

Joint Interim Committee on Transportation Preservation and Modernization
Meeting Summary – South East ACT working lunch, Ontario/Nyssa tour
Tuesday, June 28th, 2016

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

Members Excused: Sen. Girod; Rep. McLain, Rep. Smith-Warner

Working Lunch with Members of South East Area Commission on Transportation

Committee members shared a networking lunch with members of the South East Area Commission on Transportation (SEACT). Attendees included: Dan Joyce, Malheur County Judge; Linda Simmons, Malheur County; Alan Daniels, Malheur County; Boyd Britton, Grant County Commissioner; Lynn Findley, Vale City Manager; Mike McLaughlin, Mayor of City of Vale; Dan Cummings, City of Ontario; Jim Hamsher, Prairie City Councilor; Mike McArthur, Association of Oregon Counties; Craig Honeyman, League of Oregon Cities; Andrea Dominguez, staff for Rep. Bentz; Craig Sipp, ODOT Region 5 Manager; Todd Strandberg, ODOT; Karmen Fore, Governor's Office; Kate Sinner, Governor's Office; Scott Fairly, Governor's Regional Solutions Manager.

Ontario/Nyssa Tour

The Committee assembled at the Four Rivers Cultural Center and boarded a charter bus for a tour of several locations in and between Ontario and Nyssa. A primary focus of the tour was the balance between agricultural land and industrial land; Rep. Cliff Bentz emphasized that any land converted from the former to the latter could be replaced. The tour passed by the only operating ethanol blending plant in eastern Oregon.

A second major focus for the tour was a proposal by RailEx to construct and operate a transload facility that would enable loading of agricultural products grown in the Ontario/Nyssa area on to trains for shipment to processing centers and consumers. The Committee reviewed one possible site for the transload facility at a defunct sugar plant property in Nyssa. While negotiations are ongoing, estimates are a need for a legislative allocation of \$22 million to construct the facility. Currently, onions and other crops produced in the area are trucked to Washington, where they are loaded onto trains and eventually pass back through Ontario on their way to market.

Agriculture in the region has begun to switch to pivot irrigation systems due to ongoing water shortages. While most farms in the area used to be in the 100-acre range, consolidation during the last several years has increased the average size to about 600 acres, which has had a real effect on the economy of the region. Emphasis was placed on the need to develop industrial land to provide a more well-rounded economy. The Committee toured one of three larger industrial sites that were recently zoned, as well as an onion packing facility.

With regard to transportation infrastructure, the Committee was shown several locations where sidewalk improvements have been made. Committee members inquired whether such

improvements interfere with freight truck movement on the routes. Also seen was a project funded by House Bill 2001 (2009) to create improved drainage on a local street to avert storm water buildup; however, that project has not yet been completed. Finally, the tour reviewed a community solar project that is being installed.