

Office of Governor Kate Brown

Governor's Transportation Vision Panel

March 8, 2016 – Rogue Valley 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 7th, 2016 from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. at Jackson County Public Works (200 Antelope Rd, White City, OR 97503). Approximately 60 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

- Funding for transit does not support regional growth
 - The federal grant that funds weekend and night transit service has run out
 - Flexible and reliable transit is essential for providing access to school, work, goods and services
- This region has a high population of low income residents spread out over a large geographic area
 - Due to the low economic vitality and lack of local funding, it is difficult to afford improvements and new technologies
- Consider connecting the regional transit system to the existing rail line
- There is a strong, regional desire for improved and increased intercity transit connections
- Consider allowing transit districts to use the revenue from transit fare boxes to match federal funding
 - Currently districts rely on local taxes
- Congestion is not the main driver of improving transit in the southern Oregon region, though the Portland bottlenecks (which impact this region) could benefit from increased transit

Seismic

Invest in seismic resiliency

- Bridges and river crossings will be important in the aftermath of a seismic event
 - Make investments in retrofitting bridges that provide necessary connections
- Coordinate with regions in northern California
- Identify and invest in what is needed to prepare regional airports
- Consider prestaging supplies in order to ensure lack of access doesn't result in lack of resources

Bicycle & Pedestrian

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

- Ensure that new infrastructure is intuitive for all users
 - Ensure that lack of access to a vehicle doesn't mean lack of access to a reliable transportation system
 - Create a cohesive transit, bicycle and pedestrian system
 - Identify where connections are needed between the off-road and on-road systems

- Transit is a necessity for the senior and disabled communities
- Provide a safe bike connection between Phoenix and Ashland
- Investing in bike and pedestrian infrastructure will decrease emissions
- Make the connection between public health and transportation when making improvements
 - Invest in safe routes to school
- Barnett Rd needs to be improved and connected in order to support those commuting to and from Medford for work

Bottlenecks

Reduce roadway bottlenecks and enhance freight network alternatives

- Portland is a major bottleneck that impacts the entire state
 - Consider investing in a train between this region and Portland to relieve congestion
- Provide incentives to companies that encourage their truck drivers to stagger freight trips in order to avoid main arterials during peak hours
- Conduct and provide an alternatives analysis of where freight mobility can be quickly restored following a seismic event
- Implementing climbing lanes on Blackwell Hill will reduce congestion on I-5
- South Metro interchange is a key bottleneck in the region

K-12

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

- 549-C provides transportation for students
 - Consider reallocating what is being spent

Make Oregon a Transportation “Hub”

- Make the connection between electric vehicles and decreased emissions
 - Expand the infrastructure to support future growth of this industry
- Make investments in innovation that will increase tourism
- Electric vehicles could provide the opportunity for electricity storage after a seismic event
- Explore alternative fuel options, e.g. compressed natural gas

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:
 - I-5 provides mobility
 - Regional center due to I-5 access

- The region's arts, natural resources and scenery brings in tourism
 - CA tourism and economic impact
 - The transportation system needs improvements in order to continue this growing market
- Harry & David
 - Wants to be year-round business – needs supporting transportation system
- Natural resources
 - Timber
 - Wine
 - Agriculture
- The regional airport is key to economic vitality
- Healthcare is an important industry and new infrastructure is needed to provide access
- Infrastructure improvements should enhance freight mobility to support the manufacturing, timber and agriculture industries in the region
- Improvements to transit and bike and pedestrian infrastructure will provide mobility for low income workers in the region
- Members of the community from younger generations that commute for work desire sustainable alternatives
- Improve transportation to support Medford as a commercial center
- Provide safe and reliable transportation to students to improve and grow the education industry

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:
 - Proximity and access to I-5 allows the region to be a commercial center
 - Harry & David provides tourism and revenue
 - Natural and agricultural resources
 - Access to airports
 - Collaboration between Jackson County and the City of Medford
- Weaknesses:
 - Lack of mobility to support agriculture freight
 - Project inefficiency contributing to unnecessary spending
 - Missing connections in bike and pedestrian infrastructure

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 needs to prepare for increased immigration and population growth
- A stabilized funding system from congress that will support the improvements that have been backlogged

Group Discussion: Transportation Financing

Concepts for consideration

- Consider adjusting the State Transportation Planning Rule by lifting or relaxing the requirements that inhibit access to state transportation funds
- The current local funding option does not adequately support smaller regions outside of metropolitan areas
 - Consider making a statewide funding management structure
- Develop strategies for better utilization of state funds
- Consider increasing and indexing the gas tax