

Rail Advisory Committee (RAC)

Tuesday, March 19, 2024

9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

Attendees, RAC Members

Bruce Carswell, Chair

Johan Hellman, Co-Chair

Aaron Hunt

Carmen Merlo

Chase Kitchen

Toby Van Altvorst

Chris Myron

Ross Lane

Glenn Carey

Bob Krebs

Jake Boone

Introductions and Committee Business

- Quorum confirmed
- Introduction of new member, Jake Boone
- Minutes approved ([12/12/2023](#))
- Legislative Update/Kali Sullivan
- Senate Bill (SB) 1572 directed ODOT to create an advisory committee to study issues related to extension of the Westside Express Service commuter rail to Salem. This bill did not pass.
- SB1553 makes drug consumption on public transportation a crime constituting interference with public transportation. This bill passed.
- SB5701 –directed a \$500,000 distribution from ODOT to Metro to study the use of existing heavy freight rail assets in the Portland metropolitan area for passenger rail alternatives to existing transportation modes. This bill passed.
- The Joint Committee on Transportation (JCT) plans to conduct a legislative roadshow this summer. The focus will be on the transportation funding package for the 2025 session.

Oregon Administrative Rule (OAR) Update

- SB16-1 OAR Chapter 741 Division 15: Sent to the Department of Justice (DOJ) for review.
- House Bill 3406 OAR Chapter 741 Division 30: The shortline tax credit was approved at the January Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) meeting.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Training

- Lisa Brown (ODOT) provided a presentation on how Diversity, Equity and Inclusion is being addressed with advisory committees as directed by HB2985, which directs committees to diversify to be more reflective of Oregon’s population as per census information.
- The objective is to ensure viewpoints of all citizens of Oregon are included in decisions and prioritize diversity, equity and inclusion by identifying and address systemic barriers.
- ODOT’s Strategic Action Plan calls for DEI across committees whether the committee is Governor appointed or not.
- DEI resource page: <https://www.oregon.gov/odot/equity/Pages/HB-2985-Guidance.aspx>

Action Item: The RAC needs to examine the onboarding process for new members. Add to the September Agenda.

Oregon State Rail Plan – Kathy Holmes

- ODOT will hire a consultant to support this work.
- Staff are working on updating the Rail Needs Inventory to more easily add new projects to the existing database.

Connect Oregon and Policy Plan Update – Erik Havig

- Daniel Porter, ODOT Chief Economist
 - The Privilege Tax is a vehicle sales tax of 0.5 percent.
 - Administrative costs are deducted from the full amount and 45 percent goes to the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ).
 - The remaining funds go to ODOT to be split as follows:
 - 92% dedicated to Connect Oregon grant program for Rail, Marine, and Aviation grants.
 - 7% to the Multimodal Active Transportation Fund for bike/ped grants.
 - 1 percent for administration of the fund.
 - Projections are that Connect Oregon will continue to be funded at the \$50M mark.
- John Boren, Freight Program Manager: Program Overview – Connect Oregon IX
 - Connect Oregon is an initiative established by the 2005 state legislature to invest in non-highway modes of transportation.
 - There have been seven competitive cycles between 2005-2022.
 - Connect Oregon XIII cycle:
 - Ran from 2021-22 awarding \$46 million in funds out of \$130M requested
 - 21 projects were selected by the OTC
 - 14 projects are on schedule, 4 complete, and 2 are expected to be complete by end of year.
 - Connect Oregon IX has 10 rail applications, 36 total applications and \$100M in requested funds.
- Connect Oregon VII – dedicated projects are down to the two intermodal projects at Treasure Valley and Millersburg, continuing work to bring them to fruition.
- The Oregon Transportation Plan has been adopted by the OTC.
- Connect Oregon Review process:
 - The June RAC meeting will serve as the Rail Modal Review meeting. This will be an all-day meeting.
 - 20-minute presentations with 5 mins for Q & A
 - Scoring to be completed mid-April.

RAC Membership Refresh – Jennifer Sellers for Kathy Holmes

- Jake Boone, Assistant City Manager of Cottage Grove has been confirmed.
- A member representing rail freight users is still needed.
- Kathy is working with ODOT Office of Social Equity to fill the four positions related to increasing social equity and ODOT's tribal representative to fill the Tribal representation.

Action Item: Kathy Holmes will schedule a meet and greet with new members.

Quarterly Updates

- **Public Transportation Division (PTD) – Suzanne Carlson**
 - PTD is requesting a permanent high-speed rail program manager in the 2025 legislative session. This position is currently a Limited Duration position. PTD will also recruit for an intern.
- **Passenger Rail – Kathy Holmes**
 - Q1 2024 Ridership: Four of last five months hit ridership records. Ridership on the full corridor has not yet reached pre-pandemic levels, but Oregon ridership exceeded it. Ridership for 2023 is 21% above 2019. High gas prices, adjusted schedules, adding two new round trips between Portland and Seattle and lowered fares are drivers of the increase.
 - Business travel remains below 2019 levels.
 - WSDOT will initiate free fares for youths under 17 in May. This was legislatively mandated in Washington.
 - On-time performance (OTP) was impacted by equipment issues and weather. We are using the new metric of customer on-time performance. Passengers are considered on-time if they make it to their destination within 15 minutes of the scheduled time. OTP improved slightly in February from January.
 - The Amtrak Airo equipment (previously referenced as the Next Generation equipment) is expected for delivery in April 2026.
- **Corridor Investment Plan – Jeff Schultz (DEA)**
 - Several scenarios with different passenger train roundtrip frequencies between Portland and Eugene are being simulated along with various freight traffic growth projections to determine where additional sidings and main tracks will be needed to efficiently accommodate more trains without detrimentally affecting service.
 - This work is underway with Union Pacific (UP) and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA).
- **FRA Long-Distance Service Study – Bob Melbo**
 - The FRA long-distance study is looking at long distance routes that were discontinued and at potential new long-distance routes.

