

MINUTES

Metropolitan Policy Committee
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

November 3, 2022

9:00 a.m.

PRESENT: Randy Groves, Chair; Lucy Vinis (City of Eugene); Sean VanGordon, Steve Moe (City of Springfield); Heather Buch, Joe Berney (Lane County); Caitlin Vargas, Don Nordin (Lane Transit District); Nancy Bell (City of Coburg); Bill Johnston for Vidal Francis (Oregon Department of Transportation), members; Anne Heath (City of Coburg), ex officio member.

Brenda Wilson, Paul Thompson, Dan Callister, Ellen Currier, Kelly Clarke, Drew Pfefferle, Michael Wisth (Lane Council of Governments); Sandy Belson (City of Springfield); Rob Inerfeld, Catherine Rohan, Jennifer Willard (City of Eugene); John Marshall, Megan Winner (City of Coburg); Mark Johnson, Jeremy Carr, Tom Schwetz (Lane Transit District); Neil Moyer (Metro Television).

WELCOME, CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

Mr. Groves convened the meeting of the Metropolitan Policy Committee (MPC) and a quorum was established.

Mr. Groves recognized the absence of City of Coburg Mayor Ray Smith who died the previous week. He paid tribute to Mr. Smith's life of public service. He said his accomplishments should be recognized and celebrated. A memorial service was scheduled for November 4, 2022.

ADJUSTMENTS TO THE AGENDA/ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM MPC MEMBERS

There were no adjustments or announcements.

COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

There was no one wishing to speak.

APPROVE October 6, 2022, MPC MEETING MINUTES

Ms. Vinis, seconded by Mr. Moe, moved to approve the October 6, 2022, meeting minutes as submitted. The motion passed unanimously, 9.0.

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO) ISSUES

Title VI and Environmental Justice Program Plan Update

Ms. Currier noted that a draft of the plan update had been reviewed at the MPC's previous meeting and a public hearing was held. She said the plan covered the MPO's Title VI and environmental justice policies and procedures. The plan was updated every three to four years. The current update included changes to administrative, program and policy staffing; updated contracting procedures; demographic data and any

updates to any state and federal authorities. No public comments related to the draft had been received and no changes had been made to the previously reviewed draft.

Ms. Buch, seconded by Ms. Vinis, moved to adopt the Title VI and Environmental Justice Program Plan. The motion passed unanimously, 9:0.

Oregon MPO Consortium (OMPOC) Report

Ms. Clarke explained that OMPOC is a forum for the Oregon Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) to work together on matters of mutual interest and statewide significance and has been in existence for about 18 years. She said the MPC's OMPOC representatives were Mr. Moe and Ms. Vargas.

Ms. Vargas reported that the following 2021 legislative priorities had been discussed at the recent OMPOC meeting:

- Robustly fund multimodal transportation projects and transportation planning
- Use transportation investments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector, improve safety on our roads, and improve the resiliency of our transportation system
- Ensure that transportation investments prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion by identifying and addressing systemic barriers to ensure improved outcomes for everyone, particularly people of color, who have historically been underinvested in or harmed by transportation funding and policy
- Invest locally and support local engagement, direction, and planning of the transportation system
- Improve transit access, impact, and help build more transit projects across the country

Ms. Vargas said there was also conversation about the ODOT fund exchange program and support from MPOs to assure that funding was available for smaller agencies and rural areas of the state so their projects could be completed efficiently. She said there was also support for more funding for carbon reduction.

Ms. Clarke stated that OMPOC had been focused over the past year on the difficulties MPOs experienced in dealing with rail when transportation projects were adjacent to or crossed over rail tracks. The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) had increased their efforts to assist at local and national levels in resolving issues.

Mr. Moe arrived at 11:45 a.m.

Mr. Moe reported that progress was being made matters such as infrastructure and maintenance fees and homeless camping along the railroad. Ms. Clarke added that the letter from OMPOC, highlighted by Rep. Peter DeFazio's office, had been effective in bringing federal attention to the matter.

