

Joint Interim Committee on Transportation Preservation and Modernization
Meeting Summary – Rogue Valley ACT working lunch, Medford 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. Esquivel, Sen. Whitsett

Members Excused: Sen. Boquist, Sen. Girod, Sen. Winters, Rep. Olson

Working Lunch with Members of Rogue Valley Area Commission on Transportation

Committee members shared a networking lunch with members of the Rogue Valley Area Commission on Transportation (RVACT). Welcoming remarks were provided by Dave Lohman, member of the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC). Other attendees included: OTC Commissioner Susan Morgan; Colleen Roberts, Jackson County Commissioner; John Vial, Jackson County Public Works Director; Simon Hare, Josephine County Commissioner; Rob Brandes, Josephine County Public Works Director; John Stromberg, Mayor of Ashland; Chris Stanley, Gold Hill City Councilor; Dan DeYoung, Grants Pass City Council President; Michael Zarosinsky, Medford City Councilor; Bruce Sophie, Phoenix City Councilor; Pam VanArsdale, Mayor of Rogue River; Julie Brown and Tonia Moro, Rogue Valley Transportation District; Tim Lewis, Justin Gerlitz, Steve Haydon, David Kellenbeck and Mike Montero, Rogue Valley ACT; Karmen Fore and Ivo Trummer, Governor's Office; Art Anderson, Frank Reading, Leah Craft, Paul Mather and Gary Leaming, Oregon Department of Transportation; Mike McArthur, Association of Oregon Counties; Al Densmore, Dave Dotterer, Sean Tate and John Watt, JWA Public Affairs; Kayla Parker, Petro Stopping Center; Mark Kellenbeck, Exit 24 Storage; Kathleen Donham, League of Women Voters; Robin Maxey, Senate President's Office; Pamela Fitzsimmons, Staff for Sen. Johnson; Michelle Binker, Staff for Rep. Wilson.

Medford Tour

The Committee boarded a Rogue Valley Transportation District (RVTD) bus at Inn at the Commons for a tour of regional transportation facilities. Welcoming remarks were provided by Oregon Transportation Commission member Susan Morgan, who discussed the itinerary for the tour and emphasized the role that RVTD plays in the region.

Julie Brown, RVTD Executive Director, provided statistics on the transit agency, which was formed 41 years ago. The district now provides service to Rogue Valley Community College and the medical center, provides elderly and disabled transportation, and commuter service for businesses. Fare box receipts paid for approximately six percent of operating costs last year, which is down from a peak of 21 percent. The agency left approximately \$350,000 in available federal money on the table for lack of available matching funds. Leigh Johnson of Harry and David provided history of the company in the Medford area and emphasized the importance of dependable transportation infrastructure to the mail order business. He estimated that the

company receives 3,500 trucks of goods and sends out 7,200 trucks each year. He also indicated that an improved freight route in the region will improve freight movement and pedestrian safety.

Committee questions and comments for this panel included: whether Harry and David would be affected by Ballot Measure 97; whether the company ships by rail; what percentage of the company's business is done in Oregon; the percentage of RVTB buses that run on compressed natural gas; and whether the company ships internationally primarily out of Tacoma.

Fern Valley Interchange

Jeff Bellah, Mayor of the City of Phoenix, described the large amount of road construction that is occurring in his community, which is helping boost development. He also spoke to the reduction in travel lanes on some corridors, which he referred to as a "road diet".

Art Anderson of ODOT then narrated the ride through the recently-opened "diverging diamond" interchange at Interstate 5 and Fern Valley. The interchange is designed to minimize vehicle conflict points by moving traffic to the opposite sides of the highway, which allows for unimpeded left hand turns. He then narrated a trip through the Interstate 5 viaduct area.

Committee questions and comments for this panel included: whether using Highway 99S as the main street through Phoenix causes conflicts with ODOT; whether there has been an increase in traffic congestion due to lane reductions; how driver behavior has adapted to the new interchange alignment; whether the project received funding from the Jobs and Transportation Act of 2009; whether and when population growth will result in expansion of the urban growth boundary; and how successful projects like the Fern Valley interchange help sell the idea of a funding package.

Oregon 62 Expressway

Art Anderson of ODOT gave an overview of the realignment project for the I-5/OR 62 area, describing several planned phases for the project. He noted that the large scale of construction has earned the project the nickname "rear-end alley". The project, expected to be completed in three and a half years, will reduce traffic by diverting part of it through a bypass.

Mike Cord of Combined Transport discussed the importance of the project from a trucking perspective, noting that the cost to operate a long-haul truck is approximately \$70 per hour, meaning that reducing time stuck in congestion saves money. He also noted that reducing congestion decreases the amount of carbon dioxide put into the atmosphere. He calculated that the project, once complete, will save his company approximately 75,000 miles of truck travel. Ben Case of the Medford Airport explained the waiver process used with the Federal Aviation Administration to allow the project to move forward in proximity to the airport.

Committee questions and comments for this panel included: confirmation that the primary purpose of the project is to ease congestion; whether the trucking industry will support a transportation funding package in 2017, and what size package it would support; the importance of climbing lanes and rest areas for road safety; how many rest stops are needed on Interstate 5; and whether passage of Ballot Measure 99 would make further iterations of the *ConnectOregon* program impossible.