

Office of Governor Kate Brown

# Governor's Transportation Vision Panel

January 14, 2016 – 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 January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2016 from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. at Redmond Public Works (243 E Antler Ave, Redmond, OR 97756). Approximately 45 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.

#### *Bottlenecks*

*Reduce roadway bottlenecks and enhance freight network alternatives*

- Highway 97N is a major freight route
  - Consider making 4 lanes or building more passing lanes to reduce congestion
  - In Crook County there are issues with sight distance causing safety and traffic flow concerns
  - Investing in highway 97 will alleviate some of the congestion on I-5
  - There is a lack of pull off locations for trucks causing safety and traffic concerns
  - Consider putting in a lane divider between Sunriver and La Pine to remedy safety hazards
- Investing in alternative routes between Prineville and central Oregon would relieve congestion and allow for more movement of goods

#### *Transit*

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

- Rural, central Oregon communities have limited to no access to transit
  - Unable to travel to healthcare, goods and services without single occupancy vehicles (SOVs)
- Ensure this process includes transit systems that may not be part of a district
  - Advocate tools for funding
- Smaller transit districts struggle with the matching system and are unable to acquire investments
- It is important that OSU Cascade have reliable transit
  - Focus investment on facilities instead of parking
- Explore a process for funding the relocation of employees who have to commute to work

#### *Bicycle & Pedestrian*

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

- Project planning should include all modes
- Central Oregon needs increased bike paths to support the rise in tourism
- If possible, bike and pedestrian paths should be separated

- Separated bike paths are not always the most effective, consider sharrows or bikeways as an alternative
- Invest in intercity bike paths that allow for safe travel between and within communities
  - For commuters as well as recreational riders
- Invest in safety measures for pedestrians
  - Crosswalks, signals, street lamps, etc.
- Educate students on how to bike or walk safely

## *Seismic*

### *Invest in seismic resiliency*

- Redmond's airport is central to seismic relief plans
  - The airport cannot handle all air traffic following a seismic occurrence, identify alternatives
- Inventory all airport resources i.e. fuel availability, parking, staging areas, electrical power to operate fuel systems, etc.
- Identify and retrofit bridges that will be key routes post seismic event
- Crook County is working to get the fuel supply set up for emergency services
- Sister cities have been established with coastal towns to help provide services
- There needs to be an assessment of non-highway bridges and structures
  - Maintenance is needed to prevent damage in a seismic event
  - Crook County bridges are expensive to maintain
- Develop interim steps for getting functional post a seismic incident
  - Redmond has, and will be, holding meetings to discuss solutions
    - FEMA will be heavily involved
- Bonneville Dam may be unable to produce power for anywhere from two days to three weeks
  - There are concerns about the preparedness of citizens
- Concerns about Oregon's communities' capacity post seismic occurrence can be applied to the refugee situation as well
- Link transportation planning to Oregon's soon-to-be appointed Resiliency Officer

## **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?*

- Agriculture is the key economic driver in Jefferson County
  - It's important to be able to get product out of county, as well as water for irrigation into county
- Lumber and recreation are the key economic drivers in Deschutes County
- The region has a strong, high quality workforce

- Continue improvement of workforce through education and training
- Make efforts to attract the creative class and build the software and technology industries in the region
- Increase access to transportation to improve quality of workforce
- Support the creation of living wage jobs
- Highway 97 is a threat to local business
  - Commuters don't stop in the communities it runs through
  - High speeds create safety issues for residents and drivers
- Lack of access to an interstate keeps businesses from locating in 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?*

- There is a lack of regional transit which inhibits growth and access

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

- The region needs to be able to ship containers on a national level
- Increased rail access to industrial lands
  - The trunkline along highway 97 is an opportunity to expand passenger and freight rail lines
- Highway 97 and highway 26 need safety improvements
- Consider removing barriers to school bus usage to allow for public transportation
- Increase student ridership of public transit

## **Group Discussion: Transportation Financing**

*Concepts for consideration*

- Index the gas tax and increase it by 25-50 cents
  - Gas prices are low providing this opportunity
  - Ensure gas tax revenue is reserved for roads
  - Emphasize the impact this will have on employment and present as "jobs tax"
- Consider a fee or ban for studded tires
  - Les Schwab is concerned about excess inventory
- Oregon's trucking permits are very inexpensive compared to other states (\$8 compared to \$40-\$60), consider raising the price
  - Ensure revenue is reserved for transportation infrastructure
  - Consider funding an intermodal facility
- Restrictions on cutting standing dead trees prevents further revenue from timber sales

## **Comment Cards**

Below is the feedback, not raised during the group discussion, from the 11 comment cards submitted by meeting attendees.

## ***Freight***

### *Invest in strategic intermodal freight infrastructure*

- Create intermodal freight infrastructure and facilities
  - Ensure these facilities don't negatively impact the communities in the region
- Air travel is a key component of an efficient freight system, ensure that improvements are made in order to support growth
- Hazardous and volatile oil is being transported on rail through communities
  - Communities are facing greater danger of devastating rail accidents
- Rural roads can't sustain large freight trucks

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

- Aerospace, drone technology and high end business travel by air are important drivers of innovation in a region

## ***K-12***

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

- Consider removing barriers to yellow bus usage so as to allow for public transportation
- Work to educate students on how to bus, walk or bike to school safely
- Partner with school districts to grow the student ridership of public transit

### ***Facilitate Jurisdictional Transfers***

- Ensure that transferred roads are in good condition and can be maintained by the city or county