other fund) and getting an engineering study to build a building for our Transit buses.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:59 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for March 19, 2026, in John Day.

Respectfully submitted: Sarah Morris, Region 5 Executive Support Specialist and Vicki Moles, R5 Community Affairs Specialist.