



## Community Advisory Group

### Online Briefing Summary

November 4, 2015

5:30 – 6:30 p.m.

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#### Participants (and staff) Who Logged In

Robyn Bassett, *Corvallis Public Works*  
Terry Beyer, *Better Eugene-Springfield Transit*  
Jeff Broderick, *Portland Area At-Large*  
Georgia Edwards, *City of Tangent*  
William Gifford, *Oregon City Business Alliance*  
Dave Hauser, *Eugene Chamber of Commerce*  
Peter Klæbe, *Rosewood Neighborhood Association/CPO*  
Jeff Leach, *South East Salem Neighborhood Association*  
Ron Litwillier, *South Albany Area Plan*  
Carla Mikkelsen, *Friends of French Prairie*

Shannon Mudge, *Downtown Springfield Citizens Advisory Committee*  
Karen Odenthal, *Mid-Willamette Valley Council of Government*  
Brad Perkins, *Cascadia High Speed Rail*  
Carleen Reilly, *River Road Community Organization*  
Alan Scott, *Northeast Neighbors Neighborhood Association*  
Don Slack, *Oregon City*  
Russ Stoll, *Ardenwald Neighborhood Association*  
Kari Westlund, *Travel Lane County*

#### Project Team

Jim Cox, *ODOT*  
Stacy Snider, *ODOT Rail*  
Scott Richman, *David Evans and Associates*

Theresa Carr, *CH2M Hill*  
Stacy Thomas, *JLA Public Involvement*  
Jeanne Lawson, *JLA Public Involvement*

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### Welcome, Introductions and Agenda Review

Jeanne Lawson, meeting facilitator, welcomed participants and audience members to the third Community Advisory Groups meeting. She introduced project staff participating in the briefing, reminded the CAGs of their role in the project and reviewed the agenda.

Jeanne explained that the purpose of the briefing was to receive a project update and learn more about the recommended Preferred Alternative and ask questions of project staff.

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### Project Update

Jim Cox, ODOT project manager, provided a brief overview of the project. In December 2013, the Leadership Council recommended two “Build” Alternatives and one “No Action” Alternative

to analyze in the Tier 1 Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), which the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) approved.

Alternative 1 follows the existing Amtrak Cascades passenger rail route with improvements. Alternative 1 originally assumed double tracking along a lot of the alignment and many sidings and elevated structures. Some of these improvements were reduced, minimizing costs while still keeping Alternative 1 functional. Alternative 2 is primarily a new route between Springfield and Oregon City located along I-5, an existing freight rail line, and I-205. It would follow the existing alignment north of Oregon City.

The team conducted additional analysis:

- *How many riders a day can we expect on the system?*
- *How many train trips should we have each day?*
- *What are the costs to build, operate and maintain the two build alternatives?*

In a separate process, the project team prepared a long-range (beyond 20 years) vision for what high speed rail might eventually look like in this corridor. You can access the High Speed Rail Concept Vision Report in the project library and on the online open house.

Jim then handed the presentation over to Scott Richman, David Evans and Associates, who explained the initial assessment of the two build alternatives.

## Initial Assessment of the Alternatives

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Scott Richman presented the results of the initial assessment of the alternatives. All of the results discussed can be found on the project's website ([www.oregonpassengerrail.org](http://www.oregonpassengerrail.org)).

After conducting the analysis, the team has identified Alternative 1 as the recommended Preferred Alternative (PA). Scott explained that the team is recommending a PA now because of recent federal guidance. The guidance stated that in order to streamline the NEPA process, it is advisable to take a recommended PA going into the DEIS whenever possible.

Scott reviewed the evaluation criteria that stand out the most or differentiate the two build alternatives, including: travel time, stations and transportation connections, the ability to build incrementally, building towards true high speed rail, cost and ridership, community and social impacts, and the natural environment.

