

Office of Governor Kate Brown

# Governor's Transportation Vision Panel

January 28, 2016 – Cascades West Regional Forum Summary

## Project Overview

The Governor's Transportation Vision Panel is a yearlong effort to develop a series of recommendations for the Governor that address transportation issues across all modes and regions of the state. Members of the Vision Panel include legislative representatives, business owners, and civic leaders from across Oregon. Under the leadership of Governor Kate Brown, members of the Vision Panel have been charged with the following tasks:

1. Assess the current conditions of Oregon's transportation system
2. Develop a long-term vision for the future of Oregon's transportation system
3. Create a series of recommendations that can be enacted in the near-term to lay the groundwork for this vision

## Forum Details

The regional forum was held on January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016 from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at Linn-Benton Community College (6500 Pacific Blvd SW, Albany, OR 97321). Approximately 45 people attended the meeting.

## Meeting Format

The meeting was organized around a discussion facilitated by Jeanne Lawson, JLA Public Involvement, between the meeting attendees and the chairs. The agenda was as follows:

1. Welcome and initial activities:
  - Dot exercise
  - Comment Wall
2. Panel overview
3. Preliminary findings, regional needs/priorities, and financing discussion
4. Wrap up and summary

Upon arrival, forum members were given a sheet explaining the preliminary findings, a comment card and four dots. They were then guided toward two posters listing the Key Preliminary Findings as well as a comment wall with questions about the region's needs and priorities. They were instructed to place their dots next to the issues on the posters they would most like to discuss, and answer the questions on the comment wall.

Once attendees were seated, the Co-Chair gave an introduction explaining the preliminary findings and turned the floor to Jeanne to facilitate the discussion. The discussion revolved around the issues identified on the Key Preliminary Findings poster, as well as the specific needs and priorities of the region. Jeanne wrapped up the discussion by asking attendees if there were any recommendations for financing transportation.

To close the meeting, forum members were briefly reminded how the input from these forums will be used, and thanked for their participation.

## Key Input

### Group Discussion: Preliminary Findings

At the beginning of the meeting attendees were asked to identify the preliminary findings that they wished to discuss using a dot exercise. The issues with the highest number of dots were then used to guide the group conversation. Below are the issues with the highest number of votes, and the input pertaining to them.

#### *Transit*

*Invest in transit service improvements targeting road congestion and system gaps*

- Investments are needed in transit outside of urban areas to support the senior, veteran and handicapped population
  - Transit should be considered from an equity standpoint, recognizing that it often isn't a choice for many riders
- Corvallis transit needs funding for system improvements and intercity transit
  - Corvallis is an employment center with 19,000 vehicles commuting into the city for jobs
  - Transit is over capacity
  - Consider Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) on east/west corridor to Philomath
- Matching federal funding for transit is not possible in some communities due to the funding structure and lack of resources
- There are system gaps and missing connections out of Jefferson
- Investments in transit should be made when a system has reached its passengers per hour (PPH) limit

#### *Bottlenecks*

*Reduce roadway bottlenecks and enhance freight network alternatives*

- Land use and transportation need to collaborate and coordinate priorities in order to better remedy congestion and bottleneck issues
- Consider using Highway 99 as an alternative to I-5 between Salem and Corvallis to relieve congestion
- The bridge on Highway 20 to Philomath needs maintenance and structural improvements to ensure continued service
- The overpass on 99 is a bottleneck
- Three lanes merging onto Van Buren Bridge causes congestion
- Railroad crossings have been an impediment to mobility
- Consider a dedicated train for people travelling from Portland to Eugene for University of Oregon football games
- Highway 20 to Central Oregon needs repairs to avoid landslides

#### *Bicycle & Pedestrian*

*Invest in bicycle and pedestrian improvements targeting safety, system gaps, and road congestion*

- Educate the public on the necessity of bike and pedestrian infrastructure
  - Emphasize safety, mobility and momentum of the system
- Identify the connection to public health
- Highway 34 and Highway 20 need safety improvements for bike commuters to and from Corvallis
- Invest in regional bike paths that are separated from the road system
- Ensure that safety is considered as important as throughput when developing the bike and pedestrian system
  - Consider building bicycle boulevards
- Bicycle tourism can increase economy and vitality of a community
  - Expand and improve connections on the Oregon Scenic Bikeways
  - Increase bicycle tourism facilities on the coast
- Improve infrastructure to support multimodal trips
  - Allow for more space on buses and trains for bike storage
  - Invest in safe storage for bikes at transit stops and employment hubs
  - Create a platform for bike-sharing