The study has taken place over the last 15 months and is likely to take two years to complete. It assesses long distance routes of over 750 miles, focused on Amtrak as service provider, service frequencies to meet current long-distance markets, utilization of existing rail corridors and existing technology (not high-speed rail).

- Legislative considerations are the linkage to large and small communities as part of a regional rural network, advance the economic and social wellbeing of rural areas, provide enhanced connectivity for the national long-distance system and to reflect public engagement and local and regional support of restored passenger rail service.
- They have selected 15 routes as preferred routes. Two affect the Northwest, The Pioneer which operated from Seattle to Portland to Boise to Salt Lake City and on to Chicago. The other is the North Coast Hiawatha route which operates between Seattle and Denver.
- This study will produce a report for Congress. It will contain:
 - Preferred options for restoring or enhancing previous long-distance routes.
 - Prioritized inventory of capital projects to restore or enhance service.
 - It will list Federal and non-Federal funding sources.

It will include the estimated costs of the public benefit of restoring or enhancing intercity passenger rail transportation in the region for each relevant Amtrak route.

- **Cascadia High Speed Rail Study – Jennifer Sellers**
 - ODOT is working with WSDOT (WSDOT is the lead) as the project advances through the FRA Corridor Identification and Development Program.

Freight Rail Industry – Bob Melbo and Roundtable

- First 10 weeks of this year, traffic is up 2.1% over the same period last year.
- Two sawmills have announced closure. This will affect freight revenues.
- BNSF: trying to move thru a dynamic freight rail environment with focus on minimizing costs. Lots of infrastructure investments while funding is available.
- Genesee & Wyoming: January and February were good months but having the two mills go out of business will have an impact. Transloading is going to be a focus.
- Goose Lake Railway: Facing headwinds with truck market availability. Competitive lanes in lumber market have made market capture difficult. Green cement plant is promising, potentially adding 1000 carloads per year for next three years. Working on infrastructure projects.
- Oregon Eastern – lumber transloader is light (truck competition). 2023 was solid year, but first part of 2024 is softening.

Public Comments

Doug Allen/AORTA: Legislation directed ODOT work with Idaho to restore the Pioneer route. The ODOT State Rail Planner has a meeting scheduled with the Idaho representative on April 15.

Agenda Build

- Next RAC quarterly meeting is scheduled for June 18, 2024, and will be dedicated to Connect Oregon project presentations and scoring.
- Carmen invited the RAC to meet at the Port of Portland.

Closing comments and adjourn – Bruce Carswell

- Meeting adjourned at 12:24PM

Decision Considerations

Statutory

- Access to jobs/labor; reduced transportation costs*
- Economic benefits to state*
- Critical link for system*
- Required match
- Readiness*
- Useful life
- Proximity to mining aggregate

***More weight in considerations in staff scoring**

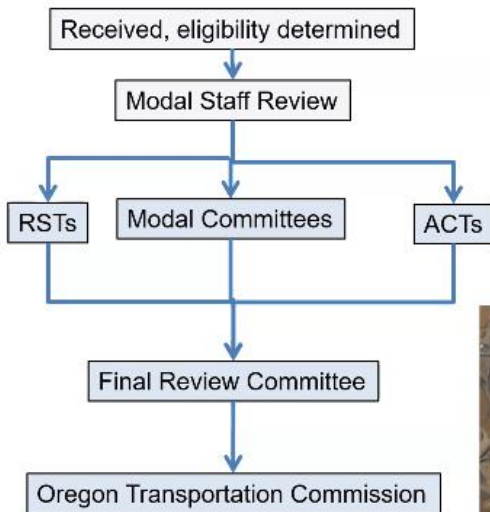


NEW: Additional considerations for breaking ties among close scoring projects; geographic mix, equity and climate/GHG impacts



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Review process




OTC anticipated to select projects in October 2024



PowerPoint 132x768 - Advisory Committee Guidance 11/2023.pptx - Head-City.pptx - PowerPoint

Committee Guidance Objectives



Better equip advisory committees and members to:

- Reflect on ODOT and Committee values.
- Utilize the ODOT Social Equity Lens in decision making.
- Incorporate diversity, equity and inclusion into guiding principles.
- Ensure inclusive practices and environment.
- Take personal ownership and accountability for equitable outcomes.
- Sets expectations and standards for membership makeup.
- Sets expectations and standards for issues and complaints.
- Provides guidance on committee compensation options and requirements.
- Provides guidance on equitable engagement and outreach.
- Provides guidance on equitable recruitments and onboarding practices.
- Offers diversity, equity and inclusion training resources.

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