



Oregon Travel Information Council

1500 Liberty Street SE, Suite 150
Salem, Oregon 97302

Minutes – Rest Area Committee
OTA Offices, Portland
Thursday, November 3, 2016

Members Participating:

Mike Marsh, Ed Washington, Bob Russell, Kathy Watson (by phone)

Members Excused:

Ryan Snyder

OTE Staff Participating:

Nancy DeSouza, Executive Director; Tim Pickett, Operations Director; Jason Nash, Rest Area Division Administrator; Heather Swanson, Rest Area Operations Manager; Jessica Carbone, Office Assistant

The meeting of the Travel Information Council Rest Area Committee was called to order by Chair Russell at 10:01 a.m.

Business Meeting:

Minutes Approval: Marsh proposed a change to the September 1, 2016 minutes: removing the first “fully” from “Staff have fully cooperated fully.” Marsh moved to approve the minutes with the proposed amendment. Russell seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

2017-19 Biennial Budget Process: Pickett reported that the agency currently uses a bottom-to-top budget creation process. The unit managers’ inputs were returned Sept. 28-Oct. 14, which was on schedule. The first consolidated draft budget was completed Oct. 26, before the initiation of the executive and management budget review that began Oct. 31 to be completed by the end of November for Finance Committee review in December with a TIC-adoption date by the end of the fiscal year. DeSouza said that assumptions may need to change for TIC employees if the State implements salary freezes or furloughs. DeSouza commented that the budget assumes the ODOT annual transfer of \$6.55 million will remain stable. Potential sponsorship dollars are uncertain, so are not factored into this budget. In short, TIC will adopt a budget based on the best information available at the time, but will be prepared to amend as necessary with new information.

Russell asked about the role of the Rest Area Committee in the budget process. DeSouza said that any significant changes in rest area operations and funding options would be brought to the committee for discussion and recommendation. Watson asked about the transportation package in relation to Ballot Measure 97, if it were to pass. Russell said an estimated \$250-\$750 million of the revenues would go to the Highway Fund. The transportation package would then likely deal with how to allocate that money and address non-highway transportation issues.

Regulatory Compliance Update: DEQ determined the civil penalty for the Deadman Pass testing compliance issue is \$3,736. DeSouza believes this less-than-anticipated penalty reflects our full cooperation, willingness to quickly fix the problem, and to put procedures in place to ensure full compliance in the future. We will be allowed to spend 80% of the penalty on an alternative “Supplemental Environmental Project.” Nash reported on potential options including a watershed project with the Umatilla tribe, on whose land the rest area is located.

Swanson reported that all existing permits have been obtained and she is finalizing the regulatory compliance database. Russell asked about requirements for permits at two additional locations. Nash and Swanson reported that DEQ does not require the permits unless we make improvements to the sewage systems at those locations at a level that triggers the need for permits. DeSouza and Pickett will get written confirmation from ODOT as the property owner.

Rest Area Capital Projects: An updated project list was distributed showing the addition of landscaping equipment for Gettings Creek. Staff will be taking over the landscaping instead of using a contractor and cost of equipment should be recovered in 6-10 months. Some projects were moved to the completed list, while others cannot be completed until weather improves. There remains \$101,000 in unassigned cash for any unforeseen circumstances. Pickett reported the Finance Committee’s guidance to reduce reserves allowed for the current list of projects, with the Oak Grove Southbound rebuild still in question.

Oak Grove Capacity Expansion: DeSouza reported damage from a car collision with the northbound restroom building; an inspection by Branch Engineering reported the building as structurally sound as before, keeping Southbound as the best option for renovation. DeSouza met with Travel Lane County’s Kari Westlund about the potential rebuild and possible partnership opportunities including an electronic kiosk.