In response to a request from Ms. Vinis, Ms. Clarke said she would provide copies of the letter from OMPOC to ODOT and the letter from OMPOC to Oregon's congressional delegation.

Ms. Buch commented if the Port of Coos Bay received major federal funds for improvements to the Coos Bay Rail Line (CBRL) there would be a new set of questions and concerns as the line went through Lane County. She asked that the issue be scheduled for discussion if the funding was awarded.

Mr. Groves reported on a meeting he and Eugene city councilor Greg Evans recently held with railroad officials concerning pollution and camping. He said the officials had sold CBRL and while no longer connected, were interested in revitalization of the line as the Port of Coos Bay was developed.

Mr. VanGordon agreed the discussion was timely. He said local jurisdictions still struggled with basic communications and contact information from the railroad. He stressed the importance of a consistent point of contact. He said it sometimes took weeks for city officials to find an appropriate phone number.

Mr. Groves indicated he would provide MPC members with contact information he had received during the meeting with rail officials.

Mr. Moe emphasized the importance of CBRL as a link to the Willamette Valley.

Mr. Berney asked Ms. Vinis if her participation on the EPA local advisory committee could be a resource for addressing rail-related environmental issues.

Ms. Vinis said most of the committee's work had been focused on forwarding recommendations to EPA about how federal legislation (Infrastructure and Jobs Act and Inflation Reduction Act) would be implemented and the type of support communities would need in order to take advantage of those funds. She said the issues Mr. Berney referenced were not part of the committee's initial charge from the EPA, but it could provide a path for her to advocate for the impact of railroads on specific communities.

Ms. Vargas said that OMPOC chair and vice chair elections would be held at the next meeting and a Central Lane MPO representative would be vice chair under the rotation schedule. She was leaving her position with LTD and would no longer serve on the MPC. She endorsed Mr. Moe as the MPC's OMPOC representative.

Ms. Clarke noted that the MPC would need to select its OMPOC representatives when it held elections after the first of the year. Mr. Thompson said MPC elections had typically been held in February to give jurisdictions an opportunity to make their own committee assignments, although the OMPOC meeting was in late January. He said the appointment of OMPOC representatives could be scheduled at the MPC's January meeting.

Mr. Groves asked staff to provide committee members with information about the OMPOC positions and time commitment involved.

Legislative Priorities

Ms. Clarke reviewed the 2023 legislative priorities for the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC) and the League of Oregon Cities (LOC), copies of which were included in the agenda materials. OMPOC was looking at those priorities as it developed its 2023 legislative priorities. She said OMPOC's 2021 priorities, along with ensuring the needs of smaller MPOs were included in policy and programming decisions, resonated with OMPOC members along with the following additional priorities:

- Support legislation to increase spending for state-owned urban arterials that address critical safety and maintenance needs and seek increased funding for the Great Streets program
- Support legislation to address ODOT's operations and maintenance funding and budget shortfall issues
- Support efforts to advance funding for the interstate bridge replacement project (Columbia River crossing) and ensure the project adheres to the modified locally preferred alternative
- Support legislation for continued funding of ODOT's local fund exchange program to create a permanent pool of state funding for jurisdictions to access in exchange for federal funds

Mr. Thompson said OMPOC had reviewed AOC and LOC priorities that were being developed and the OMPOC 2021 priorities and added the additional potential priorities. He said OMPOC was attempting to narrow the list and inviting feedback from MPOs on which were the top priorities.

Ms. Buch said she co-chaired the AOC Transportation Committee and noted that utility companies had a cost exemption to counties for processing of permits to excavate right-of-ways which decreased funding for counties' planning departments. That was the reason AOC had made that issue a legislative priority.

Mr. VanGordon commented that the ODOT funding shortfall should remain a top priority in order for assist ODOT to deliver projects and support MPOs.

Mr. Groves asked about ODOT's efforts to expand contracting opportunities for small businesses. Ms. Clarke shared a presentation from ODOT's Small Business Assistance Program describing how the program would be implemented. She did not know the program's funding source. Mr. Thompson added that funding details would be discussed after the mid-term elections.

