

Office of Governor Kate Brown

# Governor's Transportation Vision Panel

January 7, 2016 – Salem/Keizer 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 7<sup>th</sup>, 2016 from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. at Keizer City Hall (930 Chemawa Rd NE, Keizer, OR 97303). Approximately 58 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. Connect Oregon was also identified as a key issue, and there was general support for continuing the program.

#### *Transit*

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

- An intermodal system with good transit service is critical to the region. Rural communities lack transit and connectivity to other regions
- Improvements and funding should extend to the Chemeketa Area Regional Transportation System (CARTS), not just Salem/Keizer transit
- There is increased demand for alternative modes of travel for commuters:
  - Growing population of seniors reliant upon transit
  - Newer generations choosing more sustainable lifestyles
- Federal investments are designed for capital infrastructure, but are being used on operations as well, resulting in fewer capital investments
  - Need to invest in improved infrastructure and new buses
- Transit service is limited by the funding structure
  - Funding doesn't support night and weekend service
- Funding for statewide transit service could come from income and property taxes:
  - The state should look at equalizing transit funding in all regions, without requiring a local vote
  - Limitations on property taxes prevent adequate funding

#### *Bicycle & Pedestrian*

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

- Safety for bikes and pedestrians should be the primary goal
- Bike and pedestrian infrastructure should be considered from an economic perspective as well as a transportation perspective
  - Bike paths are difficult to site due to property ownership, but are huge economic benefit once available
- Over/under crossings for bikes and pedestrians on I-5 and Hwy 22 are needed
- Bikes and pedestrians use major roads and highways for the majority of travel. Make sure new road infrastructure plans consider bike and pedestrian needs and safety
- It would be helpful to have a cost/benefit analysis of freight vs. bicycle infrastructure improvements

- Consider a user fee for bicyclists
- Freight and bike infrastructure should be seen as complimentary. Congestion is caused by cars on the road, and improved bike infrastructure should result in relieving some of that congestion
- Look at increasing income tax to fund bike and pedestrian infrastructure, but keep gas tax for road improvements
- There needs to be a connection across the Willamette at Wilsonville that is physically separate from automobile traffic

### ***Bottlenecks***

#### *Reduce roadway bottlenecks and enhance freight network alternatives*

- Key regional and statewide bottlenecks:
  - Boone Bridge
  - Salem 3<sup>rd</sup> crossing
  - All of 99W
- Look at investing in alternatives to relieve pressure on bottlenecks, i.e. I-5 vs. 99W
- Congestion occurs during peak commuting hours, consider taking freight off popular arterials during those hours to reduce traffic pressures
- Instead of focusing on funding and investments, focus on decision based solutions, such as land use
- Tri-County is crossroad for people travelling to and from the coast resulting in traffic throughout the day
- Look at building another bridge across the Willamette in Salem/Keizer to support freight and livability
- Decisions on funding should depend on how many investments have already been made

### ***K-12 Student Transportation***

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

- Enhance safe routes to school
  - Educate students on how to bike, walk and bus to school safely
- This region includes many small communities that lack resources larger communities have, and therefore needs leverage
- Due to lack of funding, Cherriots' cut the student bus passes. This program encouraged students to ride, and fostered long term transit users
- The tradition has been to separate transportation functions; however, it would be beneficial to look at altering the restrictions on partnerships in this region i.e. transit buses vs. school buses
- Improved bike and pedestrian infrastructure and better land use decision-making should alleviate this problem
- Don't build schools on the periphery of communities

- Many communities are compact enough to allow student mobility without public transit or school buses, but are in need of safer sidewalks and biking infrastructure. Look at the needs of the community to make better decisions

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

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

#### *What are the important transportation connections for your region to the rest of the state and nation? How can these be improved?*

- Connections to intercounty transit need to include rural/suburban municipalities, i.e. Marion and Linn counties
- The transportation system supports north/south movement within valley and state. East-west connections are needed

#### *What is driving your region's economy? And how does the transportation system impact these economic drivers?*

- Agriculture is the main economic driver in the region
- There needs to be a better system for getting goods and services in and out of the region
  - Access to airports, ports and the global market
- Tourism (Yamhill Co traffic)
  - Coast, casino, wine tourism, etc.
- Salem is the government center for state which increases commuters on road to and from the capital. Reducing commuter traffic will relieve congestion and improve freight mobility
- Work with private rail companies to develop and fund an efficient Eugene to Portland commuter rail

#### *What are the strengths and weaknesses of your region's transportation system?*

- Strengths:
  - Access to rail, air travel, roads and ports
  - High demand for public transit and connectivity
  - Coordination within the region is good comparatively
- Weaknesses:
  - Lack of interconnectivity across rivers
  - Lack of funding for local commuter transit systems
  - Agriculture is impacted by congestion on rural roads that are being used as alternatives for main arterials
  - Lack of equitable statewide funding for transit
  - Inability to maintain existing infrastructure
  - Congestion on Salem bridges
  - Inadequate connectivity between Salem and Portland
    - Needs to include Keizer, Woodburn and south metro employment centers

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

- The transportation system should connect people and freight to places of employment, recreation, travel, education, medical needs, etc. efficiently, safely and in a timely and cost effective manner
- There should be an improved bicycle, pedestrian and transit system to allow equitable mobility
- The system to should have container shipping alternatives

## **Group Discussion: Transportation Financing**

### *Concepts for consideration*

- No definite recommendations for transit funding
- Need to change constitutional limitations to make transit funding more feasible
  - Change the property tax system to incentivize maximum use of urban tax lots
- Should explore alternative sources of funding, i.e. sales tax for transit
- Past funding has been allocated to new projects, ignoring known maintenance, safety and seismic projects
  - Need to invest in maintenance, seismic, bike and pedestrian infrastructure to reduce congestion and prevent future bridge and road replacement
- Trucking industry is currently undertaxed – look at this as a possible source of funding
- Index/raise the gas tax
- Increase registration fees
- Toll bridges and major routes for future maintenance
- Increase trucking fees

## **Comment Cards**

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

### ***Freight***

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

- Trucks cause the most wear and tear to the system. Trucking companies should be paying more to alleviate the impacts of their business
- Need for more local trains and train loading facilities in order to move product and reduce freight impact on roads
- Invest in airport improvements

### ***Seismic***

#### *Invest in seismic resiliency*

- Airports are very important in an event like the one we are expecting. Develop infrastructure and preparedness accordingly
- Invest in retrofitting instead of expanding our current system, i.e. roads and bridges
- Need a higher level analysis of key corridors such as Marion and Center Street bridges to prevent potential collapse
- Invest in preparing I-5 and other main arterials for movement of supplies and services necessary post seismic event

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

- Ensure that improvements and innovation are planned and enacted for the whole state, not just Portland and Eugene
- Oregon already has many innovative plans for transportation, however funding is still needed to accomplish them

### *Facilitate Jurisdictional Transfers*

- Ensure transferred roadways are in good condition so as not to put the maintenance burden on the local jurisdiction
- No urban roads should be state owned