

Office of Governor Kate Brown

# Governor's Transportation Vision Panel

January 13, 2016 – Lane County 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 13<sup>th</sup>, 2016 from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at Ford Alumni Center on University of Oregon Campus (1720 East 13th Avenue, Eugene, OR 97403). Approximately 57 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*

- Rural areas need better transit and services in order to improve connections and enhance business infrastructure
  - Inter-city bus lines need to have increased frequency
  - Regular and reliable transit service is needed between Eugene and Florence
- Consider reintroducing the student pass program
  - Providing bus passes to students increases the likelihood of lifetime ridership
  - Increased mobility allows students more opportunities to participate in after school programs or find jobs
- Make the focus about providing mobility for people to get to goods and services, don't emphasize decreased congestion
- Consider a public transit option on Hwy 126 to provide an alternative for those travelling to and from the valley and the coast

#### *Bicycle & Pedestrian*

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

- Rural areas need safe biking routes to Eugene and other urban centers
  - Make investments in safety early on so as to avoid make those changes in response to a fatality or accident
- Work to move higher capacity bike paths away from busier streets
- Develop the technology for a bike-share program
  - Use apps to locate unused bikes
- Investing in bike and pedestrian infrastructure meets state climate and health goals, and is a more viable option for a larger part of the population
  - Don't focus solely on how bike and pedestrian investments decrease congestion
- Bike infrastructure can increase tourism and improve the economic stability of a region
- In rural areas with limited transit options, consider removing restrictions to yellow buses to support more of the community's needs
- New and existing infrastructure needs to include curb ramps for people with disabilities
- Bike and pedestrian infrastructure is the most cost effective form of travel

## **Freight**

### *Invest in strategic intermodal freight infrastructure*

- Continue Connect Oregon
- Connections between trucks, trains, ports, etc. need to be improved for better mobility and access
- It is cheaper to take product off of the train in Portland, truck it to Eugene, and then load the product back on the train to California
- Preserve the existing rail corridor between Portland and Eugene
- Consider restoring service from Portland to eastern Oregon – Amtrak Pioneer
- Look at ways to increase passenger ridership of rail
- Consider a train schedule for taking people to and from the football games

## **K-12 Student Transportation**

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

- Consider reintroducing the student pass program
  - Providing bus passes to students increases the likelihood of lifetime ridership
  - Mobility allows students more opportunities to participate in after school programs or find jobs
- Due to Eugene's success with their Safe Routes to School Program, consider having them partner with other agencies to improve the regional school transportation system
- In rural areas with limited transit options, consider removing restrictions to yellow buses to support more of the community's needs
- Strategically place schools to avoid long travel times for students

## **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?*

- Local business is a key driver in the economy of many smaller communities
  - The transportation system should improve access to local businesses
- Ensure rural communities have infrastructure improvements to support the growing population
- Quality of life is a common goal of the region, support active transportation and transit infrastructure in order to adhere to the desires of these communities
- The education and information technology industries are key drivers in the region, but current transportation system does not support growth
- Access and connections to public land for tourism are limited, but could be an economic opportunity for the region

*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:
  - Multimodality
    - Four rail lines
    - Transit
    - Bike and pedestrian infrastructure
    - Auto travel (I-5 access)
    - Airports
      - Cresswell Airport could be a transportation hub
      - Ensure that connections between air travel and other modes are there
  - The arterial and collector roads system is adequate
  - The payroll tax to fund transit operations
- Weaknesses:
  - Passenger rail needs improvements to system to support a more regular and reliable schedule
  - Lack of alternatives to I-5
    - Insufficient modal network
    - North/south road alternatives don't support increased traffic
  - Rural communities lack connections to multimodal transportation
  - Lack of funding to support transit improvements that meet the needs of the region and the statewide goal
  - Flooding on Hwy 126 blocks travel and impacts business
    - Safety and infrastructure improvements are needed
  - There is a transportation gap in Yachats

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

- A bus service between Eugene and Florence would cut down congestion
- Increased alternative modes of transportation, specifically public transit, to reduce reliance on single occupancy vehicles (SOVs)
  - Investments in bike, pedestrian and transit infrastructure that is in proportion with the outcomes the region would like to see achieved
- An Amtrak stop in Oakridge
- Development of Coos Bay that will improve economic vitality of western Oregon
- Affordable freight mobility to support the export of goods
- Increased safety and sustainability education

**Group Discussion: Transportation Financing**

*Concepts for consideration*

- Take advantage of increased population and tourism
  - Diesel tax
  - Room tax
  - Parking space tax/sale
- Increase and index the gas tax
- Create a bi-state passenger rail authority with Washington
- Look into using revenue from the marijuana tax
- Develop a tax or user fee for bicyclists
- Increased demand on public transportation will result in increased revenue

## Comment Cards

Below is the feedback, not raised during the group discussion, from the 15 comment cards submitted by meeting attendees.

### *Bottlenecks*

*Reduce roadway bottlenecks and enhance freight network alternatives*

- Explore multi-modal solutions to bottlenecks and include the percent of economic impact on local economy
- Building more lanes will not reduce congestion, but rather increase SOV usage which will result in future congestion
- Make improvements to rural highways to support freight and serve as alternatives to main arterials

### *Seismic*

*Invest in seismic resiliency*

- Explore the transportation connections to airports that can mitigate impacts of seismic events on communities and regions
  - This type of resilience can bring resources to both large metro areas and smaller remote areas that are significantly higher risk of isolation without access to resources
- Fuel supply will be vulnerable during a seismic event
  - Consider loosening land use codes and creating intermodal freight hubs with warehouse and storage capacity to prevent lack of resources

### *Make Oregon a Transportation "Hub"*

- Promote use of EV vehicles
  - Provide clear, streamlined grant program for putting cities located along I-5 on the "EV Super Highway"
- Autonomous vehicles are an opportunity that could help the state reach Vision Zero

### *Facilitate Jurisdictional Transfers*

- Ensure that the jurisdiction can support the maintenance of the roadway long-term
- State-owned roadways should provide cities with alternatives
- If cities or counties won't take on low use state roads, consider halting maintenance or closing them