

# Rail Advisory Committee (RAC)

## Tuesday, December 12, 2023

### 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

### Meeting Minutes

#### Attendees, RAC Members

*Johan Hellman, Co-Chair*

*Aaron Hunt*

*Carmen Merlo*

*Chase Kitchen*

*Chris Myron*

*Toby Van Altvorst*

*Glenn Carey*

#### Introductions and Committee Business

- Quorum confirmed
- Chair and Vice Chair are re-elected by unanimous vote
- Minutes approved (09/19/2023)

#### Senate Bill 16.1 Update:

- The working group met and suggested additional edits. Another working group meeting will be held 12/18/2023.
- Next step will be to send to the Department of Justice (DOJ) for review.

#### House Bill 3406 – Shortline Credit

- No public comments were received.
- DOJ reviewed and approved.
- Will be on the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) OTC Consent Agenda on 01/24/2024.

#### Legislative Update: Kathy Holmes and Bruce Carswell

- Short session begins on February 5, 2024.

#### Oregon State Rail Plan – Bob Melbo

- David Evans and Associates will be the consultant supporting this work.
- The completion date estimate is early 2025.
- We've received our first submission to the RNI selection process. We are working through the process to import data.

#### Connect Oregon and Policy Plan Update – Erik Havig

- The next competitive round will be released on January 11, 2024. More information, including the timeline can be found on the Connect Oregon website.
- Anticipated awards are at least \$46 million in projects.
- Program is solely funded by vehicle privilege tax.
- Connect Oregon is for rail, aviation, and marine projects.

- The Oregon State Rail Plan - Implementation Plan contains factors and criteria that may be useful in evaluating the Connect Oregon grant applications.
- [The Oregon Freight Plan Implementation Plan](#) is currently published on their website.
- The Oregon Highway Plan is in the process of being updated. For rail, the focus is highway/railroad crossings which is a point of intersection in highway and rail safety.

### State of Oregon Department of Transportation [Strategic Plan Update](#) – Mary McGowan

- The Strategic Action Plan (SAP) documents priorities for ODOT. It documents measurable goals and near-term actions for the next five years and identifies measurable specific outcomes.
- The SAP is intended to be a focused, actionable plan. It is not a comprehensive list of all ODOT programs, activities and investments.
- The SAP is intended to operationalize long-term policy plans, communicate priorities with partners and attempt to demonstrate our forward-leaning approach to climate action and awareness. The SAP increases transparency and accountability.
- Draft is complete and ready for review by committees, anticipating OTC approval in Q1/2024.

### RAC Membership Refresh – Jennifer Sellers for Kathy Holmes

- Bob Melbo has been working with the Association of Oregon Counties. Jake Boone was recommended for a RAC seat and the approval process has begun.
- Bruce Carswell and Bob Melbo have been seeking a new member to represent industries with strong rail connections. A few names have been provided for consideration and are under review.
- AORTA recommended Bob Krebs with Doug Allen as alternate for the Intercity/Long-distance passenger rail, commuter and transit users seat on the RAC. This membership request is in process.
- The RAC charter will be updated once updates to the approval process have been finalized.

### Quarterly Updates

- **Public Transportation Division (PTD) – Jennifer Sellers**
  - PTD is prepping for the Oregon Legislature Short Session 02/05 – 03/10/2024.
- **Passenger Rail – Kathy Holmes**
  - 2023 Ridership
    - Ridership for January – August increased 17% over 2019. October and November ridership is the highest since 2007.
    - The new fifth and sixth round trips between Portland and Seattle began 12/11/2023.
    - The ODOT team is monitoring schedules to ensure passengers can meet their connections.
  - On-time Performance (OTP) has improved.
    - The primary delays in June – August:
      - 65% Host Railroad
      - 30% Amtrak
      - 5% Other
    - The Amtrak Airo equipment (previously referenced at the Next Generation equipment) is expected for delivery in late 2026.
  - **Corridor Investment Plan – Jeff Schultz (DEA)**
    - Modeling efforts continue with FRA and UP.
  - **FRA Long-Distance Service Study – Bob Melbo**
    - FRA will hold four meetings with each of six regional groups. Two have been held with the third scheduled for 02/08/2024 in Seattle.
  - **Cascadia High Speed Rail Study – Jennifer Sellers**
    - FRA notified that both Cascadia High Speed Rail and Amtrak Cascades have been accepted into the Corridor Identification Development (CID) Program.

- The WSDOT application for the Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail Grant Program (\$197M for high-speed rail) was not accepted as the projects granted were all shovel ready and not for planning funds.

### Freight Rail Industry – Bob Melbo and Roundtable

- November showed an increase of 2.6% in both carload traffic and container traffic combined over same month last year.
- 2023 vs. 2022 carload traffic is up very slightly. Intermodal business is down year over year.
- Regional freight is seeing an upward tick. Individual railroads are working through issues w/Cities and Counties in working with unhoused populations on railroad right of way.
- Traffic levels for shortlines are steady.

### Public Comments

No public comments

### Agenda Build

- Next RAC quarterly meeting is scheduled for March 19, 2023, and will be in person with a hybrid option.
- Diversity Equity and Inclusion Training (45 minutes).
- Standing Topics:
  - PTD, High speed and Passenger Rail, Freight Rail, Legislative and Connect Oregon Updates
- Discuss Connect Oregon with State Economist
- FRA Long-Distance Service Study Update
- Oregon State Rail Plan Update

### Closing comments and Adjourn – Johan Helman

Meeting adjourned at 10:53AM