



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

## MINUTES

### Council Meeting

Monday, March 10, 2025

Salem, OR

Hybrid Meeting

**Members Participating:** Eliza Canty-Jones, Chair; Bob Garcia, Secretary; Jeff Baker, OTC; Diane DeAutremont (virtual); Kristine McConnell; Matt Preston (virtual).

**Excused:** John Hamilton; Rich Riggs, Vice-Chair.

**TIC Staff members Participating are** Mac Lynde, Diane Cheyne, Michelle Roth, Heather Peck, Beth Dehn, and Jessica Carbone.

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**Call to Order/Introductions:** The quarterly public meeting of the Travel Information Council was called to order by Chair Canty-Jones at 9:30 a.m. Introductions were made for the record.

**Approval of the Agenda and Order of Business:** Canty-Jones said there is a proposal to add a voting item to the agenda and change the order of the voting items. Due to the urgent need for asphalt repair work at Baker Valley, staff proposed adding a voting item to approve an expenditure for Rest Area Asphalt Repairs and moving the 2025-27 Budget- Approval for Public Comment and to Hold a Public Hearing to the end of the voting items.

*McConnell made a motion to approve the updated agenda and the addition of the Rest Area Asphalt Repairs voting item. Garcia seconded. 6-0 Vote. Baker- yes; Canty-Jones- yes; DeAutremont – yes; Garcia- yes; McConnell-yes; Preston- yes.*

**Public Comment:** None.

**Executive Director Update:** Lynde said that next week he will be in his position as Executive Director of TIC for four months. During this time Lynde said he has been working on his goal to visit all of TIC's rest areas. He has visited all the rest areas but Ellmaker and Government Camp. Lynde finds meeting staff in person and seeing the locations and what they work on firsthand invaluable. Legislative engagement continues to be a top priority currently. Lynde said he has been working with Victory Group to meet with legislators to speak about TIC's funding needs. He feels he has been positively received. Lynde has also been working with key stakeholders such as the Oregon Trucking Association and Oregon State Police. Lynde said that internally, TIC's leadership team has been talking about what TIC's needs are, and how those are shaping the 2025 priorities. Lynde informed Council that the new server, which had been approved by Council

to update our accounting system and move to online invoicing for our sign program, has been successfully installed. Three employees celebrated their anniversary with TIC this quarter, ranging between 10 and 20 years of service. Lynde then spoke to the Council about the priorities for TIC Leadership for 2025. These include topics such as improved safety measures, updating administrative policies and procedures, implementing a step-based compensation schedule effective July 1<sup>st</sup>, renewing the quarterly performance review and feedback process, developing plans for each program area, and maintaining and building new partnerships.

Lynde then followed up with the Council on a couple of topics from the December 2024 Council Meeting. Regarding the future of committees, after research into each of the committees and discussion with several committee members, the following approach will be taken: the Finance Committee will continue to operate as it currently does as a Council-chartered committee, the Heritage Tree and Historical Marker Committees will move to an agency-chartered committee, and the Rest Area Committee will be abolished in its current form. In Fall 2025, after the legislative session, a Rest Area Advisory Committee will be formed as an agency-chartered committee. It will be an externally focused committee, with members committed to the work being done in the rest areas and to help inform future priorities and service levels at the rest areas. Lynde will also be coordinating with the Governor's office on new councilor appointments. The Council then discussed the current work being done to connect with legislators and a possible transportation funding package.

**Chair Update:** Canty-Jones shared her appreciation and thanked staff and the Council for all the work that they do for TIC and therefore the public. Canty-Jones asked Council members to still consider taking part in any of TIC's committees that they have an interest in. Canty-Jones said that she would be working closely with Lynde and others to think about how the Council oversees and conducts annual evaluations of the Executive Director. During this time the agency is still in a process of transition, so she asked that the staff and Council be patient with themselves and others during this time.

#### **Action/Voting Items:**

- **Approval of December 9, 2024 Council Meeting Minutes:**

*Garica made a motion to approve the December 9, 2024, Council Meeting Minutes as presented. McConnell seconded. 5-0 Vote. Canty-Jones- yes; DeAutremont- yes; Garcia- yes; Baker- yes; McConnell-yes.*

*Preston was inaudible at the time of this vote.*

- **Capital Sign Replacement \$25,000 Limit:** Cheyne requested the Council approve an expenditure of \$28,727 for a full replacement of the existing sign on I-205 at Exit 24 northbound. Existing footings, supports, and sign board were installed in 1994 and have reached the end of their service life.

