

Joint Interim Committee on Transportation

Meeting Summary- Albany area site tour, stakeholder roundtable

Tuesday, July 17th, 2024

Members Present: Sen. Gorsek, Co-Chair, Sen. Boquist, Sen. Frederick, Sen. Findley, Rep. McLain, Co-Chair, Rep. Boshart Davis, Rep. Mannix, Rep. Nathanson, Rep. Pham, Rep. Reschke

Visiting Legislators Present: Sen. Gelser-Blouin, Rep. Diel, Rep. Lively, Rep. Scharf, Rep. Tran

Members Excused: Sen. Woods, Rep. Evans

Albany Site Tour

The Committee assembled at Linn Benton Community College and boarded a battery electric bus provided by the Corvallis Transit Center. Members were welcomed by ODOT Director Kris Stricker, who provided an introduction for the tour.

Savannah Crawford, ODOT Region Manager 2, shared information about highway sweeping and grass removal efforts, noting that there is one sweeper being used in four counties including U.S. Highway 101 from Florence to Tillamook. She also noted that state and local governments are cooperating and coordinating with each other to share limited maintenance equipment.

Ms. Crawford shared information about the needs and challenges for bicycle and pedestrian safety improvements on U.S. Highway 20 and U.S. Highway 99. She noted that historic factors and existing septic systems impact new developments and that there is a high bicycle use and a high crash rate on Highway 99. Chris Bailey, Albany Public Work Director, shared information about the Corvallis-Albany Bikeway Project, which will create a new route along Highway 20 for pedestrians and cyclists. The County is currently facing challenges to purchase Right of Way (ROW) access from property owners to complete the path.

Director Strickler spoke about bridge clearance issues in the region and shared information about the Ellsworth Bridge project. The bridge was originally constructed in 1925 and due to several incidents of tall trucks hitting the cross beams at the top of the bridge, they are raising the bridge clearance. Total project cost for the construction is approx. \$5.9 million.

The committee then visited Albany's ODOT Maintenance Station to hear from managers and staff about local incident response, maintenance challenges and maintenance needs. Dustin Ross, ODOT Incident Response Manager, shared slides on recent incident response events, noting the dedication and of ODOT staff and the public appreciation of the work.

Jon Barnard, ODOT Transportation Manager Region 4, shared information about training activities and risks involved with maintenance and response work, including exposure to traffic, distracted and impaired drivers, inclement weather, and hostile environments. Maintenance activities include surface maintenance, roadway shoulders, drainage, vegetation, traffic services, and responding to emergency events. Challenges include staffing and budget shortfalls, and responding to extraordinary maintenance issues, including the 2024 ice storm which cost District 4 an estimated \$911,000 in associated costs. Mr. Barnard noted that District 4 has 10 active landslides and rockfalls that require frequent emergency response, which impacts routine maintenance efforts.

Robb Romeo, Transportation Manager at the City of Albany, spoke on their maintenance efforts. Mr. Romeo has eight employees, 8,000 traffic signs and 22 traffic signals to maintain. Emergency response is a priority, but it does impact routine maintenance operations. The City of Albany is looking for additional funding for local streets, sweeping and stormwater maintenance. They have limited response equipment, including sharing the street sweeper that is shared between multiple counties. The City of Albany owns a sweeper, and they contract out to the state to assist other areas.

The committee boarded the bus to visit local areas including Waverly Drive, 7 Mile Lane and Ridge Drive. Lisa Scherf, Transportation Services Supervisor for the City of Corvallis, spoke on transit hubs between Corvallis and Albany and estimated 18,000 people per day commute between the communities. The Corvallis transit system received grants from the 2017 transportation funding package, which allowed them to create new shuttle services and allow for fareless services to remove barriers for residents to use the system.

Kevin Hamilton, Operations Manager at Linn County Roads Department, spoke on recent traffic fatalities and traffic calming devices. Mr. Hamilton mentioned that some of the roads they maintain are over 150 years old and the existing materials and soil structures impact the road base. Mr. Hamilton noted that water is the worst enemy of roads, as it sits in ditches that then leach onto the roads causing buckling and other issues. Mr. Hamilton also noted that roadside vegetation management is an issue, including having to eradicate highly toxic plant varieties such as poison hemlock and poison oak.

Ms. Scherf then spoke about the Oregon State University (OSU) and Linn Benton Community College (LBCC) mobility hub that received discretionary funding through the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program. With this two-year funding they will improve shelters, walkways, passenger facilities and make other improvements on both campuses.

