



Meeting Minutes

First Quarterly Council Meeting
Monday, March 9, 2026
Virtual Meeting

Attendance

Council Members Participating: Eliza Canty-Jones, Chair; Rich Riggs, Vice-Chair; John Hamilton, Secretary; Jeff Baker, OTC; Kristine McConnell.

Excused: Diane DeAutremon; Matt Preston.

TIC Staff Participating: Mac Lynde, Executive Director; Jessica Carbone, Executive Assistant; Michelle Roth, Finance Administrator; Heather Swanson, Rest Area Program Administrator; Beth Dehn, Heritage and Community Assets Manager.

Call to Order/ Introductions: The quarterly public meeting of the Travel Information Council (TIC) 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 reviewed the agenda with the Council. The meeting proceeded with the agenda and order of business as presented.

Business Meeting

Public Comment: There are no public comments at this time.

Director's Update: Lynde thanked the Council for their attendance and informed them that Diane Cheyne, the Sign Program Administrator, was unable to attend the meeting, so he would be facilitating any questions about the sign program. Lynde said that the Legislature held its final adjournment of the short session last Friday, which was a couple of days ahead of their constitutional deadline of Sunday night. The bill to reallocate existing funds from other programs to support the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) maintenance and operations passed. Lynde said that this will fund TIC's additional \$3,000,000 for rest area operations starting July 1 for a total of \$12.16 million. There is still no additional funding for capital improvements. Lynde said

that he, Swanson and Roth will be meeting with rest area staff to have a conversation about the agency's current funding status and what may be going on with ODOT and in their cities and counties. Next, Lynde spoke to the Council on the administration's work on agency goals for 2026 focused on operational excellence, technology, and support. The organizational structure of the rest area program has been reorganized. Swanson has become the permanent Rest Area Administrator after serving as the interim Administrator for a little less than a year. Two new roles have been implemented: Rest Area Regional Managers. Phil Dempsey and Mark Baker, who have been serving as Rest Area Supervisors for a long time, have been moved into these positions. Dempsey will be managing the rest areas on the west side of the state, and Mark Baker will be managing the east side. This will help with operational effectiveness, leadership, and support of frontline supervisors. The other reorganization implemented is that we will not have in-house IT support but will be relying more on our outsourced managed IT provider. The current IT provider will be increasing its services to take on more of that role. All of TIC's staff will be consolidating onto one floor of its current office space, while looking to sublease the remaining space. This will reduce our long-term costs as we are still under lease for the entire space for several more years.

Lynde said that work continues on the Rest Area Facilities Assessment Project that was approved by the Council at the previous Council Meeting. Staff worked with the consultant to define the scope of work, and the contract is currently under DOJ review. Fieldwork is expected to begin this spring/summer with visits to all the rest areas. The consultants will be focused on pavement conditions, the facilities themselves, key systems like septic and water, ADA compliance, and truck parking expansion. Lynde said this assessment will help with operations management, inform budget allocations, and inform funding needs as staff heads into another legislative conversation. Lynde then spoke to the Council about some of the actions taking place to build for strategic planning work. Consultants were brought in to help with continuous improvement training, focusing first on the finance and sign programs. Lynde said staff plans to work with the Council on Strategic planning later this year. Staff will use the reorganization, information from the facilities assessment, staff trainings, and working on strategic planning to help start building the next budget and legislative funding conversation.

Next, Lynde shared images of TIC's new logo and refreshed promotional look that it will be using for tables at the upcoming Governor's Conference on Tourism and Oregon Heritage Conference. Lynde celebrated the Q1 employee anniversaries of Jessica Carbone, Executive Assistant, and Rod Ritchie, Rest Area Specialist at Deadman Pass. Both employees have worked for TIC for 10 years. There was one new

hire in Q1, Mason Hill, Rest Area Specialist at Midland.

