



OREGON TRAVEL INFORMATION COUNCIL
SEPTEMBER 13, 2018 LEGISLATIVE REPORT

SUBJECT: Roadside Rest Area Transition Plan

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BACKGROUND: In the 2017 Regular Session of the Oregon Legislature, HB 2017 was passed which included the transfer of management responsibilities for eight additional highway rest areas to the Travel Information Council (TIC) along with increased operational funding and capital funding.

The legislation included the following requirement: *"The council shall provide a report on the transition plan to the Joint Committee on Transportation established under section 26 of this 2017 Act in the manner provided by ORS 192.245 no later than September 15, 2018."* This is that report.

For the purpose of improving the overall experience for travelers using Oregon's highway rest areas, HB 2017 expanded the scope of responsibilities for the TIC to include management of an additional five rest areas owned by the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) beginning July 1, 2018 and three rest areas owned by the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) beginning July 1, 2019. At that point, the TIC will be managing 39 rest areas in 25 locations throughout the state. The legislation also included capital funding for improvements to all rest areas under TIC management across the state.

Transition of ODOT Rest Areas

After the passage of the legislation, the TIC immediately began discussions and information sharing with ODOT to prepare for a smooth transition of the five rest areas on July 1st of this year. ODOT worked with us on the transfer of information relating to rest area buildings, utilities and permits, site drawings, existing contracts and on revising the Inter-Agency Agreement. In the spring of this year the TIC began recruiting the necessary staff for these rest areas. We are pleased to report that we were able to hire experienced and qualified staff who have "hit the ground running" and performed outstandingly thus far. The handoff of management of these rest areas from ODOT to TIC was seamless.

The five ODOT rest areas are as follows:

- **Cow Canyon:** located on Hwy 97 between Madras and The Dalles.
- **Beaver Marsh:** located on Hwy 97 between La Pine and Klamath Falls.
- **Midland:** located on Hwy 97 between Klamath Falls and the California border.
- **The Maples:** located on Hwy 22 between Salem and Detroit.
- **Sunset Springs:** located on Hwy 26 between Portland and Seaside.

Since assuming management duties on July 1st staff have been working in the rest areas to improve the overall appearance and cleanliness, replacing amenities to meet TIC operational standards, enhancing services and supplies to accommodate increased efficiency, and to address any building, sewer and water systems issues that could potentially result in rest area closures. This includes things like sewer system filters, pumps and pipe repairs, septic tank pumping, electrical repairs, and removing hazardous dead trees. The TIC has also been

installing vehicle and people counters and acquiring the necessary equipment to perform janitorial and landscaping duties in the new rest areas.

Transition of OPRD Rest Areas

On July 1, 2019 management responsibilities for three rest areas owned by OPRD will transfer to the TIC. We have had several meetings with OPRD staff in preparation for the transition and like ODOT, OPRD has been extremely cooperative and helpful in providing available documentation relating to these rest areas. Staff from the two agencies are working out the details to define rest area boundaries, install vehicle/people counters, define maintenance and operational resource needs and draft an Inter-Agency Agreement.

The three OPRD rest areas are as follows:

- **Ellmaker Wayside:** located on Hwy 20 between Philomath and Newport.
- **Van Duzer:** located on Hwy 18 between Grand Ronde and Lincoln City.
- **Peter Skene Ogden:** located on Hwy 97 between Redmond and Madras.

Capital Funding

The funding provided in HB 2017 for rest area operations and capital improvements allowed the agency to contract for a condition assessment of its current and incoming rest areas. We now have a much clearer picture of overall rest area conditions. The study provides a strong basis for ongoing assessments of systems in the rest areas, and will be used to prioritize repairs, address deferred maintenance issues, and make improvements over the next four biennia.

The TIC is prioritizing capital projects to reduce the potential for rest area closures due to system inadequacies, update facilities and address issues of insufficient capacity and ADA access. For example, projects completed this summer or currently in development include the following:

- We replaced the filtration "curtains" in the septic system at Gettings Creek rest area. The old curtain system was worn out and not adequately filtering sewage which was putting us in danger of non-compliance with our DEQ permit.
- We rehabilitated the manholes at the Santiam rest area which are part of the connection to the sewage treatment facility in the City of Jefferson. The manholes had been in danger of failing which would have required excavation and complete replacement.
- We are in the design phase of a project to replace the walkways, picnic tables and ADA access ramps at the Santiam Rest Area.
- We are in the design phase for projects to remodel the auxiliary restrooms and replace the main restroom buildings at the Oak Grove rest area, north of Eugene. The Oak Grove restroom facilities are inadequate for the amount of traffic the rest area receives. During peak summer travel as well as during college football season, long lines of travelers waiting to use the restrooms are common. The new facilities will triple the capacity of the restrooms. We hope to go out to bid later this fall.

In addition to improvements to rest area facilities, the TIC has contracted with a company to implement an electronic comment system, called "Opiniator," that will allow travelers to use cell phones to comment on their experience in rest areas and will facilitate real-time alerts to staff of conditions needing immediate attention.

The Opiniator system is easy to use and convenient, allowing travelers to provide information and feedback via telephone call, text or internet. We receive the information in real-time resulting in customized alerts, follow-up and data logging. The Opiniator system is a fully automated, digital, real-time database, that we anticipate will enable us to better manage the rest areas in the following ways:

- Respond, document responses and analyze rest area urgent response needs.
- Collect and analyze data to enhance evaluation of rest area resource needs.
- Collect and analyze data to enhance quantification of our performance measures.