Roundtable Discussion with Cascades West Area Commission on Transportation, Jurisdictional Leaders, Business Representatives, and Topic Area Experts

Committee members and visiting legislators were joined by a number of participants and observers for a roundtable discussion of goals, possible funding strategies, and challenges moving forwards. Welcoming remarks were provided by ODOT Director Kris Strickler and Oregon Transportation Commission Vice-Chair Lee Beyer.

Other participants at the roundtable included: Jeff Baker, Oregon Transportation Commission; Jasper Smith, Benton County Developmental Diversity; Chrissy Clyburn, Linn County Developmental Disabilities Programs; Karen Tatman, ACEC Oregon; Stacey Bartholomew, Creative Housing Coalition; Kelly Brooks, Office of Governor Tina Kotek; Russ Benton, SMART Local 16; Jackie Montague, Albany City Councilor; Pat Malone, Benton County Commissioner; Mayor Charles Maughan, City of Corvallis; Lyle R. Mordhorst, Polk County Commissioner; Kevin Cameron, Marion County Commissioner; Ben Verhoeven, Oregon Association of Nurseries; Greg Macpherson, former state legislator; Wendy Byrne, Streets are for Everyone, Jay Thatcher, Safe Routes, Mayor Cathy Clarke, City of Keizer, Heather Peck, Transportation Information Council; Lisa Scherf, City of Corvallis; Mark Gibson, Siskiyou Transportation; Heather Hayes, Tradewinds Transportation; and Stratos Flanders, Knife River Construction.

In addition to participants, others present at the roundtable included: Alex Johnson, City of Albany; Chris Bailey, City of Albany; Greg Gescher, City of Corvallis; Jim McCauley, League of Oregon Cities; Kirsten

Adams, Associated General Contractors; Amanda Pietz, ODOT; Lina deMorais, Office of Senator Gelser Blouin; Jeff Stone, Oregon Association of Nurseries; Ryan Tuthill, Office of Representative Lori Chavez-Deremer; Mayor Kenneth Jackola, City of Lebanon; Patrick Sieng, Oregon Transit Association; Tanner Lloyd, Associated General Contractors; Suzanne Carlson, ODOT; Miles Pengilly, Tri-Met; Mallorie Roberts, Association of Oregon Counties; Sharon Tucker, Emerarld Valley EVA, Lani Radtke, Marion County; Savannah Crawford, ODOT; Brian Morey, ODOT; Mac Lynde, ODOT; Stuty Maskey, House Speaker's Office; Lindsay Baker, ODOT; Tim Martinez, GeoToll; and Tom Gustafson, GeoToll.

Topics of Discussion

- Stakeholders invited to share “top of mind” issue for transportation work/package;
- Stakeholders invited to share one item that is a regional challenge;
- Stakeholders invited to share examples of factors that cannot be controlled that affect transportation in their area, and;
- Stakeholders invited to share ideas for diverse, stable and sufficient transportation funding sources.

Major these that were raised during the roundtable include:

- Emphasis on addressing local and community-level transportation needs;
- Need for timely maintenance and preservation of existing infrastructure;
- Consistent, stable, and indexed funding is required for roads, staff, and transit expansions;
- Safety of roads and streets, especially for pedestrians, is a priority;
- Need for active safety measures and seismic upgrades for bridges;
- Need for accessibility and service availability for all, including low-income individuals;
- Need to explore new funding sources to replace or supplement existing revenue-generating methods;
- Promises made in legislation, such as House Bill 2017, should be fulfilled;
- Incentivize alternatives to single-occupancy vehicles and promote economic development through infrastructure projects;
- Address congestion issues that impact local economies, including in tribal areas;
- Ensure interconnectedness between cities and improve community connectivity;
- Equity concerns in transportation planning to ensure accessibility and benefit for all communities;
- Explore indexed funding mechanisms to keep pace with inflation or usage;
- Support for various revenue sources, including vehicle and bicycle tire taxes, rental car fees, and EV charging station revenues;
- Implement toll roads for new lanes, bridges, and road projects;
- Pilot tolling on specific roads and expand successful programs like OReGO;
- Establish partnerships between the state and tribes to leverage federal funding and match tribal contributions;
- Streamline bureaucratic processes/ reduce red tape to expedite transportation projects;
- Advocacy for public transit in smaller communities;
- Recognition of transportation beyond highways, including airways, railways, and inter-state bus services;
- Appreciation for the role of trucks in transporting goods and services;

- Impact of legislative actions like HB 2001 on housing and transportation needs, and;
- Need for compromise and collaboration to resolve transportation funding challenges.