*Garica made a motion to approve the expenditure of \$28,727 for a sign replacement capital project at I-205 at Exit 24B northbound. McConnell seconded. 5-0 Vote. Canty-Jones- yes; DeAutremont- yes; Garcia- yes; Baker- yes; McConnell-yes.*

*Preston was inaudible at the time of this vote.*

*10:13 am Preston left the meeting.*

*10:14 am Preston returned to the meeting.*

- **Memaloose Building Project – Approval to Award Contract:** Peck presented a request to the Council to approve awarding the contract for the Memaloose Building Project with an additional \$613,427.12, for the complete project including the contract and the construction support costs. The bid opening was conducted last Thursday with only one bidder. The submitted low bid was \$1,584,920. Peck said that based on the engineering estimate of \$1,136,300 the low bid was a 39.48% increase over what was estimated. The bid has been reviewed and is considered responsive and meets the requirements of the solicitation documents. The engineer reviewed the bid and said that the pricing appears fair and there is no sign of irregularity. The bid items are mostly lump sum due to the type of construction, so there were few individual bid items to further examine. Having only one bidder had not been expected by staff. There were 10 general contractors of various sizes that downloaded the plans, 15 subcontractors and consultants, and five plan centers. There were no questions or RFIs during the bid process. Peck said she had reached out to several contractors that had worked for TIC on past rest area projects and a few contractors had reached out to her to express interest. Peck said there could be multiple factors for only receiving one bid, one being the remote location of the rest area. Baker shared his concern with only having one bidder on a project. Baker then asked if staff saw a benefit to rebid the project with different requirements. Lynde responded that even if the project had been repackaged with just the required ADA upgrades, there would not be a lot of opportunities to rethink the scope of work. Peck stated that rebidding the project is an option, but it would delay the construction season until 2026 and likely see increased costs due to inflation. Peck shared her concern since the contractors' bid had been opened to the public and viewed, for the process to remain fair, the scope of the project would have to drastically change.

Baker asked what impact these unplanned expenditures would have on existing planned projects. Peck responded that with the limited funding available, the planned project at the Deadman Pass Rest Area would be limited to the design phase until additional funding could be found. The Council then reviewed and discussed how the remaining capital funds were allocated in the proposed 2025-27 budget.

*Garcia made a motion to approve a project increase of \$613,427.12 and award of the contract to Construction Services Group, LLC in the amount of \$1,584,920. McConnell seconded. 6-0 Vote. Canty-Jones- yes; Baker – yes; DeAutremont- yes; Garcia- yes; McConnell-yes; Preston-yes.*

- **Rest Area Asphalt Repairs:** Lynde thanked the Council for their support to add this agenda item. Lynde said that during his recent trips to visit the rest areas, he became very aware of the poor condition of some of the pavement in our rest areas. Lynde said that staff is doing a great job performing maintenance and sealing the asphalt where they can, but the eastbound Baker Valley Rest Area, needs to have action taken immediately. Lynde then presented photos of the cracked and deteriorating pavement, highlighting the entrance and exit ramps. Lynde and Peck shared their concerns with the Council that the harsh spring

freeze and thaw along the I-84 corridor will exacerbate the deterioration. Lynde asked the Council for approval to use \$250,000 of the remaining capital funding and award contracts to make the urgent pavement repairs before winter. If nothing is done soon, Lynde said there is a concern that the rest area will have to shut down until the needed repairs are made. The Council then discussed how staff in the field are reporting their maintenance needs to the administration. Peck said that this change is happening very rapidly and did not look like this the last time she visited. Peck said she has started working on the development of a pavement maintenance program and hopes to implement it if TIC receives additional funding.

*Garcia made a motion to approve the expenditure of \$250,000 from capital funding reserves and award contracts for asphalt repair at rest areas. Baker seconded. 6-0 Vote. Canty-Jones-yes; Baker-yes; DeAutremont-yes; Garcia-yes; McConnell-yes; Preston-yes.*

Council break 11:20 a.m.

Council returned at 11:30 a.m.