### *Seismic*

#### *Invest in seismic resiliency*

- Identify and assess the risks and impacts that bridge damage will have on mobility and access after the Cascadia event
- Highway 101 needs improvements to support increased traffic post seismic event
  - Bridges need maintenance and replacement
  - North of Newport the highway is slipping into the ocean
- Low income and rural areas don't have the resources to make the necessary investments in seismic resiliency and are at a higher risk of detriment after the Cascadia event

### *Freight*

#### *Invest in strategic intermodal freight infrastructure*

- Port of Newport is working on a transload facility to avoid shipping through the Port of Portland bottleneck
- Improvements are needed to support shipping agricultural goods internationally

### **Group Discussion & Comment Wall Exercise: Regional Needs/Priorities**

The discussion was then guided toward the questions posed in the comment wall exercise pertaining to the needs and priorities of the region.

#### *What do you see as the key driver of your region's economy? How does the transportation system impact these economic drivers?*

- Improved air transportation (specifically in Eugene) will help support a growing platform for innovation and technology

- Lumber, wood manufacturing, government and the medical industry are the key economic drivers of the region
  - Improved transportation is needed to support economic growth and business development
- Make investments that will reduce dependency on SOVs for people that need to commute long distances for school or work
- Lincoln County's third largest economic driver is marine research
  - Make investments in transportation to support this industry
- Consider a transit option to and from the Cascade campus in Bend

*What are the strengths and weaknesses of your region's transportation system? What are its important connections to the rest of the state and nation?*

- The North/Northwest Connector, linking the coast to the Willamette Valley, is a strength
- Access to rail allows for movement of product
  - The rail system needs to be more reliable
- Develop a collaborative system with land use
  - Housing is a land use issue, but directly impacts transportation
- Funding and maintenance issues result when the main street in a city or town is a state funded highway
  - Freight traffic deteriorates roads
- The region needs a higher capacity arterial to support growth, freight and business development
  - Consider making Highway 97 four lanes
- There is a need for commercial air transportation

*As you look to the future of your region, how does the transportation system serve your community's long-term goals and priorities?*

- Mid-valley communities are working to develop comprehensive transportation system plans (TSPs)
  - Corvallis is focusing on building a sustainable, multimodal system
- Long-term, steady funding is needed to maintain the existing roads and bridges
- Work to legitimize biking, walking and public transit as alternatives to SOVs
  - Alternative modes are important for students, seniors, low income and disabled citizens
  - Safety improvements are needed to support these communities
- The public transit system needs increased service to meet the needs of the region
  - Employees with odd work hours often resort to biking or walking on unsafe routes
- Aim to make future investments in autonomous vehicles

**Group Discussion: Transportation Financing**

*Concepts for consideration*

- Simplify and streamline the required steps in a project to reduce costs
- Consider increasing and indexing the gas tax

- Studded tires and heavy trucks have the most impact on roads
  - Develop a way to identify and charge these users
- Consider a bike user fee to make up for the impacts from lower gas prices and increased use of alternative modes
  - Ensure that fees do not discourage ridership
  - Recognize that bicyclists may not have another option for transportation
- In the current system, it is cheaper for trucks pulling heavy loads to forgo purchasing a permit and pay the fines, than it is to purchase a permit to begin with
- Current House Bill that will enhance local match

## Comment Cards

*Below is the feedback, not raised during the group discussion, from the 11 comment cards submitted by meeting attendees.*

### *Make Oregon a Transportation “Hub”*

- Make investments in innovation that will increase access for low income, disabled and elderly users
  - Autonomous vehicles should be available to anyone without a driver’s license
- Invest in a collaborative and innovative housing and transportation system for Oregon State University
- There was concern that connected cars will allow more people to drive and increase the number of single occupancy vehicles on the road

### *K-12*

*Increase the flexibility of K-12 student transportation services across the state*

- Explore removing restrictions to yellow bus usage to support more of the community’s needs
- Community design needs to incorporate transportation options for children
  - Consider building safe bike tramways for students
  - Explore the idea of autonomous trains or vehicles for student transport

### *Facilitate Jurisdictional Transfers*

- Ensure that transferred roads are in good condition and can be maintained by the city or county
- Funding and maintenance issues result when the main street in a city or town is a state funded highway
  - Freight traffic deteriorates roads