



Travel Information Council
1500 Liberty St. SE, Suite 150
Salem, OR 97302

MINUTES

Third Quarterly Council Meeting
Monday, September 8, 2025
Salem, OR
Hybrid Meeting

Members Participating: Eliza Carty-Jones, Chair (virtual); Rich Riggs, Vice-Chair, John Hamilton, Secretary; Jeff Baker, OTC; Diane DeAutremont (virtual); Kristine McConnell, Matt Preston (virtual).

TIC Staff Participating: Mac Lynde, Diane Cheyne, Michelle Roth, Heather Swanson, Beth Dehn, and Jessica Carbone.

Call to Order/Introductions: The quarterly public meeting of the Travel Information Council was called to order by Chair Carty-Jones at 11:03 a.m. Introductions were made for the record.

Approval of the Agenda and Order of Business: Carty-Jones reviewed the agenda with the Council. The meeting proceeded with the agenda and order of business as presented.

Executive Director Update: Lynde welcomed attending members of the Council and thanked them for their attendance. Lynde said it has been a busy summer at TIC for all its programs. Lynde spoke to the Council about his site visits to different rest areas in the last quarter. Multiple visits were made to the Memaloose rest areas to monitor the progress of the ongoing construction project on the eastbound side and to sign off on the reopening of the westbound side. Lynde said he visited the Santiam rest area to discuss possible safety and logistical improvements to the location. Lynde made the trip to see the finalized pavement projects at Oak Grove and Baker Valley. The repairs at Bakery Valley were approved by Council at the June meeting to make time sensitive repairs to the pavement on the exit and on ramps of the eastbound rest area. On a road trip to Idaho with his family this summer, Lynde was able to visit all of the rest areas on I-84, numerous historical markers in eastern Oregon, and had the opportunity to interact with the public while visiting several historical markers along Highway 20. Lynde then updated the Council on the status of the Transportation Funding Package. The legislative session ended without the package being passed. This meant significant budget shortfalls for the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT). ODOT was challenged with reductions of about 900 positions and layoffs of about 500 employees. TIC's budget was built with most of the funding in the first half of the biennium. Without additional funding, the second year is when TIC faces significant reductions. The Governor called a special session for the Friday before Labor Day. The version of the bill being contemplated during the special session would increase rest area funding for TIC by \$3 million beginning July 2026. The increase in funding would be for rest area operations and maintenance costs, no additional funding would be allocated for capital improvement projects. Lynde said the

bill passed the House and is currently slated in the Senate with the vote scheduled for September 17.

During the last quarter, Lynde said the Leadership Team participated in a leadership development workshop led by our partners at the Department of Administrative Services (DAS). In this workshop, the team walked through the history of TIC, identified critical moments, and discussed how those moments shaped the current organizational perspective and culture of the agency. Lynde shared current pictures of the Memaloose remodel and how staff are using the feedback from this project and the new building at Peter Skene Ogden to shape future projects. Lynde celebrated Brian Jackman, Lead Sign Program Technician's 10-year anniversary. Commissioner Baker gave his comments on the Transportation Funding Package and its possible outcomes. Hamilton asked if the funding package goes through, does staff anticipate presenting an amended budget in early 2026 for the Council to consider. Lynde said that with the information staff currently has, he is unable to give a definitive timeline. Over the next few months, with more information, staff will be working through a revised budget to discuss with Council.

Chair Update: Carty-Jones shared her gratefulness for the expertise and the steady leadership found in the Council and among staff, especially as we continue to operate during a time of funding uncertainty.

Public Comment: None.

Action/Voting Items:

Approval of June 9, 2025, Council Meeting Minutes:

Baker made a motion to approve the June 9, 2025, Council Meeting Minutes as submitted. Hamilton seconded. 6-0-1 Vote. Carty-Jones- yes; Hamilton-yes; Baker- yes; DeAutremont- yes; McConnell- yes; Preston – yes. Riggs-abstained.

Sign Program Oregon Administrative Rule (OAR) Revisions: Cheyne shared the history of the Sign Program's administrative rules. The Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) states that each individual state, if it chooses to do specific service signs, will have their own administrative rules to govern the program. The Federal Highway Administration notified all states that they have until January 1, 2026, to substantially comply with the MUTCD. The rules presented have been amended to meet this requirement. Cheyne worked with staff from ODOT Traffic Section to review the amendments. Cheyne reviewed and highlighted all the significant updates and amendments made to the current rules for the Council. The Council discussed some of the current limitations facing the sign program in urban areas where ODOT's traffic control devices take priority over TIC's service signs in increasingly limited space. There is a much larger opportunity for customer signage and additional EV charging signage in Eastern Oregon. Cheyne said that if the Council approves these revisions, staff will submit the revised rules to the Secretary of State along with a notice of proposed rulemaking to begin the rule amendment process, making the rules effective January 1, 2026. If the Council votes not to approve these amended rules, TIC's OARs would be out of compliance with the Oregon supplement to the MUTCD. McConnell asked if there would be a fine or some other consequence if the rules were out of compliance. Cheyne replied that the consequences were unknown. Hamilton asked what

