

Joint Interim Committee on Transportation

Meeting Summary- Coos Bay area site tour, stakeholder roundtable

Wednesday, August 7th, 2024

Members Present: Sen. Gorsek, Co-Chair, Sen. Findley, Sen. Frederick; Rep. McLain, Co-Chair, Rep. Nathanson, Rep. Pham

Visiting Legislators Present: Speaker Fahey, Rep. Conrad, Rep. Lively

Members Excused: Sen. Boquist, Sen. Woods; Rep. Boshart-Davis, Rep. Evans, Rep. Mannix, Rep. Reschke

Coos Bay Site Tour

The Committee assembled at Marshfield High School and boarded a Rogue Valley Transportation District (RVTD) bus for a tour of transportation facilities and sites in and around Coos Bay. Members were welcomed by ODOT Assistant Director Lindsay Baker, ODOT Region 3 Manager Darrin Neavoll, Coos County Public Works/Roadmaster Paul Slater, and Coos Bay Public Works Director Jim Hossley.

Coos Bay DMV

Amy Joyce, ODOT DMV Administrator, and Dave McKay, ODOT DMV Field Services Manager, provided a tour of the DMV office in Coos Bay, as well as an overview of DMV offices statewide. Many of the facilities are experiencing maintenance issues, and some are in areas where population growth requires them to move to a new location. They noted that some facility moves are planned well in advance, while others occur on an emergency basis, making it difficult to prioritize such changes. There are about 14 DMV offices looking to move in the near future, though it will take an estimated 28 years to complete the process in all locations. They highlighted offices in Hillsboro and Gladstone as cases of high need, and emphasized the need for sufficient, stable, and predictable revenues to ensure effective facilities management.

Committee questions and comments for this portion of the tour included: the standard ratio for office space to region population; whether it is preferable to have a small number of large DMV facilities or a large number of small DMV facilities; respective benefits of renting vs. leasing vs. owning DMV facilities; how development of DMV's online presence has affected facility needs; how DMV can compete for workers with other agencies that pay more and/or allow remote work; and the impact of funding provided for Real ID Act implementation.

U.S. 101/OR 42 Junction

Mr. Neavoll provided information regarding the difficulties of keeping roads open in the region during winter months. He noted that the Siskiyou Summit is the highest pass on the Interstate 5 corridor, and that the road to Diamond Lake has the highest pass in the State of Oregon. He also addressed safety issues on U.S. 101 related to congestion, speeding, distracted driving, impairment and drowsy drivers. He indicated that a limited number of incident response

personnel covers a geographically large area. The Committee was briefed about striping and painting on U.S. 101, which presents a challenge due to weather conditions and traffic volumes. Paint, while cheaper, wears out sooner than reflective tape.

Committee questions and comments for this portion of the tour included: whether the maintenance and incident response crews are understaffed; what is the level of involvement of Oregon State Police in the corridor; whether worn fog lines results in higher road departures; where road markings fall on the list of safety priorities; and how to balance funding decisions between materials, equipment, or personnel.

Bridges, Ross Inlet Road Slide and Olive Barber Road Slide

The bus stopped near a bridge site for discussion of bridge maintenance and seismic maintenance. The region's bridge maintenance crew, which is housed at the same location as the Coos Bay DMV office, is responsible for maintaining and repairing bridges and culverts. There are 154 vulnerable and potentially vulnerable bridges in the area, with those older than 1975 being the most vulnerable and those built since 2004 being the most resilient.

The next stop was at a slide that has closed a portion of road where a slide has dropped the westbound travel lane into the nearby valley. Repair of such slides is a long process, with the slide in question expected to keep the road closed to through traffic for nearly 18 months. Such slides cost approximately \$35 million to repair just last year, consuming a significant percentage of the region's road budget. Presenters emphasized that the road system in the region is the one that has been built up over the last 100 years, and that while a road system designed today would not resemble the current one, road managers must work with the road system that exists. There are also 1,400 culverts in the region, many of which are in poor or failing condition, and failures often result in road slides and closures.

Committee questions and comments for this portion of the tour included: the types of materials used to build and maintain bridges; which bridges are eligible for federal funding; process for repairing road slides; and whether reducing the number of lanes in some corridors is an option.

Isthmus Slough Bridge

The bus traveled over the Isthmus Slough Bridge before traveling to the area below the bridge landing. The structure was completed in 1931; some sections were replaced in just one week in 1977 following a collapse. The bridge approaches were then retrofit in 2012, and the electrical system was replaced in 2018. Prior to the electrical system replacement, the bridge was weight limited, which made the bridge one of many weight-limited bridges in the region. Drawbridge maintenance is particularly expensive, and the training and experience in doing so is limited and specialized.

