

**Rail Advisory Committee
October 4, 2007
Meeting Minutes**

Meeting location:

Port of Portland Building, 121 NW Everett Street, Portland

Members in attendance:

Chuck McLaran, Chair	Bob Krebs, retired
Bruce Carswell, Portland & Western RR	Paul Langner, Teevin Bros.
John Gray, Union Pacific RR	Craig Levie, Tangent Services
Mike Hayward, Wallowa County Commissioner	Annette Price, Port of Portland
Delmer Hansen, United Transportation Union	Dave Root, Willamette Valley RR
Jonathan Hutchison, Amtrak	

Members absent:

Ray Barbee, Roseburg Forest Products
Bob Lowry, retired
Andrew Johnsen, BNSF Railway

ODOT staff in attendance:

Kelly Taylor, Rail Division
Bob Melbo, Rail Division
Cary Goodman, Rail Division

Special Guest:

Janice Wilson, Oregon Transportation Commission

Chair McLaran called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m. Rail Advisory Committee (RAC) members made self introductions. RAC reviewed and accepted its May 11, 2006, meeting minutes.

ConnectOregon I Update

Bob Melbo gave an overview of the first *ConnectOregon* program and distributed a spreadsheet showing the status of the 19 rail-related projects. One project is completed, several others are well underway, three are on hold, and one was cancelled.

One member asked what would happen if any more projects get cancelled – what other projects would receive funding. Kelly Taylor explained that the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) has all the committees' lists (regional, modal, consensus), and the OTC will decide if/when more funds become available. Ms. Taylor also pointed out that re-allocated funds may go to other modes, and she reminded the RAC that under *ConnectOregon I* each of the five regions has to receive at least \$15 million of the funds.

Several RAC members (Dave Root, Willamette Valley Railway; Annette Price, Port of Portland; Bruce Carswell, Portland & Western; Paul Langner, Teevin Bros; John Gray, Union Pacific; Mike Hayward, Wallowa-Union) reported on projects they were associated with.

As each project nears completion, Ms. Taylor recommended that the project recipient hold a ceremony (inviting customers, media, local legislators) celebrating the development. She will email a list of legislators for all the districts to RAC members. Ms. Price suggested inviting other legislators – chairs & co-chairs of Transportation and Ways &

Means Committees (Sen. Metzger, Rep. Beyer, Kurt Schraeder, Mary Nolan). Delmer Hansen suggested the RAC members be notified on all these ceremonies.

2007 Legislative Session Review

Ms. Taylor and Mr. Carswell gave an update on the recently concluded legislative session:

- Senate Bill (SB) 224 passed; it repealed state of Oregon employee minimum experience language that was out of sync with current FRA requirements. State of Oregon hiring standards match the current FRA requirements.
- SB 225 became House Bill (HB) 2982 and passed. This provides dedicated funding, a first in state history, for passenger rail via custom plate fees (\$50/two years).
- HB 2853 passed, forbidding adverse possession of rail ROW. Some think the amended bill's language was overly broad and that it may get revised in the next session.
- HB 2472 would have established a task force to evaluate the idea of extending commuter rail from Wilsonville to Salem, but it did not pass.
- The *ConnectOregon II* bill (HB 2278) changed the minimum regional allocation to \$10 million, and requires all recipients pay two percent of the funds received and any required match to fund a multimodal study. The Legislature allocated \$2 million to the rail portion of the multimodal study, which will include an assessment of the condition and use of the rail system, future passenger rail routes and potential funding strategies for rail investments.

Ms. Taylor reported on several developments for *ConnectOregon II* (COII):

- All the modal and regional committees will get instructions from the Department to ensure all committee deliberations are conducted consistently, e.g. in public meeting settings, evaluation tools, conflict of interest declarations, etc.
- A public hearing regarding the COII administrative rules will be held on October 22, 1-2 p.m., in room 122 of the Transportation building, 355 Capitol Street NE, in Salem.
- Project eligibility and feasibility will be evaluated by both the consultant & staff.
- Modal committees will review the projects first, followed by the regional committees. This is intended to provide the regional committees with the modal committees' results and expertise as they evaluate project proposals. The modal committees will only review projects pertaining to their mode(s) and regional committees will only review projects within their region. The final review committee will consider all of the modal and regional recommendation lists to finalize the projects in rank order.

Ms. Taylor suggested that RAC members reserve a Thursday-Friday session or two in February 2008 for meetings to review rail COII projects. There were no objections; RAC agreed that February 7-8 and 14-15 will be blocked out. Several RAC members said they wanted to afford applicants the opportunity to give a presentation and field questions from the RAC (15 minutes per project).

Therefore, RAC members are to reserve all Thursdays and Fridays in February for potential meeting dates. Meetings to be in Portland, either at the Port of Portland or

ODOT Region 1 buildings. The goal is for staff to get project application materials to the RAC at least one week in advance of the first February meeting.

2008 & 2009 Legislative Sessions

Ms. Price and Ms. Taylor gave a preview of the upcoming legislative sessions. For the four-week 2008 session, no more than 50 Senate bills, and fewer than 50 bills for the House, are anticipated. Low legislative staff levels suggest that there could be even fewer bills than that.

For the 2009 session, transportation, education, & health care are the Governor's priorities. Senator Metzger thinks transportation funding will be highway-focused and Representative Beyer thinks that perhaps there won't be a *ConnectOregon III* (concerns regarding the amount of bonded debt).

General Discussion of Issues:

- Looming passenger rail equipment shortage – another passenger train round trip to in Washington will be added in by 2010 or 2011. This will maximize use of the five Talgo train sets, resulting in the loss of equipment for one of Oregon's two trains.
- The 'truce' between railroads and the American Trucking Associations regarding truck equipment sizes will end in 2009. If heavier/larger/longer trucking equipment is allowed, the short lines (as well as the eastern Class I's) will likely bear a loss in traffic. Roads and bridges will also suffer. BNSF will not oppose trucking size increases; UP is undecided whether it will or won't oppose them.
- It is hoped that Amtrak reauthorization will go through next year. If so, it would provide a six year cycle, rather than annual; capital funding matches looking back five years at what States have invested and allowing them to count as a match towards getting leveraging federal funds.
- Unauthorized public crossings and the need for legislation to address these crossings.
- The Amtrak *Cascades* Talgo equipment: one train set of the Talgo is back on line. One set is being refurbished with new furnishings; three will be back in November on line. The stress cracks were checked thoroughly and it was determined they did not pose a real hazard to the train sets. During the period the train sets were off the tracks, there was not a huge reduction in demand for ridership.

The meeting adjourned at 2:08 p.m.