

Office of Governor Kate Brown

Governor's Transportation Vision Panel

March 11, 2016 – Southwest Oregon 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 March 11th, 2016 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at the Coos County Courthouse Annex (201 N Adams St, Coquille, OR 97423). Approximately 35 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 attendees 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.

Freight

Invest in strategic intermodal freight infrastructure

- There was general support for continuing the Connect Oregon program
 - Make investments to improve and expand the multimodal system
 - Focus on increasing the economic vitality of the region
- Invest in the Coos Bay rail system
 - Move freight off of highways and onto rail
 - Make investments in multimodal alternatives to decrease congestion
- The lack of access to an interstate impedes the region's ability to successfully participate in the market
 - Consider linking Highway 101 and I-5, investing in shortlines and Class 1's
- Develop a state marine plan
- Increase the mobility of ports for product being shipped from Eastern and Central Oregon
- Coos Bay Harbor has been in transition, with increasing tourist interest
 - Take advantage of the opportunities that are becoming available
 - Make investments in, and take advantage of the North Spit's assets
 - Weyerhaeuser has available property
 - Work to make the harbor useful for industry and enjoyable for the community and tourists
- Implement transload facilities
 - Transload and multimodal connectors in the Eugene area will offer opportunities to remedy freight congestion and increase mobility
 - Companies often opt to avoid the Port of Portland for fear of congestion

Bottlenecks

Reduce roadway bottlenecks and enhance freight network alternatives

- Consider relaxing truck restrictions on Highway 199
- Mail goes through a series of locations that create significant delays
- Explore moving freight east before moving things north in order to relieve congestion
- Consider adding passing lanes to I-5 in Central Douglas County
- The bottlenecks in Portland cause issues for the entire state
 - Consider making Highway 97 an alternative for freight
 - Freight lanes along I-5 would help reduce congestion from shipping traffic

- Congestion on the I-5 bridge impacts the market flow of the entire state
- Improving intercity transit service would help remedy congestion issues
- Address regulatory barriers and paper barriers related to Class 1 railroads
- Improve connections between the northern and southern coastal regions by relieving truck restrictions and preventing future closures
- Prioritize the mobility of agriculture freight
- Make improvements to address increased traffic during summer months
- Congestion on highways to Elkton and Reedsport need improvements to support the coastal freight industry

Seismic

Invest in seismic resiliency

- Ensure that seismic retrofits prepare for a 9.0 earthquake
- Highway 38, Scottsburg Bridge needs investment to prevent collapse
- Conduct and provide an analysis of how resources will be allocated and the connections necessary
 - Explore using waterways as a way to provide resources and respond to a disaster
- Resiliency plans need to be connected to transportation plans
- Address seismic concerns when applying a state marine plan

Transit

Invest in transit service improvements targeting road congestion and system gaps

- Stable funding is necessary to meet the federal match
 - Seek stable funding to support weekend service, extended routes, connections, etc.
- Transit lacks frequency and reliability
- Create intercity and interregional connections
- The region is in need of transit to meet the needs of the community
 - Providing mobility for those without alternative choices
 - Increasing accessibility to goods and services
- Congestion is not the main driver for transit needs in the region
- Fixed route transit service may not meet the needs of the community
 - Identify priorities and explore alternatives
- Pursue strategies that will provide mobility for low income, student, senior and the disabled populations

Bicycle & Pedestrian

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

- The current infrastructure is unsafe for active transportation users
 - There is a lack of bike lanes and shoulders which encourages unsafe riding
 - The system does not support growing bicycle tourism in its current form

- Improve Highway 101 to better support bicycle users
 - Studies have shown the average amount spent by bicycle tourists is higher than the average tourist
 - Safer infrastructure will increase tourism and economic vitality
- Encourage safer biking through education, particularly youth
- Residents of the region may be more inclined to bike if there are safe routes and better connections between cities
 - The lack of safe bike infrastructure is an equity issue in low income communities
- Improving freight routes and mobility will remedy congestion and prevent safety concerns

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?

- Economic drivers:
 - Natural resources
 - Tourism
 - Freight
 - Wood
 - Commercial fishing
 - Employment

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?

- Strengths:
 - The Port of Coos Bay has the ability to accommodate larger vessels
 - Collaboration within the region
- Weaknesses:
 - The lack of access to resources and airports in the event of a natural disaster
 - Rail lines are in need of improvements

Group Discussion: Transportation Financing

Concepts for consideration

- Increase/index the gas tax and consider labeling it as a "Carbon Tax"
 - Incentivize local agencies adopting a gas tax when applying for state funding and grants
- Ensure equity is considered when making funding decisions
- Avoid restricting the success of businesses in the region with onerous taxes and regulations
- Consider implementing a lodging tax that gathers transportation revenue
 - Identify and take advantage of the nexus between transportation and lodging

- Ensure improvements are grounded in reality
- Consider implementing road usage charges that apply to bikes as well
- Explore allocating lottery revenue to transportation funds