Committee questions and comments for this portion of the tour included: comparisons to Multnomah County drawbridges; and Coast Guard agreements on navigable waterways.

Ports, Bicycle/Pedestrian, and Transit Systems

Mike Dunning, Executive Director of the International Port of Coos Bay, provided an overview of port and wharf facilities on the south Coast. The Port operates a fairly long rail line acquired after it was abandoned years ago, which entails significant costs for maintenance and repair. The facilities are important to the region's natural resource and tourism industries. Planned expansion is intended to prevent operations from becoming constrained. There are also flooding risks to rail facilities similar to those of road risks.

The Committee also received a briefing from Coos County Area Transit (CCAT), as well as on challenges related to enhancing access for cyclists and pedestrians.

Committee questions and comments for this portion of the tour included: how CCAT has spent its funding from the Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund; the size of buses used in the region; and how full the average intercity bus tends to be.

Roundtable Discussion with South 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, Oregon Transportation Commission Chair Julie Brown, and Oregon Transportation Commission Vice-Chair Lee Beyer.

Other participants at the roundtable included: Scott Adams, Douglas County Public Works; Sue Bennett, City of Coos Bay; Jeff Bernardo, DOWL Engineering; Kathy Bernhardt, Curry Public Transit; Chuck Bracelin, Chuck Bracelin Trucking; Bret Cecil, Coos County Democrats; Rodger Craddock, Coos County Airport District; Dick Dolgonas, South West Area Commission on Transportation; Mike Dunning, International Port of Coos Bay; Kristi Gilbert, City of Sutherlin; Selina Kelly Irvin, Coos County Area Transit; Bob Main, Coos County Commissioner; Tom Orsi, Coos Trails; Rick Osborn, Blue Ridge Strategies; Andy Owens, A&M Transport; and Paul Slater, Coos County Road Supervisor.

In addition to participants, others present at the roundtable included: Jonathan Bates, United Brotherhood of Carpenters; Cheryl Cheas, Umpqua Public Transportation District; Lanelle Comstock, Port of Coos Bay; Karen Forsythe, Coos Bay resident; Matt Friesen, International Port of Coos Bay; Jamie Fugate, City of Sutherlin; Mark Gibson, Oregon Trucking Associations; Garrett Gray, Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians; Tom Gustafson, GeoToll; Matt Jensen, Coquille Indian Tribe; Mac Lynde, ODOT; Tim Martinez, GeoToll; Brett Morgan, Climate Solutions; Darrin Neavoll, ODOT; Glen Pederson, ODOT; Mallorie Roberts, Association of Oregon Counties; Nate Schwartz, Country Media; Patrick Sieng, Oregon Transit Association; Kali Sullivan, ODOT; Lindsay Ward, Coquille Indian Tribe; and Gary Wolford, Curry County Road Department.

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 themes that were raised during the roundtable include:

- The need to address ongoing repair and maintenance needs for roads;
- Need to look forward to the future, not backward;
- Need to support maintenance AND capital projects;
- Safety should be the primary concern;
- Importance of Connect Oregon to non-highway modes;
- Trail and offroad recreation needs to be funded;
- Need to remedy weight restriction on bridges;
- Finish projects promised in House Bill 2017 (2017 Session);
- Factors that cannot be controlled – climate change, inflationary cost escalation, population growth, and wildfires and other natural disasters;
- Consideration of indexing fuel taxes to inflation;
- Need to analyze legislation for impacts on local government spending and revenues;
- Need to disperse the cost of roads across the entire population;
- Consider a vehicle miles traveled tax/road usage tax for all vehicles;
- Concerns about evasion and self-reporting for weight-mile taxes;
- Need for electric vehicles to pay fair share for use of the roads, including e-bikes;
- Consider a driver education adjustment for the cost of using the roads;
- Use of telematics for road funding similar to its use for car insurance;
- Difficulty in reaching sufficient votes in Legislative Assembly for revenue bills;
- Consider charging vehicles for using the road based on vehicle cost;
- Consider a household assessment for funding roads;
- Consider toll facilities, especially for larger capital projects like the Rose Quarter;
- Replace weight mile tax with diesel fuel tax and fix Highway Cost Allocation Study;
- Importance of providing solutions that serve both rural and urban communities;
- Congestion relief is important for quality of life;
- Importance of public transportation, even in rural areas;
- Importance of Highway 101 to the region and state;
- Importance of port, rail and airport facilities;
- Areas that have high tourism are disadvantaged by distribution of State Highway Fund revenues by population;
- Consider delivery fees for transportation;
- Large scale disaster can completely cut off coastal communities.