Mr. Groves asked for an update when that discussion began.

Mr. Berney described how Lane County had established priorities for women- and minority-owned businesses in its construction projects of \$500,000 or more. He said while ODOT indicated commitment to a community benefit bidding process that did not seem to be the case. He hoped the MPC would push ODOT to move forward with that initiative. He said electric vehicle charging stations also did not appear to be an ODOT high priority and Lane County was working to see that it became one.

Ms. Vinis said the question of ODOT's operations and maintenance shortfall was discussed at the LaneACT's last meeting and members requested more clarity about the reasons for the shortfall and which funding streams might be used to fill the gap.

Mr. Johnston said ODOT had a plan to extend EV charging stations and more details would be provided to Lane County and the MPC.

Ms. Heath said Coburg had asked to move out the timeline for its projects because it did not have a certified agency to conduct them. That meant projects pushed out to 2024-25 would become more expensive because there was no ability to exchange funds and the city did not have an engineer. She hoped there would be support for efforts to find funding to help small cities. She thanked Lane City and the cities of Eugene and Springfield for their support of Coburg's transportation projects.

Regional Broadband Update

Mr. Wisth reported that Lane Council of Governments (LCOG) issued a request for proposals for a broadband strategy and a committee with representatives from local jurisdictions had reviewed the six proposals received, selecting a Texas firm with offices in Olympia, Washington. A scope of work for the project had been completed and the contract was ready for execution. He said because of the historic federal funding opportunities becoming available, a part of the strategy would be a standalone federal funding readiness component and development of grants focusing on un-served and underserved areas of the county. He described aspects of the scope of work. LCOG was establishing an advisory committee with representation from jurisdictions, utilities and many other stakeholders. LCOG was also working closely with the Oregon Broadband Office and offering assistance as it prepared to receive federal funding. The process of asset mapping had begun.

Mr. Moe said he had long advocated for fiber optics across the state as it would decrease transportation problems by increasing access for rural communities and allowing them to grow.

Ms. Buch expressed her excitement with the expansion of broadband and urged LCOG's contract to work with local ISP providers who knew communities well. She hoped the strategy could address providing some type of incentive that would allow local ISPs to be in a position to answer RFPs in the future. Requirements in current RFPs denied local ISPs the opportunity to get the work and she hope to see a more equitable approach that would allow rural communities to see the same level of benefit.

Mr. Groves agreed with Ms. Buch on the importance of channeling work to local or near local providers.

Mr. VanGordon said he was somewhat skeptical because it was a large and complicated project and a strategy could be over-engineered. He said there was a need for better internet service in metro areas and rural parts of the county in order to be competitive economically. He hoped the strategy would be flexible, forward-thinking and transparent that would help change things. He wanted to see a path that would lead to better service in the county in the most cost effective way possible.

Mr. Berney agreed with Mr. VanGordon's caution about over engineering and supported efforts to find a way to legally prioritize providing opportunities and injecting capital and capacity into the small business communities, in this instance local ISPs. He said changing the requirement that low bids were awarded contracts would help reverse the trend of taking energy and profits out of small communities.

Ms. Vinis asked for clarification on how underserved communities would be defined as even some parts of metro areas could be considered underserved if broadband capacity was insufficient. Mr. Wisth said LCOG was working with the Oregon Broadband Office and the Federal Communications Commission to help with that definition.

Follow-up and Next Steps

- **ODOT Update**—Mr. Johnston said ODOT was in the process of obtaining permits from local governments for its projects.
- **Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Project Changes**—There were no questions.
- **Next Meeting/Agenda Build**—December 1 Virtual Meeting, January 5 Virtual Meeting

Mr. Thompson said the annual meeting of ACT chairs with the Oregon Transportation Committee (OTC) would occur on November 16. The LaneACT had identified some initial topics to discuss, particularly related to improved communications between the OTC and ACTs.

Mr. Groves adjourned the meeting at 12:42 p.m.

(Recorded by Lynn Taylor)