



Oregon Travel Information Council

1500 Liberty Street SE, Suite 150
Salem, Oregon 97302

SUBMITTED Minutes – Rest Area Committee Meeting
Monday, November 2, 2015

Members Participating:

Bob Russell; Mike Marsh; Ed Washington; Kathy Watson (phone); Ryan Snyder (phone)

OTE Staff Participating:

Nancy DeSouza, Executive Director; Tim Pickett, Operations Director; Jason Nash, Rest Area Administrator

The first meeting of the Travel Information Council Rest Area Committee was called to order by DeSouza at 9:03 a.m.

Business Meeting:

- **Organization of the Committee:** *Watson nominated Bob Russell to chair the committee through 2016. Washington seconded. Marsh moved the question and Russell was selected by unanimous vote.* The committee agreed to hold monthly meetings on a regular date to be determined by the group. Snyder requested participation by telephone as an option and may need to be excused from some meetings because of scheduling conflicts. Staff will poll members and work with the Chair to set the meeting calendar for 2016. Location will generally be at the OTA offices, with Salem as an option during legislative days.
- **LED Lighting Conversion:** Nash discussed the proposed conversion of lighting to LED fixtures at the French Prairie and Santiam Rest Areas for a total estimated cost of \$105,000, with return on investment of approximately five years of reduced energy costs. LED lighting has a longer lifespan; Nash explained that the cost of replacing individual ballasts in existing fixtures costs roughly the same as converting to LED. Converting piecemeal as ballasts fail is not cost effective, as OTE does not have the pole trucks to change them individually. There are incentives from Energy Trust of Oregon that expire the end of 2015, with no guarantee that credits will be renewed, so this is a time-sensitive issue. Pickett explained that this proposal is with a preferred bidder selected by ODOT, expediting the work to meet the 2015 timeline under the same terms as their ODOT contracts.

DeSouza confirmed with Karen Morrison at ODOT that this is an “in-kind” replacement that does not require separate ODOT approval, and that the light provided by the new LED fixtures would equal or exceed the output of the existing lights. Snyder discussed “dark sky” ordinances around the state and applicability for conversions. Pickett said the rest areas are in unincorporated areas and are component parts of the federal interstate system, and this will not significantly increase the lighting footprint of the rest areas. Washington would like to consider conversion of other rest areas in the future; Russell agreed this should be part of the committee’s ongoing work. Nash discussed previous conversions of Suncrest by ODOT and Tillamook by OTE.

- *Washington made a motion that the Rest Area Committee approve the LED conversion to go before the full Council for proposed approval at a special telephonic meeting Wednesday, December 4, 2015, at 2:00 p.m. Second by Marsh. Unanimously approved.*
- **Committee Work Plan – Scope of Potential Topics and Priorities:** Russell discussed prioritizing a large list of topics. Watson discussed big-picture policy vs. project perspectives and balancing long-term progress with where staff needs immediate response. Marsh wants to ensure the role of rest areas in safety is on the list. Washington asked the chair to assign leads to work with staff on individual topics. Snyder asked about project work versus strategic planning, and recommended ensuring strategic alignment of priorities with prioritizing individual projects, such as ensuring ADA issues are addressed. Russell walked the committee through the list of topics and the group divided them into “Strategic Initiatives” and “Projects/Tactical”:

Strategic Initiatives

RA Sponsorships Policy
 Role of Rest areas in tourism
 Alignment of state agencies involved in tourism
 Review and possible amendments to OTE strategic plan
 Coalitions
 Role of rest areas in safety
 Performance Measurements
 Capital Maintenance Plans

Project/Tactical

Individual Sponsorship Projects
 Grove of the States
 Government Camp parking lot
 Clackamas E-kiosk at Government Camp
 ADA Accessibility
 OPRD Valley of the Rogue inquiry
 Individual budget items/contracts:
 - Family bathroom at Gov. Camp
 - LED lighting conversions

Snyder asked for an overview of the Rest Area Committee’s mission. Russell said it was envisioned by Council to develop initiatives and make recommendations to the Council for consideration. Will move forward with rest area development with all its complexities and strategic parts. Operations of rest areas, as well as how they fit into tourism and other strategic initiatives. Marsh commented on OTC Commissioner Morgan’s questions regarding the need for rest areas and the number of rest areas. Russell gave an overview of the Kulongoski Transportation and Tourism Task Force results, and asked DeSouza to send the report and the initial recommendations/strategic plan for rest areas to the committee members for review. He explained that this was the pathway that led to TIC rest area operations. This is separate from OTE’s own strategic plan approved in 2014.