would happen to current dual-sign customers now that dual signs are not in compliance with the MUTCD. Cheyne said current customers are allowed to keep their dual signs until they need to be replaced. At that time, the customer will have to choose one logo to put on the new sign. The customer would have to apply, and if accepted, pay for another plaque space for the second logo. Hamilton then asked if there is an active wait list at the location where the dual logo customer had to go down to one logo, and where this customer's application falls on the wait list. Cheyne said that the policy has not been written yet, and it is something the Council can decide in future discussions. The Council discussed how the new regulation's stricter guidelines affect the current sign program. Next, the Council discussed how rules made in 1965 with the intention to encourage travelers out of their cars and take a rest, may now be missing potential sign customers, such as drive-through coffee locations and food trucks. Carty-Jones asked why this was brought to the Council on such a tight timeline. Cheyne said that she was working with ODOT and waiting for them to get through their supplement process. ODOT just had its last meeting two weeks ago.

Riggs made a motion to approve the amended sign program OARs as presented. Baker seconded. 7-0 Vote. Carty-Jones- yes; Hamilton-yes; Baker- yes; DeAutremont- yes; McConnell- yes; Preston – yes; Riggs-yes.

Council break 12:25 p.m.

Council returned at 12:31 p.m.

Informational Staff Reports

Finance: Roth presented an informational finance staff report beginning with a summary of the FY 2024-25 year-end financial results. The change in the agency's net position showed positive retention of \$2.9 million, which was \$1.6 million more than budgeted. Interest income was \$1.15 million greater than planned. Payroll and general administrative expenses were lower than planned. Roth said that other funds ended the fiscal year with a fund balance of \$4.3 million, an increase of \$248,000. This was driven by greater than planned interest income and lower than planned sign repairs and maintenance expenses and bank fees. Rest area operating funds ended the fiscal year with a \$3.4 million fund balance. This was an increase of \$217,000, primarily from interest income. This was the third year in a row that rest area operating expenses exceeded the annual \$9.16 million received for rest area operations. As interest rates start to decrease and capital funds are spent, TIC will no longer be able to count on interest income to offset the gap between operational expenditures and current funding of \$9.16 million.

Roth said that the agency is starting out the 2025-27 biennium in line with what was budgeted. The budget anticipated starting the biennium with a \$4.2 million cash balance for other funds, half of which is expected to be spent during the biennium to fund operations. Roth asked Council to remember this when they have the conversation about sign fees at the December meeting. The budget includes a 3% sign fee increase in the second year of the biennium. Roth then informed the Council of some changes made to the original budgeted amount of the assessments for DAS resulting in a net increase of \$3,227 per year. With no legislative action, TIC's rest area operating funds are anticipated to see a deficit of \$2.6 million in FY 2026-27. Baker asked if staff felt that the legislature had a good understanding of the financial need the rest area program has and if that was how the request for an additional \$3 million in funding was decided. Lynde said that the \$3 million in additional funding came about through extensive discussions

with the Governor's office, considering many factors, including the reality of what funding was available and balancing that with TIC's and other agencies' needs.

Roth spoke to the Council about rest area capital funds. During FY 2024-25, TIC received \$3.3 million in capital funds and spent \$3.6 million, ending the fiscal year with a fund balance of \$7.3 million. The funds were spent on pavement at Sunset and Oak Grove, the Memaloose restroom expansion and pavement, the new restroom building at Peter Skene Ogden, and septic work at the Boardman, Cabin Creek, and Charles Reynolds rest areas. Roth said that FY 2025-26 was the final year the agency would receive capital funds from the HB 2017 funding package of \$766,000 on July 1st. The remaining capital funds have been budgeted for pavement preservation, building improvements, vehicles, and unplanned operational improvements. Unplanned operational improvements include costs for unplanned events such as repairs to water or sewer systems.