DeSouza reviewed the design recommendation developed by ODOT and used at the Sage Hen and Cow Canyon rest areas. ODOT staff were pleased with the staff recommendation to use an already vetted design, and DeSouza believes this will assist with obtaining ODOT’s project approval. The design is attractive, highly functional and easy to maintain. There had been staff discussion of the cost of the skylight and slightly increased maintenance versus the value of the aesthetics. Russell asked if we have the architectural drawings/plans. DeSouza responded that we have them from Sage Hen, but they would need to be revised for the design changes at this location. Russell and Marsh asked that staff pursue as many environmentally sustainable or LEED options as possible, including solar and subsidizing grants/credits. Russell recommends looking to the Climate Trust and the Department of Energy for help. And believes PGE may be interested in sponsoring solar panels.

Watson likes the proposed design and aesthetic and recommends keeping the skylights. She inquired to the timeframe for construction and whether there will be rest area closures. DeSouza said there are many contributing factors that may affect the timeline, and there has been a discussion of using trailer-based portable toilets to avoid lengthy closures. Watson asked if the cost for portable toilets had been built into the cost of the project. Nash responded that it has not been specifically, but there are sufficient funds in the project to cover the cost. DeSouza added that other costs of running the rest area would be reduced, such as water and sewer, which may offset the cost of portable toilets.

Russell asked if there was a plan to include an office in the permanent structure to replace the leased portable building now used. Nash replied that permanent buildings had been discussed, but not as part of the restroom building. Highway funds cannot be used to create space for the Free Coffee Program that is housed in the office. DeSouza mentioned the options to the rented portable structures are under discussion to be addressed after TIC knows its long-term funding levels.

DeSouza recommended looking to ODOT for guidance in managing the construction project, as the agency does not have this expertise in-house; this could be one of their construction managers on a part-time job rotation. Both Russell and Marsh supported this idea.

Marsh moved to present the project to the TIC at the December 6 meeting, including hiring construction management expertise. Watson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

ADA/ODOT Agreement: DeSouza informed the committee that the originally shared effects of the ODOT/ADA lawsuit had changed dramatically since the last meeting. ODOT since committed to bringing all its facilities, including rest areas, to 2010 ADA standards on a short timeline; ODOT is negotiating implementation timelines that will likely be five years for our parking lots, sidewalks and restroom buildings. TIC-operated rest areas will be evaluated by an ODOT inspector and Nash later this month. Once complete, agencies will evaluate how ADA standards can be met and at what cost. Pickett noted that the interagency agreement will need to be amended to identify specific responsibilities and timelines to meet those standards. Any added expenses may be included in long-term rest area funding discussions. Russell asked that the issue be addressed with the full Council.

Performance Measures: DeSouza presented information on the external measures to be reported before the February legislative session. Swanson provided the total number of visitors, cost per visitor, and public perceptions of rest areas by customer comment cards. Nash provided an update on the condition of rest areas after his recent round of inspections. Questions remain on the “Safety” measures, which will be explored with Oregon State Police following their full implementation of the Exclusion Program. Economic Development measures will be explored in future meetings with Travel Oregon and with regional and local destination marketing organizations.

Sponsorships: DeSouza suggested bringing in at least one outside sponsorship marketer to make a presentation to the committee on what they can offer. Russell agreed and asked if the company was capable of presenting an option of handling the marketing themselves and one where the marketing is handled by staff. Nash responded they are capable of providing both options, and could be asked to discuss during their presentation.

Grove of the States: DeSouza reported solid progress. Annie von Domitz is coordinating the arborist work day for November 11, where two dozen volunteers will remove unviable specimen trees and trim and shape remaining trees. She is working on sponsorships, and is actively seeking partners.

Other Business:

DeSouza updated the committee on the current status of the Walker lawsuit. She and Pickett also will work with ODOT to respond to the FHWA request for comments on commercial activities in rest areas.

Adjournment: Meeting was adjourned at 11:27 a.m.

Next meeting: December 1, 2016, 10:00 a.m. at the OTA Offices, Portland.