

MINUTES

Metropolitan Policy Committee
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

June 6, 2024
11:30 a.m.

PRESENT: David Loveall, Chair; Pat Farr (Lane County); Sean VanGordon, Steve Moe (City of Springfield); Lucy Vinis, Randy Groves (City of Eugene); Nancy Bell (City of Coburg); Susan Cox (Lane Transit District); Vidal Francis (Oregon Department of Transportation), members; Jameson Auten (Lane Transit District), *ex officio* member.

Brenda Moore, Dan Callister, Ellen Currier, Kelly Clarke, Rachel Dorfman, Kate Wilson, Drew Pfefferle, Anne Davies, Delaney Thompson (Lane Council of Governments); Jenifer Willer (City of Eugene); Andrew Larson (City of Springfield); John Marshall, Megan Winner (City of Coburg); Sasha Vartanian, Cassidy Mills (Lane County); Dave Roth, Jeramy Card (Lane Transit District); Bill Johnston, Mark Bernard, Bert Hartman (Oregon Department of Transportation); Neil Moyer, Tim Garner (MetroTV).

WELCOME, CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

Mr. Loveall welcomed those present and called the meeting to order. A quorum was established.

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 May 2, 2024, MPC MEETING MINUTES

Mr. Moe, seconded by Mr. Groves, moved to approve the May 2, 2024, meeting minutes as submitted. The motion passed unanimously, 8:0.

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO) ISSUES

Lane Transit District (LTD) System Review Draft Service Recommendations

Mr. Roth used a slide presentation to explain the draft service recommendations. He said the service review was conducted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on transit usage and LTD staffing levels and to match service levels to changes in travel demands and mobility needs in the community. Data on ridership and connections on every route was analyzed and a robust public engagement was still ongoing. He described outreach activities and ways the public was able to participate in the process. He described specific route change recommendations, both short- and long-term, and explained why those changes were being proposed and how they would improve service. He also responded to questions from MPC members on different routes. He said LTD was also conducting a vigorous campaign to hire new bus operators.

Mr. Roth said the final recommendations were expected to be adopted in the fall of 2024.

Bridge Seismic Resilience in Lane County

Ms. Dorfman stated that the agenda item was in response to the MPC's request for information on the topic. She introduced Bert Hartman with the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) to present the item.

Mr. Hartman displayed a chart of bridges in the state, their dates of construction and current condition. He said during the late 1960s and early 1970s there were about 60-70 bridge replacements per year; currently there were only 2-3 bridge replacements per year, resulting in a very large backlog. He shared pictures of bridges in various states of repair. The results of a Seismic Plus report by ODOT in 2014 were intended to identify seismic needs in Oregon. He reviewed the projects completed to date, those under construction and those planned in the future. He explained the Region 3 triage approach to prioritizing projects on local routes and minor state highways prior to work on Interstate 5 and options for bridges between Eugene and Portland.

Mr. Groves expressed his concern that most of Lane County could not access a hospital in the region using surface streets without crossing multiple spans. He asked what type of priority could be given to seismic upgrades on one or two routes in the case of an emergency. Mr. Hartman said a seismically resilient route would require bridge replacement and the current focus of the state program was on bridge condition. Without significant new funding there would not be bridge replacements on seismic routes.

Mr. Groves felt it was not responsible to focus priorities on upgrades based on condition ratings. The need to move people in the event of a large seismic event should also be a factor. He asked who should be contacted to get the issue of seismic resiliency elevated. Mr. Hartman said the matter should be referred to the director of ODOT.

Ms. Vinis joined the meeting at 12:17 p.m.

Mr. Moe asked for a tour of bridge sites as he was a retired bridge contractor. Mr. Hartman replied that he would follow up on the request.

Mr. Farr urged that priority be given to routes to hospitals. He concurred with Mr. Groves remarks.

Ms. Cox pointed out that LTD's main hub was along Franklin Boulevard and the report was sobering. She hoped that route was on the priority list.

Ms. Vinis agreed with previous speakers that routes for survival in a Cascadia event should be priorities.

Mr. Loveall asked that there be a follow-up presentation at a future meeting on lifeline routes in the region.

Oregon Joint Committee on Transportation (JCT) July 17th Eugene Meeting

Ms. Willer said the JCT was conducting a series of conversations across rural and urban communities in order to gain a better understanding of transportation funding needs and priorities. The purpose of this agenda item was to develop a message from the Central Lane MPO to be delivered at the JCT's July 17th meeting in Eugene.