- **2025-2027 Budget – Approval for Public Comment and to a Hold Public Hearing:** Roth presented the proposed 2025-2027 biennial budget and a new budget narrative for TIC. Roth said she felt that the budget narrative was a great addition to the budget that it added more context and detail to the budget summary. The budget was built using 4.2% for general inflation and 6.8% inflation for janitorial and landscape services. Personnel costs were budgeted with 4.2% COLAs in January 2026 and 2027. The budget includes the change of going to a step-based compensation system, 3% - 3.66% PERS rate increases and 5.6% increases in health insurance premiums. Roth said the budget also includes a 20% increase in risk management charges and 30% - 95% increases in payroll and human resources DAS shared services fees. Roth explained that the 30% increase is for human resources services. Currently, TIC is paying about the same amount that was budgeted for a part-time in-house HR manager, but Roth said TIC is getting a lot more breadth of services for the same price. Payroll services are increasing 95%. Currently, TIC is paying about \$20 per person for each person processed in each payroll run, and it is increasing to \$39 a person. While the cost is going up a significant percentage, the dollar amount isn't that big. Roth said it is still less expensive to use DAS Payroll than to staff the position in house. The budget also includes funds for increasing computer replacements due to the age of the equipment and the need to modernize. Roth said the budget for the rest area program was built with what is currently in statute, with \$9.16 million for operations and \$766,000 in capital funding in FY 2025-2026 and no additional capital funding after that. Due to the age of rest area buildings and systems, \$250,000 was included in the budget for unplanned repairs. Roth said that additional interest income in prior years allowed expenses above funding levels, but in FY 2026-2027, there will not be enough funding to support current service levels, and reductions will be required. As the budget is built currently, there will be a \$2.6 million deficit in FY 2026-2027. The \$750,000 operating reserve is being used to fund a portion of this deficit and a \$1.9 million reduction in

personnel and services and supplies will also be needed. The Council discussed how the reduction in personnel and services and supplies might look in the rest areas. Canty-Jones asked staff to confirm that if the Council approves this budget they would not have to come back to the Council to begin making plans for reductions, but if TIC received additional funding through a transportation package, approval of an amended budget would be likely. Staff confirmed. Roth highlighted some key components of the sign and heritage program budgets. A 3% sign fee increase is included in FY 2026-2027, pending review and approval by the Council. Bank service fees to cover the 3% credit card transaction fee were budgeted beginning January 2026 to support the switch to a new credit card payment system. The heritage program budget includes \$110,000 in funding for the Oregon Trail Kiosk project in FY 2025-2026. This is half of the federally congressionally directed spending for the project. The other half is expected to be spent in the current biennium. TIC has a 10% match for this project. Roth then presented the capital outlay budget for 2025-2027. The capital outlay budget was prepared based on estimated amounts for the Memaloose building project and also did not include asphalt repairs voted on earlier in the meeting. The beginning cash balance for the rest area capital budget will be updated to reflect the \$613,428 increase for the Memaloose building project and the \$250,000 for asphalt repairs. The Deadman Pass project will also be updated from \$2.22 million to \$1.35 million. The budget also includes \$125,000 in each fiscal year for unexpected major maintenance and repairs. Canty-Jones clarified that approval of the budget, authorizes the expenditure of funds for the capital projects listed greater than \$25,000 within the approved budgeted amounts, as they would be approved by the Council through the budgetary process approval, and would not need to come back to Council again. The budget as presented includes planned personnel, services and supplies and capital outlay costs of \$17.9 million in cash outflows for FY 2025-2026 and \$16.2 million in cash outflows for FY 2026-2027. Forecasted cash balances at the end of the biennium would be no ending rest area operating funds, \$764,000 in rest area capital funds and \$2.5 million in other funds. Roth clarified that approval of the budget authorizes the expenditure of funds within approved budget limits including contracts or expenditures above \$25,000. Garica reminded everyone that this budget continues the unfunded mandates for the heritage programs. Lynde said that there have been internal discussions around identifying a source of dedicated funding for the heritage programs going forward.

*Garica made a motion to approve the 2025-2027 budget being made available for public comment and to hold a public hearing at the June Council meeting. Baker seconded. 6-0 Vote. Canty-Jones- yes; Baker- yes; DeAutremont- yes; Garcia- yes; McConnell-yes; Preston- yes.*

Council break 12:03 p.m.

Council returned at 12:12 p.m.