Baker asked Lynde if looking at how the Council interacts with staff and agency guidance was part of the Strategic Planning discussion. Lynde said that the specifics shaping the planning discussion had not been identified yet, but that has been a recurring question and could be included. Lynde asked the Council to let him know any topics they would like to address during the strategic planning discussions. Canty-Jones asked Lynde about the status of the creation of a Rest Area Advisory group. Lynde replied that given the lengthy uncertainty of TIC's funding, he felt it would be best to begin the process once more information was certain. The facility assessment will provide information on the condition of the rest area, facilities, its needs, and parking to be able to bring the right people together. Baker recommended that the consultants conducting the facilities assessment look at TIC's assets and other rest area like assets, run by counties or OPRD, for possible coordination, saving opportunities, and/or combined services. Lynde said that discussions like these have come up before. The City of Detroit has reached out to TIC because they have a city park that operates like a rest area, and some of the OPRD locations that TIC currently manages came from the legislature having the conversation back in 2017 about what locations felt like a rest area, but weren't managed that way. Lynde then gave an example of his and Swanson's recent visit to a park in Sandy, Oregon, and how the operation of that facility was approached and his and Swanson's continued work with the Government Camp relocation coalition.

Chair's Update: Canty-Jones thanked Lynde for sharing the big picture of what is currently going on in the agency. Canty-Jones shared her recent very pleasant stop at the newly completed Memaloose Rest Area and how the Oregon public has the expectation that the restroom is going to be open, clean, and safe because of the work that the TIC staff does all over the state. Canty-Jones said that the Chair will now have set meeting to meeting with the Executive Director before every quarterly Council meeting in order to have a structure of communication in place as positions change. Lynde said that his next big focus will be recruiting to fill the Council's empty seats and replace members that will be coming to the end of their term limits.

Lynde said that the agency continues to work with Chloe Haller and Victory Group under contract to keep us connected with the ongoing work being done at the Legislature and as we move into the 2027 funding conversation.

Action/ Voting Items

Approval of December 9, 2025 Minutes:

Riggs made a motion to approve December 9, 2025 minutes as submitted.

McConnell seconded. 5-0 Vote, Canty-Jones, Chair - yes; Riggs, Vice-Chair - yes; Hamilton, Secretary – yes; Baker, OTC- yes; Kristine McConnell - yes.

Approval of a Sign Fee Increase: Lynde reviewed the procedure of the required annual sign fee increase review with the Council. The 2026 - 27 budget was built with the assumption of a 3% increase of \$81,850. If the Council decided not to approve the increase today, there will be a budget deficit in the Sign Program. At the December meeting, the Council approved the 3% increase to go to public review and comment. 1500 emails and 100 letters were sent out to the program's current customers explaining the potential increase. All eight responses received are presented to the Council as part of the meeting materials. The overall responses were consistent with those received in the past. If the Council approves the increase today, the increase will become effective July 1, 2026.

Hamilton said that basing these assumptions on an increase in traffic, while the traffic numbers he has seen from January 2026 show a decrease from the previous January, seems a bit uncertain. But he also reiterated the importance that the program remains cost neutral, not using the program to create a profit, but not taking the program into a deficit as well. Lynde responded to Hamilton that it is his understanding that traffic volumes in Oregon are flattening out and redistributing across the state. While some of the customers did see an increase in their fee because the traffic count that passes their sign had increased, 300 sign customers saw a fee decrease. Lynde said that he understands the Council's position of the sign program staying revenue neutral, and staff is working to become better informed about the condition of our sign assets and what the real cost is to maintain and operate the sign program and how they are changing over time. Canty-Jones clarified that this fee increase will not necessarily make the program revenue neutral but is actually allowing the program to make smaller increases over a period while the program draws down on surplus program funds.

Baker made a motion to approve the 3% sign fee increase as submitted. Riggs seconded the motion. 5-0 Vote, Canty-Jones, Chair - yes; Riggs, Vice-Chair - yes; Hamilton, Secretary – yes; Baker, OTC- yes; Kristine McConnell - yes.

Informational Staff Reports

Finance Program: Roth said that there are some continuation of some trends; interest income is still running higher than planned. \$631,000 in interest was earned through January 31, 2025, which is about \$459,000 more than planned. TIC's investments are currently earning 3.39% with Summitt Bank and 4% interest with the Local Governments Investment Pool (LGIP). Staff continues to actively evaluate

costs to ensure operating effectiveness, so lower-than-planned expenses continue to trend. Especially under payroll due to keeping rest area positions vacant until there is more clarity on future funding and agency restructuring. With the restructuring, TIC is also taking the opportunity to consolidate the administration office to one floor and sublease the second floor for future additional savings. The year-to-date position was a net loss of \$483,000 through January. The sign program about breaking even with Other Funds at net positive \$23,000. Interest earnings are no longer making up the difference, causing staff to tap into reserves from previous periods. Rest Area Operating funds were negative at \$200,713, and Rest Area Capital is running at negative \$306,000, mainly due to TIC writing off five projects that are not going to be moving forward.