Ms. Mills stated that in 2014 Lane County developed a funding outlook and options report that identified significant funding challenges and today the region was experiencing the realities of those projections. Capital construction projects had been scaled back and currently maintenance projects were the highest priority, leaving the region's cities and unincorporated communities vulnerable to transportation system failures. The goal was to ensure the system was safe, functional and resilient for all modes of travel and

stable long-term funding was required to accomplish that. She reviewed the condition of rural roads in Lane County and the hazards that created and the impacts on rural economies. Maintenance costs had risen steadily. The region's transportation network would be critical to the state's recovery from a disaster, first by facilitating emergency response and then restoring mobility.

Mr. Larson identified some of Springfield's safety and maintenance concerns and priorities. Those included:

- completing Glenwood Boulevard east, west, north and south
- repair (or reconstruction) of 42nd Street
- maintenance needs on arterials and collectors
- improvements to the Marcola/19th Street/Q Street intersection
- active transportation safety improvements

Mr. Larson said that bond measures had assisted with moving some projects forward, but stressed the need for permanent, stable long-term funding to maintain and improve the transportation system. Springfield was poised to support statewide funding reform initiative.

Ms. Winner said Coburg's funding needs were similar to the other jurisdictions, yet unique. Many local streets were in need of preservation maintenance and improvements. Coburg had implemented a local gas tax and transportation utility fee (TUF), but those could not generate sufficient revenue to adequately address local needs. Coburg was eligible to receive federal funds, but not able to deliver federally funded projects because it was not a certified agency as required, creating additional challenges for planning and delivering projects. Another transportation priority was addressing the commuter and freight traffic through the downtown core, much of which was not generated by Coburg residents or businesses, and the many safety improvements that traffic necessitated in order to maintain a walkable downtown. Also, a complete replacement of the I-5 exit to Coburg was needed as current conditions could impede regional economic development and presented major safety issues for all modes of transportation.

Ms. Willer stated that Eugene managed 59 vehicular bridges and 52 pedestrian bridges, many of which had seismic deficiencies. Many bridges initially thought to be retrofit projects were determined to now be replacement projects. She said the maintenance backlog for all bridges was estimated to be \$8-10 million. The city also managed over 1,400 lane miles of streets and 46 miles of shared use paths. About 22 percent of those streets were in fair or very poor condition; even streets in good condition were in need of regular maintenance and preservation. The city's gas tax and bond measures were not enough to address the significant backlog for street repair estimated at \$158 million. Increasing traffic fatalities demonstrated the need for more robust transportation safety investments.

Mr. Moe said as chair of the Oregon MPO Consortium (OMPOC) he would be speaking to the JTC at its July 17 meeting about the need for transportation funding.

Mr. Groves congratulated Springfield on the passage of its roads bond measure. He thanked presenters for the useful and helpful information. He said the backlog of transportation projects in the region underscored the need for a permanent and stable source of road preservation funding as the state's gas tax could not solve the problem and jurisdictions could not continue to depend on bond measures and levies.

Mr. Moe said he was now using the term "road user" tax instead of gas tax because all must pay, including electric vehicles.

Mr. Groves remarked that Eugene's Vision Zero envisioned preventing bicycle and pedestrian fatalities and separation from vehicular traffic was a critical element in achieving that.

Mr. VanGordon asked if the JCT was looking for any specific results. Mr. Vidal replied that the committee was interesting in hearing about needs across the state and recognized that ODOT had an ongoing structural budgetary problem that left it unable to support transportation maintenance functions.

Mr. VanGordon's concern was that the JCT's interest was focused on ODOT funding mechanisms, but it could not just be a state solution; maintenance problems in communities across the state also had to be addressed. He encouraged ODOT to invest in providing swift, accessible safety data to jurisdictions.

Ms. Vinis appreciated Mr. VanGordon's comments. She asked what type of thematic presentation and recommendations would be made to the JCT given the transportation needs and concerns identified by jurisdictions.

Ms. Vartanian felt that while support for ODOT should be expressed, the need for funding solutions that also addressed the needs of communities across the state should be the goal.

Mr. Johnston said the JCT agenda format did not appear to provide specific opportunities to engage with local groups such as the MPC and LaneACT, but there was time for public comments. He would work with Mr. Francis for clarification on that. Mr. Francis said it was important to recognize ODOT's needs as well as the interplay among systems and to partner in identifying top priorities. He described a previous meeting during which there was a round table discussion, followed by about two hours of public comments.

Mr. VanGordon said if transportation issues were to be approached as partners, the MPO and LaneACT had to be treated as partners and allowed to participate in the round table discussion. He said it would be difficult to support a proposal that only addressed ODOT funding problems and those of metropolitan areas like Portland and Salem without taking into account the entire transportation system.

Ms. Vinis agreed. She asked if the MPC's designated presenter would be able to participate in the round table or confined to three minutes during public testimony and submission of written comments. Mr. Loveall concurred with Ms. Vinis' concerns.