Watson suggested working through list of tactical issues, assuming they have some timely importance, and prioritize the strategic issues. Russell asked for individuals to take the lead on the tactical issues:

- Watson: Government Camp lot, kiosk and family bathroom
- Washington: Grove of the States, ADA
- Russell: OPRD issues/Valley of the Rogue inquiry
- Marsh: Interest is in strategic issues, willing to work on tactical as needed
- Staff will be responsible for the bulk of the work on the project/tactical issues and consulting with committee members.

Leads will be needed on some strategic elements, but most will be the full committee:

- Marsh: Performance Measures, with Tourism and Safety as needed
- Snyder: Sponsorships, but needs other input regarding tourism, performance measures and DMOs

- Full committee: Remainder of topics

Russell described a dual track and expectations for the second meeting. There should be time spent at each meeting on strategic and tactical issues. Projects will be prioritized by what is ready for discussion/in need of advice and approval prior to bringing to Council. The strategic focus will prioritize performance measures and rest area sponsorships at the top of the list. The role of rest areas in tourism and the alignment of state agencies is lower on the list, so we can accomplish other things to prepare for those discussions. Capital maintenance plan should be #3 to help prioritize spending in the future.

Review of the OTE Strategic Plan is somewhere in the middle of the group. Watson says that some of the items in the plan need review and asked that staff suspend further distribution of the plan pending those discussions. DeSouza complimented the work that went into the plan, but agreed that many of its items are aspirational without identified funding and that implementation of some items must be on hold pending determination of long-range responsibilities and funding for rest areas. Russell discussed the disconnect between the Strategic Plan and what is reasonable to accomplish in the short term, particularly in relation to Performance Measures. DeSouza agreed that for the foreseeable future, it is not prudent to solicit rest area coalitions to build new facilities without first developing long-term commitments for operations and maintenance funding. This doesn't mean we let go of reasonable aspirations, but that we temper them in the current budget cycle

Russell said the committee should review the strategic plan that was done following the Transportation and Tourism Task force and have a robust discussion of performance measures at our next meeting, as it is important to show results. Marsh would like to define clear strategic plan guidelines for performance measurement and reporting. Russell said the list has two tracks for performance measures: 1) How they fulfill the FHWA requirements for a safety rest area every 40 miles, and 2) How the rest areas contribute to the tourism functions of the state, including the relationship between the rest areas and the welcome community, particularly the business community. Marsh asked about prior work involving stakeholders, staff and others involved in developing performance measures. He would like more information on what is being measured in other states and countries.

Marsh said that performance measures are an effective way to give political stakeholders and decision makers the understanding that the agency is on a track, that you know where you are going, and it is real. It is making our work tangible. We need a limited number of focused measures: 5-7 is a good number for rest area measures that are important to report externally. We may have additional internal tactical measures, such as energy use, etc. We must make sure measures are tied to strategy and vision with good data that is well measured. Business knows you need to invest in getting good data, and government often overlooks that need.

Washington emphasized keeping strategic plans and performance measures simple and clear, expressing that we know rest areas' importance in the state because we have evidence that people are using them by the millions. DeSouza said the questions include: "Are they safe?" "Are they clean?" "Are they inviting?" We already are tracking comment cards, visits, cost per visit, water reductions, etc. Some measures are qualitative, some are quantitative. How to measure user satisfaction? Washington wants to be able to talk about how we are satisfying our customers. Snyder says there are some rest areas that have tourism benefits,

but others that may not. Funding mechanisms through the regions may have some opportunities for us.

Marsh asked about trucking interests and safety. Russell said there is a huge shortage of truck parking in Oregon and across the nation. In Oregon, some rest areas are crowded, and others are underutilized. There were prior concerns about lack of safety and privacy in the rest areas before OTE operations that dissuaded use, and those are greatly improved.

Watson asked Marsh how to measure elusive elements such as the number of people who take brochures who actually leave the interstate and go into the communities/businesses that provided the brochure. Marsh explained there are differences between workload/first-level performance measures, which are just numbers of something that doesn't necessarily mean an outcome. You want to get to the point where actions are being taken. Are higher-order outcome measures available to us with the data sources we have? How to move toward that data will be key to the discussion. Marsh asked DeSouza to find out how Travel Oregon measures success of their Welcome Centers.

DeSouza said that janitorial and landscaping contracts are not ready to discuss at today's meeting and will come before the full Council in December.

Adjournment: Meeting was adjourned at 10:20 a.m. Next meeting TBA.