Rest Area Program: Swanson provided an information report to the Council. Swanson included pictures from a winter weather event that closed I-84. Travelers that are in cities or towns during these events on I-84 are stopped from entering the highway, but those in the rest area must stay there until they are open, or if they are on the highway, our rest areas may be the only place they can go. Swanson showed an image of the Deadman Pass Rest Area overflowing with people who can't be on the road. TIC staff were there to help organize parking and keep the rest area plowing and safe. Swanson said that staff is carefully considering financial resources in the value of all possible projects to make the most benefit for the longest possible duration. One of these ways is by performing pothole and pavement repairs until the opportunity for a larger improvement project occurs. Swanson said that the Gettings Creek wastewater system was upgraded and improved. The old system pumped water directly from the wells in the building. This was causing multiple problems and wearing out pumps at a rapid rate, sometimes to the point that the pumps would still be under warranty, and the pump manufacturer and provider could not possibly understand how the pumps were being worn out in such a rapid fashion. The new system has two 5000-gallon tanks for the water to be pumped into before it enters the restrooms, creating constant pressure. This constant pressure leads to less wear and tear on all of the facility's fixtures and systems, extending the overall life span of the system. The Rest Area Supervisor converted an on-site building into an office space. This project created significant savings because the mobile office building no longer needed to be leased. New security cameras from a provider called Verkada were installed on both sides of the Santiam Rest Area. The cameras are mostly used to protect TIC's assets but can also be used to assist Oregon State Police (OSP). Swanson said as staff learns more about the day-to-day use of the cameras, she is excited to see what other possible benefits the cameras may bring to the other rest areas.

Swanson spoke to the Council about the two new positions the restructuring of

the Rest Area Program has made possible. Before the restructuring, the management of the program was led out of the administration office in Salem. Now, there are managers based on both the east and west sides of the state. The two positions bring expertise and experienced problem-solving to the different challenges faced in the different corridors. These positions were created to facilitate clearer and more open communication, greater accountability, staffing resiliency and flexibility, and training. Baker invited Swanson to speak at an ODOT Area Commission on Transportation meeting to speak about some of the issues the rest area staff deal with, such as truck and vehicle safety during the I-84 shutdown.

Canty-Jones asked what TIC's standards are for data control and access to the surveillance cameras. Swanson said that TIC is following the general guidelines, which include that there is no audio on the recordings. The cameras are only accessible locally at the site. TIC limits the amount of people that have access to the footage, and the footage is only stored for 30 days. Swanson said that TIC is still clarifying what imaging we have available with OSP.

Heritage Program: Dehn said that the Historical Marker Program had five installations in 2025, which helps with deferred maintenance. The Captain Robert Gray marker, installed in 2013, weathered way faster than expected due to its location on Tillamook Bay. The committee decided it was a good opportunity to try a new product suggested by the Forest Service. The replacement marker was crafted from high-density foam. It gives the same look as a routed marker, but with materials that last much longer in harsh environments.

The committee approved replacement text for the Historic Columbia River Highway marker. This text replaced the original Sandy River Bridge marker outside of Troutdale. The original text did not meet committee standards and values. Dehn updated the Council on the Oregon Trail Kiosk Project. Dehn participated in a community meeting with the Burns Paiute in January with about 20 community members. Dehn said there was good interactive conversation and brainstorming. Dehn has also been invited to meet with the Warm Springs Culture Committee and is anticipating meeting with them. Next, Dehn shared the promotional work for the 30th anniversary of the Heritage Tree Program. This work includes installing updated Heritage Tree Promotional posters in the Information kiosks placed in the rest areas, updating all of the program's listings on Travel Oregon's website, increased conference tabling events, and promotional packets to nonprofit partners. The committee will be hosting the Vanport Cottonwoods Dedication in May during the Vanport Mosaic Festival. David Hedberg, the Committee Chair, spent considerable time doing aerial archival research to identify trees that would have been present during flood and are still there today.

Sign Program/ Information Kiosk Center: Lynde shared that Dehn and Diane Cheyne continue to work on the Multnomah Falls kiosk. The new building is still going through the permitting approval process.

New Business

Other Announcements: None

Adjourn

Next Meeting: Monday, June 8, 2026, at 9:30 a.m.