

Office of Governor Kate Brown

Governor's Transportation Vision Panel

March 7, 2016 – Lower John Day 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 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at Dalles Readiness Center (402 E Scenic Dr, The Dalles, OR 97058). Approximately 30 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.

Seismic

Invest in Seismic Resiliency

- Seismic preparation needs to be considered in all future infrastructure plans
 - Identify and prioritize lifelines (Highway 97)
- Conduct and provide an analysis of resource allocation after a seismic event
 - Identify where resources will come from and where they will be staged
- Analyze what is necessary to bring bridges up to seismic code
 - Retrofitting The Dalles Bridge should be a priority to secure connections to resources and airports
- Consider impacts to rail
- Consider landslides and river, road, and rail transportation impacts through Gorge
- Look to the past to better prepare for the future

Bottlenecks

Reduce roadway bottlenecks and enhance freight network alternatives

- Mt. Hood St. and W 10th St. is a four-way stop in a residential neighborhood and causes congestion
- Mill Creek/Skyline are congested during harvest due to semi and farm trucks
- Columbia River Gorge congestion is due to inability to improve or increase rails and highways
- Many of the bottlenecks in Portland are result from farm-to-market traffic
 - Gillum County supports the freight traffic from neighboring counties
- Identify and address sections in the gorge with frequent winter closures
 - Consider adding parking alongside US-26 for freight traffic during these closures
- Provide incentives to companies to promote alternative freight routes in order to diminish congestion on main arterials such as I-84
- Freight trucks will often stop in the region for gas inhibiting the flow of traffic
- Tribal laws prevent building alternative barge facilities

Freight

Invest in strategic intermodal freight infrastructure

- Little can be done to improve ports in the gorge without a change of legislation
- Timing of connections between truck and rail freight needs to be improved to support the shipping of perishable foods

Bicycle & Pedestrian

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

- The lack of shoulders on regional roads create safety concerns for vehicular, bike and pedestrian users
 - The issue increases during harvest
- Most of the bike traffic in the region is recreational
- Wasco County has the highest rate of child obesity in the state
 - Make the connection between health and transportation when making improvements
 - Invest in safe routes to school
- The region is in need of sidewalks

Transit

Invest in transit service improvements targeting road congestion and system gaps

- Transit is equally unavailable to residents of the region
- The region would benefit greatly from a comprehensive transit system
 - Public transit would provide access to goods and services
 - Most transit in the area is reserved for medical reasons
- The Columbia Gorge Community College serves a very wide array of residents
 - There is no transit to connect students from outlying areas to the main campus
 - Transit is needed to provide access for students from Hood River County
- Transit is needed to support the high population of low income residents in the region

Facilitate Jurisdictional Transfers

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

K-12

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

- Explore alternatives for school transportation that improve flexibility
 - Currently students lack mobility to after school programs, work and other goods and services
- Consider making transit districts responsible for K-12 transportation
- Consider removing barriers to school bus usage

Make Oregon a Transportation “Hub”

- Invest in innovation that supports mobility and connectivity, and provides alternatives to current high speed arterials
- Utilize improvements to the broadband network
- Explore how autonomous vehicles and connected cars can improve the transportation system in Oregon

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?

- The region would benefit greatly from a passenger rail line, similar to one that used to serve the area on the Oregon side of the river
- Make investments in transportation that support:
 - The growing tech industry
 - Renewable energy
 - Tourism
- Consider what the region will be faced with following a seismic event, e.g. population, damaged infrastructure, lack of access, etc.

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:
 - Great partnerships
 - Shared equipment and resources
 - ODOT has been helpful

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

- Nationwide availability and support of truck drivers needed

Group Discussion: Transportation Financing

Concepts for consideration

- Local funding isn't adequate enough to support regional infrastructure needs
- Transit funding is reserved for seniors and the disabled, but is needed to provide for the entire population
- Pursue reliable transit funding
- Ensure rural equity when considering funding options and in exploring/developing a 'Transportation Utility Commission' concept
- Consider installing tolls, how can the state work through federal restrictions/limitations on tolling options?
- Make efforts to improve efficiency in order to reduce costs
- Rural and county roads need to be a priority when allocating funding
- If value capture methods are implemented, ensure analytics accurately depict county and rural roads as a priority
- Consider altering lottery fund allocation to support transportation infrastructure