



Corridor Forum

Online Briefing Summary

November 17, 2015

3:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Participants *(Members who signed in)*

Sharon Konopa, *Mayor of Albany*
Rob Inerfeld, *City of Eugene*
Brian Latta, *City of Harrisburg*
Georgia Edwards, *City of Tangent*
Loel Trulove, *Mayor of Tangent*
Bill Monahan, *City Manager of Milwaukie*
Anna Peterson, *Mayor of Salem*
Nancy Kraushaar, *City of Wilsonville*
Biff Traber, *Mayor of Corvallis*
Bruce Agnew, *Director of Cascadia Center*
Emma Newman, *City of Springfield*
John Russell, *Co-Chair of Corridor Forum*
Dan McFarling, *AORTA*
Barb Cartmill, *Clackamas County*
Mark Ottenad, *City of Wilsonville*

Arthur Poole, *OSU/AORTA*
Rick Robinson, *City of Canby*
Brenda Wilson, *Lane COG*
Paul Thompson, *Lane COG*
Jon Nuxoll, *Eugene/ AORTA*
Marjean Cline, *Mayor of Halsey*
Rob Eaton, *Amtrak*
Mike Morrison, *AORTA*
Richard Ross, *American Planning Association - Oregon*
Bill Holmstrom, *Department of Land Conservation and Development*
Dan Heilig, *Hill Int'l (FRA Monitoring & Technical Assistance Contract [MTAC] Consultant)*

Project Team

Jim Cox, *ODOT*
Scott Richman, *David Evans and Associates*
Theresa Carr, *CH2M Hill*

Stacy Thomas, *JLA Public Involvement*
Jeanne Lawson, *JLA Public Involvement*

Welcome, Introductions and Agenda Review

Jeanne Lawson, meeting facilitator, welcomed participants and audience members to the third Corridor Forum meeting. She introduced project staff participating in the briefing, reminded the Corridor Forum 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.

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

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).

After conducting the analysis, the team 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 states 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

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

Q: Is there a more detailed set of maps available?

We will refine the alternatives maps and post to the project website.

Q: Will you have to add a second set of rails on the present alignment from Oregon City to Portland?

For Alternative 1, our refinement included more detailed work on operations and engineering. By taking out additional track in a number of constrained areas, we're still able to improve operations for passenger rail and maintain acceptable operations for freight. For example, through the most constrained area of Alternative 1 in the Oregon City area, no additional track is assumed. However north of Oregon City and through southeast Portland and the Brooklyn yard, additional track would be added.

Q: Does this plan suggest specific sidings, signaling and/or double track? If so, where?

With Alternative 1, we were aiming to minimize the improvements we needed to make, specifically avoiding new major river crossings and routes through urbanized areas. We will need to double track in some sections through Eugene. We have identified some locations to receive improvements, but unless we started constructing this fairly soon, these locations will likely get adjusted as we moved ahead due to changes in train schedules and other factors.

Q: What is the time frame for the next steps?

On November 4th, the team hosted an online briefing with all of the Community Advisory Groups. A project online open house outlining the recommended Preferred Alternative is open until November 22nd and a Leadership Council meeting will be held on December 8th. The Tier 1 Draft Environmental Impact Statement is going to be written over the next year and will be published in Fall 2016. At that time in-person public hearings will be held throughout the project area. We anticipate completing the process with a Record of Decision in early 2018.

Q: When will the project be constructed?

Completing the environmental process will make the project eligible to compete for federal funds. When funds are secured, additional engineering, evaluation of potential impacts and benefits would be completed, and then construct can begin. When federal funds are used, states are generally required to match 20%, which is more feasible with the lower cost of Alternative 1. We don't have any specific funding available that would allow us to move forward with construction at this time.

Q: Is there a way to get to the Record of Decision (ROD) faster than 2 years?

Yes, it is possible. The schedule is based on the time it normally takes for Federal Railroad Administration to go through their review process of both the DEIS and the final EIS. The

project team is working with them to find ways to streamline the process. For example, we are sending them the draft of chapter 1 by the end of this week. We will send FRA DEIS chapters as they are completed, so they can do their initial review while the team works on subsequent chapters. This tactic should help accelerate the process but time savings will also depend on the extent of the comments we receive on the DEIS. We are looking for other ways to accelerate this process and get it done as early as possible.

Q: Have you calculated the capital cost of six round trips between Eugene and Portland? With six round trips have you calculated what the increased operating and maintenance cost would be that the state of Oregon would also have to cover?

One advantage of Alternative 1 is that we can incrementally increase round trips. We don't plan on going from two to six roundtrips overnight, but instead we begin with three 3, then increase to four and so on. The ultimate goal is to get to six. The project team is estimating \$25 million in annual operations and maintenance costs for Alternative 1 and closer to \$43 million annually for Alternative 2. With Alternative 2, ODOT would own much of passenger rail infrastructure which would be a new responsibility.

Q: What's the approximate budget for the operations and maintenance ODOT is in charge of now, with only 2 round trips?

The annual operations and maintenance costs for the Oregon part of the Amtrak Cascades service is \$14 million.

Q: Considering the O & M cost increases with more roundtrips, has ODOT looked at the current fleet (2 trains)? As Washington adds additional trips on their end, their trains are going to be needed north of Portland. Are you looking at additional equipment?

The capitol cost includes the cost to purchase additional train sets. We would need at least one more train set, if not two.

Q: It is sounding like transportation will be a big issue in the 2017 Legislature. I am concerned that this plan may give legislators an excuse to wait for a final recommendation and, maybe, federal funding sometime later.

The project team believes the legislature will likely support the recommended Preferred Alternative over Alternative 2 because it gives us improved service and ridership, and costs significantly less than Alternative 2. If the legislature chooses not to fund the existing service it will have to stop in mid-2017. Identifying the recommended Preferred Alternative gives everybody a more clear idea of where we think we're going, even though it's not a final decision.

The legislature will have to address finding a more sustainable source of funding for passenger rail, according to Rob Eaton of Amtrak. It would ultimately cost more to decommission passenger rail and re-establish it in 10 years, than it would to continue with funding.

Next Steps

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 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, Corridor Forum and Leadership Council meetings will be held at this time as well. ODOT will then recommend the Selected Alternative after the public review period has closed and all comments considered. The Oregon Passenger Rail Leadership Council will review that recommendation. The FRA will make the final selection and publish the Final Tier 1 EIS and Record of Decision.

There will be a Leadership council meeting on December 8, 2015.

Online Open House

To learn more about recommended Preferred Alternative, go to 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.