## Questions & Discussion

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Participants asked the following questions or made the following comments to the project team:

**Q: Travel time of Alternative 1 is only fifteen minutes less than No Action Alternative. Does this justify the cost?**

*One of the goals of the Oregon Passenger Rail Project is to provide service that is competitive with highway travel. Reducing the passenger rail trip time between Eugene and Portland to 2:20 brings us much closer to that goal. The projected large increases in Willamette Valley population and freight traffic and a lack of funds for highway expansion are expected to lead to increases congestion of major highways. This will lead to longer travel times and make passenger rail even more competitive.*

*Another goal of the project is to increase the frequency of trips between the Eugene/Springfield area and the Portland/Vancouver, Washington urban area. Along with a fifteen minute savings for each individual trip, there will ultimately be six round trips per day instead of just 2.*

**Q: Will there be upgrades to railroad crossings so trains won't need to sound their alarm? Salem, for example, has upgraded crossings. Will the rest of the areas be upgraded?**

*At this stage of the planning process, we don't have the details as to how that will look for this project. We will be looking into safety upgrades at crossings during the next step of the study, particularly in more urbanized areas.*

**Q: Will you add double tracking so trains can come into Portland, as other trips are leaving?**

*We do not have details on where double tracking will be added, but more will likely be added to Portland. We do not foresee double tracking in urbanized areas or river crossings, but the area north of Oregon City is a likely area to add double track.*

**Q: Why are we paying to upgrade the passenger rail line, if the end result might be that the state has to pay "rent" to freight operators to use the track?**

*By law, freight rail has to give passengers the right of way. But, sidings have been too short for freight trains to pull off. The upgrades to the railroad would add additional siding, so that freights can yield to passenger trains.*

**Q: Is there double- tracking between Eugene, Salem and Albany with Alternative 1?**

*It is expected that a second mainline track would be added in some locations, existing sidings would be lengthened and some new sidings added.*

**Q: What is the timeline now for finishing the project?**

*See next section for the next steps.*

**Q: Will there be coordination with local transit for upgrades to local rail lines in conjunction with the Oregon Passenger Rail (in particular Corvallis)?**

*ODOT recognizes that good transit connections are a key factor in successful passenger rail service and that the connections between Corvallis and Albany Amtrak Station need to be improved. While improvements to local transit service is beyond the scope to the Oregon*

*Passenger Rail Project, the ODOT Rail and Public Transit division is actively working to improve that connection in the near future.*

**Q: Why don't we plan for any separated crossings? Elevate either the rail or the highway?** *The main reason is because of the cost related to raising or lowering roadways or railways. We don't want to disrupt service between Portland and Eugene during the project, and changing the elevation of either would be an impact.*

**Q: Would the project be faster if we only used state funds and didn't seek any federal funding?**

*Any projects we would pursue require federal approval, regardless of funding. Any federal approval requires a study like this Oregon Passenger Rail project. Successful completion of this project will make Oregon eligible to compete for federal funding to finish the design and construct the project. With federal funding, the State of Oregon would only have to come up with a 20% match, which would be a smaller match with Alternative 1 than it would be with Alternative 2.*

**Q: One of the advantages of Alternative 1 is that it allows for more feasible "incremental improvements." What are the first improvements that would happen with Alternative 1?**

*Initial improvements would probably include adding additional track at the Eugene Station that would allow passenger trains to over-night at the station and improving junctions in the Portland area that would allow freight trains to move faster through the junctions and clear the way for passenger trains.*

## Next Steps

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### DEIS Publication & Public Hearings

Jim Cox reviewed the upcoming events and next steps for the project. The team will publish the Draft Tier 1 EIS report and then hold a series of public hearings for public review and comments in about a year. The public hearings will be both in person and online. In-person CAG meetings will be held at this time as well. ODOT will then recommend the Selected Alternative after the public review period has closed. The Oregon Passenger Rail Leadership Council will review that recommendation. The FRA will make the final selection and publish the Final Tier 1 EIS.

There will be an upcoming Corridor Forum online briefing on November 17, 2015 and a Leadership council meeting on December 8, 2015.

### Online Open House

To learn more about recommended Preferred Alternative, go to [www.oregonpassengerrail.org](http://www.oregonpassengerrail.org) and take part in the online open house. The online open house will be available from November 2- 22 and will be collecting input and comments from anyone who participates. Please invite your community groups to participate.