

XIII. Rest Area Closures

Karen Morrison reported on rest areas and reports one was closing, in response to questions from Marian Owens at the last meeting. There are 14 maintenance districts in Oregon who respond to incidents and weather events. They also repair and maintain the highway and all features. The funding for maintenance comes from gas tax dollars. ODOT-provided rest areas are a place for drivers to take a short break and use the restroom. ODOT facilities are open 24 hours per day and there is no charge. ODOT has arrangements with other land managers for their facilities to also be available but remain under that entity's jurisdiction. ODOT provides funding for day-to-day maintenance. When state parks left ODOT to become its own agency, ODOT entered into an agreement with them allowing drivers to use certain day-use areas, so ODOT was able to give funding to them. ODOT gives money to Parks they manage the facilities and determine how that money is divided among the park properties covered by the agreement. Valley of the Rogue is one of those parks. Because of ODOT budget shortfalls, ODOT has had to reduce the funding to State Parks for this purpose. State Parks determined at three of the day-use parks used in this way they no longer wanted 24/7 rest area-type access (Valley of the Rogue, Coburg Beach, and Tub Springs). Parks' challenges included day and night management challenges, vandalism, other criminal activity, and litter. Parks also wanted to manage this area as a typical day-use area because of its proximity to the campground there. Therefore, ODOT modified the agreement so these parks will no longer be given ODOT funding assistance to be operated as a 24/7 rest area but will remain open. Reports of them being closed are not accurate; Parks is shifting how they manage it, but it continues to be open to the public. Seven of the parks will remain partners with ODOT, allowing this use. Safety is a core value at ODOT, but the budget crisis has required some hard choices to be made regarding funding. Ms. Owens remarked on local rest areas that have been closed and the safety concerns this has caused, with trucks parking on the side of the highway.