Oregon Department of Transportation

OREGON STATE RAIL PLAN - IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

MEETING NOTES

Rail Advisory Committee (RAC) Work Group

February 10, 2022 | 2:00PM – 4:00PM

Microsoft Teams Meeting

Meeting Purpose and Expected Outcome:

- Review feedback and changes from November workgroups on the Rail Needs Inventory, Factors and Evaluation Criteria.
- Present Evaluation Criteria Method example scoring.
- Gather feedback on and answer questions about the Evaluation Criteria Methods.
- Review OSRP Implementation Plan Report purpose and timeline.

Attendees:

RAC Working Group	ODOT	Consultant
Johan Hellman	Bob Melbo	Brian Peck (WSP)
Bruce Carswell	Sue Hyer	Ted Axt (WSP)
Paul Langner	Karyn Criswell	Emily Benoit (WSP)
Gary Cardwell	Jennifer Sellers	Laura Shabe (Jacobs)

1. Introduction and Background

- Bob Melbo reviewed the Implementation Plan schedule, with the goal of holding the Implementation Priorities Work Group sessions with the Rail Advisory Committee (RAC) and TAC in November 2021, and the actual Evaluation and Prioritization of Projects in February.

  Bob emphasized that this effort is the first to support the State Rail Plan through development of an implementation plan.**2. Updated Evaluation Criteria**

- Emily Benoit and Ted Axt presented the feedback received and changes made to the evaluation criteria since the November 2021 TAC meetings and RAC meeting presentation.

3. Evaluation Criteria Methods

- Emily and Ted presented that each evaluation criteria has a method for scoring
- Emily and Ted provided three examples on how to apply evaluation criteria methods on sample factors.
- Ted described the overall goal of the method scoring to establish a straightforward and consistent approach that reflects the projects likely impact score per the evaluation criteria

without excessive research or data requirements in addition to incorporating the existing approach and similar information required in the Connect Oregon application.

Specific comments and discussion organized by the six factors are summarized below.

Safety Factor Methods

- Safety Discussed the user perspective for each of the four safety evaluation criteria (railroad, passenger, roadway, pedestrian/bike)

Equity Evaluation Methods

- No comments on equity.

Economic Factor Methods

- Paul Langner – In economics and operating costs, a 0 is considered negative because operating costs go up, which isn't necessarily negative. This criterion should be about more efficient operations rather than more costly operations.
    - Response: similar question came up in TAC meeting. Propose adjusting evaluation criteria to reflect the "incremental cost" (or efficiency) as opposed to overall operating cost.
- Bruce Carswell – Many of these project are not at the point where they can be prioritized by the expanding economic opportunity factor, so do stakeholders have documentation prepared to fit the expanding economic opportunity factor, since many of these project sponsors likely will not have that information?
    - Karyn Criswell – Re-enforced the point that many of these projects will score low on this evaluation criteria.

Environment Factor Methods

- Paul – Likes what changes have been made. Small comments regarding air quality that the GHG 0 score is not clear and needs to adjust the wording of the criterion to prevent double negatives.
    - Response: Project Staff will consider adjustments to the Evaluation Criteria to clarify.

Readiness Factor Methods

- Paul – Community support factor is a little confusing because a score of 1 and 2 are effectively the same. Community support and political support are not mutually exclusive.
    - Response: Project Staff will consider adjustment to the Evaluation Criteria to clarify.
- Bruce–The leverage factor is important because it shows how invested other stakeholders are in the project.
- Paul – With funding leverage, sometimes stakeholders match projects so strongly that it automatically scores high. For example, the drone delivery project in Coos Bay.
    - Karyn – This might signal the need to beta test the evaluation criteria to screen out any issues that might come out of the testing.

  - Bruce – This situation should be prevented where the evaluation criteria produces too many high-scoring anomalies.
  - Karyn – If there are places where scores are divergent amongst the reviewers, that should be flagged to help refine the evaluation criteria to minimize the possibility of criteria producing bias.

- Johan Hellman – How does the criteria prevent road to nowhere projects?
  - Ted – The criteria is flexible, and at the end of the day the prioritization process is a tool to support ODOT with decisions about identifying and evaluating projects.

Mobility Factor Methods

- Johan – How did the consultant team come to define the capacity criteria? Class 1 Railroads typically evaluate the "velocity" of throughput on the overall systems as opposed to capacity. It was noted that shortline railroads would generally use capacity as the measure shown.
  - Ted – This is one of the and/or approaches based on the initial design of the project. For example, some projects could prevent double stacked trains or reduce siding lengths. This would reduce capacity.
- Travel Reliability Redundancy
  - Bruce– Doesn't foresee any issues with redundancy within the system.
  - Johan – The word redundancy could cause issues with reviewers. This should be more rail focused rather than the entire freight transportation system.

Global Comments

- Bruce– Definitely making progress. Thinking through the process, how do you differentiate between minor and major benefits or consequences in the methodology?
  - The rail needs inventory can screen projects more closely and can help prioritize some of the methodology.
  - Ted – Because of the way the rail needs inventory is constructed, it's possible to evaluate projects based on more than one factor alone.
- Karyn – We have some different types of projects in the rail needs inventory now. Do we have criteria that we do not use depending on the project type?
  - Ted – We can filter by project type and toggle to score projects among similar projects.
- Johan – Liking the progress, but asks that there are classes of projects that score really highly in some areas but not in others, so how do we ensure that projects are competing equally?
  - Ted – Dynamic weighting can help further prioritize projects and we can prioritize projects based on specific evaluation criteria for similar projects.
  - Karyn –There are over 100 projects and it needs to be clear how we can develop a solution to this phenomenon.
  - Jennifer Sellers – The organizational process to score these projects is in process, ODOT staff is currently developing a proposal.

- Johan – Like the design of the document, touches on a lot of different factors which allows for flexibility to adapt the process further.

4. Next Steps and Action Items

- ODOT and the Consultant team will work to incorporate the RAC Working Group comments into the Evaluation Criteria Memo.
  - RAC written comments are due by Tuesday, February 15th.
- The team is working through a process to best assign scores/calculations once the evaluation criteria and method approach is confirmed.
- Additional items:
  - Send out RAC Working Group notes
  - Incorporate TAC comments for updated project prioritization method characteristics and evaluation criteria memo
  - Further refine public involvement process