

Joint Interim Committee on Transportation Preservation and Modernization
Meeting Summary – Central Oregon ACT working lunch, Bend tour
Thursday, August 18, 2016

Members Present: Sen. Beyer, Co-Chair; Sen. Edwards, Sen. Girod, Sen. Monroe, Sen. Winters; Rep. McKeown, Co-Chair; Rep. Bentz; Rep. Lively; Rep. McLain, Rep. Olson, Rep. Smith-Warner.

Visiting Legislators Present: Rep. Whisnant

Members Excused: Sen. Boquist, Sen. Johnson, Rep. Smith

Working Lunch with Members of North East Area Commission on Transportation

Committee members shared a networking lunch with members of the Central Oregon Area Commission on Transportation (COACT). Welcoming remarks were provided by Alan Unger, Deschutes County Commissioner and COACT Chair. Other attendees included: Tony DeBone, Deschutes County; Eric King, Bend City Manager; Ken Mullenex, Mayor of LaPine; Gus Burril, Madras City Manager; Steve Forrester, Prineville City Manager; George Endicott, Mayor of Redmond; Rick Allen, Sisters City Manager; Zach Bass, Redmond Airport Director; Wendy Holzman, Bicycle-Pedestrian Advisory Committee; Matt Wiederholt, City of Prineville Railway; Mike Hollern, Brooks Resources; Karen Friend and Scott Aycock, Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council; Charly Every, COACT trucking representative; Gary Farnsworth, Karmen Fore, Annette Liebe and Ivo Trummer, Governor's Office; Leah Craft, Paul Matehr and Della Mosier, Oregon Department of Transportation; Lindsey O'Brien, Speaker's Office; Gregory Jolivette, Legislative Fiscal Office; Pamela Fitzsimmons, staff for Sen. Johnson; Meliah Masiba, staff for Co-Chair McKeown; Billie Monroe, staff for Sen. Monroe.

Bend Tour

The Committee boarded the tour bus at ODOT's Region 4 Headquarters and were greeted by Gary Farnsworth, Bend Area Manager for ODOT Region 4. Eric King, Bend City Manager, discussed the rapid growth of the Bend metropolitan area, which has resumed after a period of stagnation during the 2007-2009 recession. He emphasized the importance of a diversified economy and touted the city's strengths in technology and venture capital. The tour traveled along the Bend Parkway and through several of the city's 32 roundabouts.

Murphy Road Project

The Murphy Road project, funded in part by the Jobs and Transportation Act of 2009, provided an east-west arterial in south Bend, crossing the Bend Parkway (U.S. 97) and installing roundabouts for improved vehicle movement. Alana Hughson of the Central Oregon Visitors Association praised the inclusive process and emphasized the role that tourism efforts play in the city's economy. Mike Hollern of Brooks Resources discussed the growing preponderance of self-contained, mixed-use community development efforts. He also emphasized the need to address what had become a growing east-west divide in the city. Eric King commented on the

defeat of a local \$.05/gallon gas tax measure, which was designed to address the shortfall in deferred street maintenance.

Committee questions and comments at this stop included: whether bicycle riders should contribute financially to road construction and maintenance; the strong support for bicycle safety in the region; the arguments supporting and opposing the local gas tax increase; and whether those arguments would likely be similar regarding a state gas tax proposal.

Bend Hawthorne Station

Karen Friend of Cascades East Transit welcomed Committee members to the downtown transit station and discussed the importance that the *ConnectOregon* program has played in the development of transit in the central Oregon region. Becky Johnson of Oregon State University-Cascades Campus noted that the campus will be opening for the first time in fall 2016 and is already expanding due to high growth in the region. She discussed community concerns about the parking impacts of the campus, discussed incentives for transit use (such as free passes for both students and employees of the university), and stressed the need for expanded routes and shorter lead times and for improved safety for biking and walking. John McLeod of Mt. Bachelor Resort gave an overview of the partnership between the resort and Cascades East Transit and the development of bus service to and from the resort. Ken Mulenex, Mayor of LaPine, noted that a transit center is currently under development in his city and will connect to the Bend transit system. Mayor Mulenex also praised ODOT as a good partner to the city and spoke about ODOT projects on U.S. Highway 97 that are benefiting LaPine, such as a new stoplight at the northern end.

Committee questions and comments at this stop included: the nature of the finances of the Cascades East Transit-Mt. Bachelor Resort partnership; the percentage of Mt. Bachelor Resort employees who use transit to get to work; how to address buses being stuck in traffic; whether employees have disincentives to using their own vehicles to travel to work; whether there is a partnership between ODOT and the City of LaPine; and the relationship between growth in LaPine and housing costs in Bend.

Mervin Sempels Road

The Committee then traveled to north Bend, which is an area that experiences significant traffic congestion. The first proposed project to address this congestion is the intersection of U.S. 97 at Cooley Road. Ken Edwards of Les Schwab provided an overview of his company, which was founded in Bend in 1952 and operates 460 stores and a fleet of 100 trucks. He spoke to the impact that traffic congestion has on businesses in the region. Gary Farnsworth noted that environmental work on the project has been completed, meaning that work can begin once funding is identified. Eric King discussed the pressure of development that has existed in the north end of Bend, beginning with a proposal for a Wal-Mart store and eventually resulting in development of a Fred Meyer location.

Committee questions and comments at this stop included: whether Les Schwab would relocate if traffic gets bad enough; whether ODOT or private business should perform modeling; the number of containers moved by Les Schwab per year; current traffic numbers between Bend and Redmond; and whether ODOT currently owns the right of way for the Cooley Road project.