Mr. Francis said ODOT did not have control over the process, which was determined by the JTC, but he would share what information was available prior to the July 17 meeting, including who would be invited to participate in the round table discussion.

Mr. Loveall acknowledged that the JTC was not looking for specific recommendations, but during a discussion with his son about what was a fair approach to obtaining transportation funding resources related to electric cars, several ideas emerged:

- surcharge on kilowatts on super chargers (used primarily by those passing through an area)
- statewide tire tax
- increase in registration fees (currently low compared to other west coast states)
- electric car purchase fee (offset by state and federal incentives)

Mr. Marshall commented that he participated in several other transportation groups and he hoped that there would be a coordinated strategy from a regional standpoint on what to present to the JTC. For example, the need for hospital access in the event of a disaster.

Mr. Johnston said the LaneACT's policy was to coordinate with the MPC on funding priorities. That was less important as the JTC was less interested in specific projects and now focused on addressing the state's structural funding problems. He felt everyone was on the same page with respect to the level of needs and desire for additional funding at the state and local levels.

Mr. VanGordon reiterated that it would be challenging if the JTC's discussions only focused on ODOT's funding problems.

Ms. Moore said the JTC wanted to hear from Oregonians about transportation needs at the state, county and local levels as well as gather information on how to fund those needs. She pointed out that the recent, unexpected loss of a hospital in Eugene and the access concerns that created for residents might not be known to state policy makers. She would follow up with Representative Nancy Nathanson of Eugene was a member of the JTC and she would follow up with Rep. Nathanson on questions that could be raised during the JTC's discussions that would highlight local issues. OMPOC had a discussion very similar to the MPC's at its recent meeting.

Mr. Loveall said talking points for the MPC representative to present at the JTC meeting would be developed.

Ms. Vinis volunteered to present those points; Mr. Groves agreed to be her backup.

Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) Update

Ms. Clarke said the update was a standing agenda item during the RTP update process. Current activities included existing conditions documentation, recommendations to strengthen the RTP's performance-based planning and programming framework, and ways to evaluate projects on their support of RTP goals. A procurement process was under way for vendors for a travel benefits and barriers survey and the assist with community engagement. Staff would meet with the advisory committee to review those activities and they would be presented to the MPC at a future meeting for review and feedback.

Other MPO Information

- **ODOT Update**—Mr. Francis said much of what he had to report had been covered in the MPC's discussion of the JTC July 17 meeting in Eugene. ODOT's budget would be out soon and there could be up to a 30 percent reduction. ODOT was balancing its needs with available cash to keep projects moving.
- **Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Project Changes**—There were no questions.

METROPOLITAN CABLE COMMISSION ISSUES

Mr. Loveall convened the meeting of the Metropolitan Cable Commission, noting that membership on the commission was composed of MPC representatives from Eugene, Springfield and Lane County.

Cable TV Grant Program - Expenditures on Capital Equipment

Ms. Davies said Comcast annually provided \$100,000 for equipment. She said \$50,000 went to Metro TV and \$50,000 was awarded to the public education government (PEG) channels. In the past applications for funding were received from PEG channels; staff analyzed the requests and made dollar award recommendations to the commission for approval. PEG channels were Eugene-Springfield Fire Training

Channel (E-S Fire), Coalition to Rebuild Community Television (CTV) and the Education Channel (Channel 23). Descriptions of the funding requests were included in the agenda materials. She requested approval of the following funding recommendations:

E-S Fire	\$10,200
CTV	\$38,800
Channel 23	\$10,000

Mr. Moe, seconded by Mr. Farr, moved to approve the award of Cable TV grant funds to applicants not to exceed the amounts recommended by staff. The motion passed unanimously, 6:0.

Update on Franchise Renewal Negotiations

Ms. Davis stated that details of the renewal process were included in the agenda materials. It had been a lengthy and years-long process because of the competitive equity provision which required the commission to treat other providers similarly. The commission argued that the provision should only apply to cable providers and not to other providers such as streaming and video services. The City of Eugene's legal counsel developed language that was presented to Comcast two months ago and agreement was reached on the competitive equity provision. A few other issues remained to be negotiated and the franchise was extended to December 31, 2024. She would return to the commission in the fall with an update.

Update on Distribution of Eugene City Hall PEG Funding

Ms. Davies announced that the \$150,000 set aside for the purchase of camera and other equipment for the City of Eugene's city hall was now being used. If the full amount was not used it would be rolled into the next PEG grant cycle.

NEXT STEPS/AGENDA BUILD

Mr. Loveall indicated he would work with Ms. Moore and Mr. Thompson to develop bullet points for the upcoming JTC meeting.

UPCOMING MEETINGS—July - canceled, August - tentative, September 5 - Virtual

Mr. Loveall adjourned the meeting at 1:36 p.m.

(Recorded by Lynn Taylor)