## **Informational**

## **Staff Reports**

**Finance:** Roth presented an informational financial staff report. Roth said that the total agency net position showed a positive retention of \$2 million through December 2024, which was \$1.2 million more than budgeted. Half of this was due to greater than planned interest income. There were also savings in payroll and general administrative expenses. A 4.2% COLA was budgeted to take effect December 1st, but it took effect January 1<sup>st</sup> at 6.55%. The higher than planned COLA will offset these savings. Sign and rest area program repairs and maintenance have been under budget due to differences in scope and cost. As costs continue to increase, projects with a useful life of greater than a year are exceeding \$5,000 and are being capitalized instead of expensed. If not for interest income rest area operating funds would have had a \$204,000 net loss. During the last quarter the finance team has been focused on completing the 2025-2027 budget and the recruitment to fill a Senior Accountant position is ongoing.

**Heritage Programs:** Dehn presented an informational Heritage Program staff report. The Heritage Tree program has accepted one new tree to the program. The program's 85<sup>th</sup> Heritage Tree is a grouping of trees located at the John Quincy Adams Young and Elizabeth Constable House in Cedar Mills. Dehn said there will be one Heritage Tree Hero awarded this year to Craig Leech for volunteering for about 100 hours to help TIC create a maintenance plan for The Grove of the States. The Grove of the States is located at the French Prairie Rest Area Southbound and was planted in 1967. Over the next year or so, there will be a focus on outreach and recruitment for members with a passion for trees and history. The Historical Marker Committee is continuing to do good work. The program is working on increasing the speed at which projects are completed. There are currently four projects in various stages of production, Oregon Nisei Veterans, Yaquina Bay, Cape Sebastian, Captain Robert Gray, and four markers in content review, First Coastal Expeditions, Peter Skene Ogden, Sandy River Bridge, and Boone's Landing and Ferry. The reason the focus has been shifted to speeding up the process is the growing need to review, repair, and replace aging assets. Dehn said the design phase of the Oregon Trail Interpretive Kiosk project is complete. An agreement for the reimbursement of federal dollars has been signed with the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT). There was some concern that because of executive action those federal funds might be frozen, but the funds are available for the project to move forward. Dehn shared examples of the interpretive panels for the updated kiosks.

**Sign Program:** Cheyne presented an informational Sign Program staff report. Cheyne reminded the Council of the different types of directional signage TIC can provide and the restrictions around how many and what type of businesses TIC can sign for. Cheyne shared the feedback received from all new sign customers that were installed in the last quarter, as well as pictures of five capital sign replacements and enlargements. Cheyne then shared pictures of the newly constructed replacement Information Center at the Gettings Creek rest area. Staff continues to work through the Multnomah County Land Use approval process to replace the Information Center at Multnomah Falls with a new upgraded design similar to the one installed at Getting Creek rest area. Unfortunately, the approval process takes time and will delay the project until fall of 2026 to avoid the busy summer travel season.

**Rest Area Program:** Peck provided the Council with a Rest Area Program staff report. Peck reported that out of the 39 rest areas, staffing levels have stabilized program-wide. Currently, there is only one recruitment open which is in its final stages. The rest area team does still experience temporary staffing

gaps mainly due to the limited size of our staff and the remote locations of the rest areas. Three employees are currently out on long-term leave that have required leadership to come up with creative methods of shuffling staffing to provide adequate coverage. Peck presented current photos of the building reconstruction at the Peter Skene Ogden rest area. The project is 95% complete and is projected to be 100% complete in April. Peck said this is a new building design for buildings at state park locations. Peck said working with Oregon State Parks and Recreation (OPRD) was a very good experience and a great partnership. Baker commented that he thought it was a great ADA-accessible design, with single stall restrooms, that should be considered when we do all our other building renovations. Peck said that she thought it was a great design as well, but unfortunately, the ground space limitations and the need for increased capacity, especially for rest areas along the I-5 corridor, make replication difficult. Peck reported that there were no significant statewide snowpack-related issues or facility storm damage this year. Peck said staff is reporting ongoing pavement deterioration from the weather at all locations. Rest area staff are shifting their focus to spring preparations, facility inspections and maintenance projects. Peck said the rest area administration staff are preparing for an in-person May Supervisor meeting at the Salem HQ. Peck said she would be introducing a new rest area operations handbook at this meeting.

### **New Business**

- **Other Announcements:** None.

**Adjourn:** 1:17 p.m.

### **Next Quarterly Meeting:**

June 9, 2025 – Salem, OR Hybrid

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