

Office of Governor Kate Brown

Governor's Transportation Vision Panel

February 12, 2016 – South Central 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 February 12th, 2016 from 10:00am to 12:00pm at Klamath Community College Campus (7390 S 6th Street, Klamath Falls, OR 97603). Approximately 33 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. Connect Oregon was also identified as a key issue, and there was general support for continuing the program and increasing funding.

Bicycle & Pedestrian

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

- Invest in infrastructure that features the regional scenery to promote bike and pedestrian tourism
- Increasing bike and pedestrian infrastructure can be linked to health
 - Emphasize health benefits of improved active transportation
 - This is the first region in Oregon to participate in the 'Blue Zones' Project- an initiative that aims to make communities around the U.S. more walkable, bikeable, healthy and socially engaged
- Younger generations and people moving to the area are seeking alternative modes of transportation. Attracting this young talent is essential to the region's economic future
 - There is a growing interest in sustainability
- Explore how the gas tax could fund off-road infrastructure
- Pedestrian crossings cause congestion on Washburn Way
- Bike and pedestrian infrastructure will improve student mobility, access and health
 - Need to increase and improve sidewalks
 - Safety needs to be a priority
- Consider a bike user fee or tax to fund active transportation infrastructure

Bottlenecks

Reduce roadway bottlenecks and enhance freight network alternatives

- Consider making Highway 97 four lanes
 - Making Highway 97 an interstate will provide an alternative to I-5 and relieve congestion
 - Increased mobility of freight will improve the economy of the region
 - Consider making stretches of Highway 97 limited access
- Bottlenecks in Portland affect the whole state, invest in improving mobility through Portland
- Coordinate with bordering states to identify problem areas and remedy impacts in a cohesive way

Seismic

Invest in seismic resiliency

- Ensure that critical county bridges are included in funding for seismic resiliency
- Make investments to protect water, power, and other lines that go through issue corridors
- Make efforts to retrofit regional airports to support emergency services after a seismic event
 - Assess capacity, facilities, and seismic resiliency of airports to the west of the Cascades
- Klamath Airport has hangers big enough for large plane storage, the only F-15 trainer base in Oregon, and the facilities necessary for transportation and staging post seismic event
- Consider prestaging materials and resources to support the influx of population
- Do a seismic analysis of Highway 31, Highway 395 and Highway 140E

Transit

Invest in transit service improvements targeting road congestion and system gaps

- Transit needs differ from region to region, ensure funding reflects the needs of the community
- Klamath Falls is only getting transit funding for its senior population
- Funding doesn't support increased service, which is necessary to the region

Group Discussion: Transportation Financing

Concepts for consideration

- Increase and index the gas tax
- Invest in a system that revitalizes and enhances the economy
 - Address issues that prevent businesses from locating in the region
- Capitalize on opportunities to increase freight mobility and economic growth
- Consider increasing the motel tax to acquire revenue from tourism
- Look to Michigan's transit funding model when structuring Oregon's public transportation funding
- Identify ways to minimize expenses
 - This region doesn't have a facility that issues Commercial Driver's Licenses
 - The TSA doesn't provide services to the Klamath Airport
- It is necessary to modify the state highway funding structure to support county road improvements (look to solutions proposed by OACES)

Group Discussion: Regional Needs/Priorities

The discussion was then guided toward a series of questions 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?

- Most counties in the region rely on agriculture and lumber as economic drivers
 - Short line freight and freight mobility are crucial to support the economy
- Klamath Falls is the medical hub of the region
 - OHSU's rural campus is located in Klamath Falls
 - Air transportation is important to keeping this industry viable

- The transportation system needs to support access to medical services for communities in the region
 - Lake County has no ambulance service
- Tourism is a key driver of the economy
- Transloading facilities are crucial for business and economic growth

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
 - Access to railroads and airports (still needs improvement)
 - Highway 97 (still needs improvement)
 - Region 4 ODOT has been an exemplary agency
- Weaknesses
 - Low volume roads need investments to support freight
 - The Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILT) and Secure Rural Schools (SRS) need a different model

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

- An interstate through the eastside of the Cascades would support economic growth
- Connect to Weed, California for better mobility of freight