Roth said that in FY 2024-25, TIC earned \$1.18 million in interest income. In November 2024, TIC began investing funds in the Local Government Investment Pool (LGIP) and has been earning an average return of 4.71%. Rates were cut three times during the fiscal year resulting in some decrease in interest earned on investments. Roth informed the Council of a new accounting standard that was implemented in FY 2024-25 that requires a liability to be recorded for unused leave that accumulates, is attributable to services already rendered, and is more likely than not to be used for time off or otherwise paid in cash or settled through noncash means. In addition to unused vacation leave, compensated absences payable now include unused sick leave and the governor's day of leave. With the implementation of the standard in June 2025 a prior period adjustment of \$96,000 was recorded. Roth said that the State CFO approved increasing the State's capitalization threshold to \$10,000 beginning July 1, 2025, which TIC follows. TIC had 427 fixed assets that were under \$10,000. Many of these fixed assets were signs. This change will be reflected in the July financial reports resulting in a decrease of \$2.8 million in fixed asset costs.

Heritage Programs: Dehn said that Heritage Tree committee has met twice since the last Council meeting. The City of Portland approved the Vanport Heritage Tree designation. A committee member partnered with community members to take drone footage and compare it with archival aerial photos and found five groups of trees that were likely present before the 1948 flood and are still there today. The committee accepted two new members: Mike Boero, USFS Archaeologist and Carol Palmer, Independent Historian. Craig Leech received the Heritage Tree Hero Award for his work on the maintenance plan for the Grove of the States. Dehn said that her focus continues to be on the 30th anniversary of the program.

Dehn said that the revised Cape Sebastian marker was recently installed five miles south of Gold Beach. This marker was the first marker produced for the program by Oregon Correction Enterprises. Dehn said that the committee is currently working on text review and revisions for several markers. Part of the process is making decisions on when to remove markers permanently. Those decisions are made based on factors such as community interest, condition, location, and other factors. Troutdale and Fort Harney are two markers that the committee has decided not to replace. The Oregon Nisei Veterans WWII Memorial Highway dedication is on November 11, 2025 at 11:00 a.m. David Porter, who had a 21-year relationship with TIC, as former Councilor and Historical Marker Committee member, just cycled off the committee. Dehn recognized his time and dedication to the agency and the Marker program. ODOT gave the Oregon Trail Kiosk project notice to proceed. Dehn said she has met with the consultants that have worked on the project together and they are excited to begin work on the next phase. The goal is to have installation complete in 2026.

Sign Program: Cheyne presented the Sign Program staff report. There were 23 new customers installed this quarter, with several customers being removed from the wait list. The feedback from new sign customers was positive. The program's overall rating from 2014 is 4.57 out of five. Cheyne said that there were 24 customers removed during the last quarter. 15 of those customers closed, and 11 of those were food customers. For the first time since 2020, the program's total active sign customer statistics and active boards and supports had an overall increase. The serviceable customer wait list has decreased to 68 serviceable customers. A serviceable customer is one that could be removed from the wait list by enlarging an existing sign or installing a new sign. The Council then discussed how the current funding difficulties could affect our working partnership with ODOT sign crews in eastern Oregon, and all the capital sign projects completed in the last quarter. Cheyne informed the Council that the traffic counts, on which our sign fees are based, have not been posted by ODOT yet. Without those traffic counts, the review process cannot be started for considering changes to customers' fees. Cheyne hopes to have the data and analysis available for the discussion about sign fees at the December Council meeting.

Rest Area Program: Swanson informed the Council that there are currently two open positions in the rest area program: the Rest Area Administrator and a Supervisor for Ontario and Weatherby. Swanson said that an exceptionally competent Supervisor of the Charles Reynolds, Deadman, and Baker Valley Rest Areas, Mark Baker, is acting as interim Supervisor at this location as well. Next, Swanson illustrated for the Council the steady increase in rest area visitors from winter to summer. From January to July, visitor counts rose from 739,028 to 1,397,992. Swanson shared photos of the current projects going on in the rest areas, such as new paint on the buildings, pavement striping, landscaping improvements, and irrigation repairs. The emergency pavement work at Baker Valley has been completed, and staff were able to partner with an ODOT contractor already completing pavement work in the area for work at Oak Grove southbound. Baker asked Swanson if there was a cost per customer at the rest area. Swanson said she could find that information and would provide that to Baker after the meeting. Baker asked staff if there were any current high-priority projects needed in the rest area. Lynde said that he felt the biggest risk point was the overall age of the infrastructure, most of them are aging out. Sewer pipes are being found crumbling in the ground. Some of the most susceptible are the water systems at Gettings and Cabin Creek. Baker suggested a rating system for the rest area water and sewer systems to give a clearer picture of the capital needs.

Canty-Jones thanked Swanson for continuing to take on additional tasks, as the Rest Area Administrator position is vacant.

New Business

Lynde reminded the Council that his review is upcoming and will be discussed at the next Council meeting. More information will be sent out to Council members in the following weeks.

Other Announcements: None.

Adjourn: 1:40 p.m.

Next Quarterly Meeting:

December 8, 2025 – Salem, OR Hybrid

