



Oregon Passenger Rail

Eugene - Portland

CHOOSING A PATH FORWARD

Public Outreach and Comments

Fall 2015

Prepared for

Oregon Department of Transportation
Salem, Oregon

Prepared by

JLA Public Involvement

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Overview

The Oregon Department of Transportation conducted a round of public outreach in Fall 2015 aimed at providing information on the recommended Preferred Alternative, next steps in the process, answering questions and getting feedback.

This report includes a summary of outreach and public comments received through the following forums and events:

- Online open house from November 2 to 22, 2015.
- Online briefing for Community Advisory Groups held on November 4, 2015.
- Online briefing for Corridor Forum held on November 17, 2015.
- Comments received through the website comment form, emails and phone calls during the outreach period.
- Tabling outreach at college campuses in Albany, Corvallis, Eugene, Portland and Salem and Union Station in Portland in November 2015.

Online Open House

The project hosted an online open house from November 2nd through 22nd, 2015. The purpose of the online event was to:

- Present project updates and provide information on the recommended Preferred Alternative.
- Present the results of the initial assessment of the alternatives.
- Gather feedback.

826 people visited the online open house and 97 provided comments via the online comment form.

Online Open House Format

The homepage of the online open house included a Welcome video featuring Leadership Council Co-Chair Mayor Kitty Piercy and a summary of the five information stations:

- 1) **Background** – Information included what the project will do and how it follows the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. It also included a summary of the Purpose and Need Statement and the Goals and Objectives of the project.
- 2) **Alternatives** – Information included a brief summary of Alternatives 1 and 2, as well as a video by Mayor Piercy describing both alternatives. Alternative 1 is identified as the recommended Preferred Alternative.

- 3) **Evaluation Criteria** – This station included information on the assessment of the alternatives. The evaluation was shown in a matrix, summarized by project goals.
- 4) **Differentiating Evaluation Criteria** – Information focused on the specific evaluation criteria that stood out the most when comparing Alternatives 1 and 2. The seven different criteria examined more closely included: travel times, stations and transportation, ability to build incrementally, building towards true high speed rail, cost and ridership, community and social impacts, and natural environment.
- 5) **Next Steps & Feedback**– This station included information on the next steps in the process, upcoming meetings, and also provided a comment form for feedback and demographic questions.

In addition to the stations above, a Spanish-language page that included the information outlined above was provided as part of the online open house.

Online Briefings

An online briefing was held for members of the Community Advisory Groups and another was held for participants of the Corridor Forum. Both briefings ran for an hour and had time for participants to ask questions of the project team. The briefings included the same information covered in the online open house.

Group	Date	Time	Approx. Number Attendees
Community Advisory Groups	November 4	5:30 – 6:30 p.m.	18
Corridor Forum	November 17	3:00 – 4:00 p.m.	26
Total Attendees			44

See appendix for a full summary of each briefing.

Tabling Events

The project team hosted informational booths at University of Oregon, Oregon State University, Linn Benton Community College, Willamette University, Chemeketa Community College, and at Portland Union Station in November 2015. See appendix for full summary of the events.

Location	Date	Talked to Project Team	Signed up for project updates	Left Comment
Willamette University	November 3	24	3	2

Linn Benton Community College	November 4	20	1	3
Chemeketa Community College	November 9	20	0	2
Portland Union Station	November 10	24	5	6
University of Oregon	November 10	12	1	4
Oregon State University	November 13	0	0	0
Total		100	10	17

Notification

The following forms of notification were used to invite people to the online open house:

- **Newsletter** – The project team developed a newsletter to announce the decision to move forward with a recommended Preferred Alternative. 2,800 electronic copies of the newsletter were emailed to the stakeholder database on October 22, 2015. Approximately 50 newsletters were handed out at the community tabling events. The Spanish version of the newsletter was emailed to 25 contacts in the stakeholder database and was also available for distribution at the tabling events.
- **Project website announcement** – The website prominently announced the online open house. The website had 1,154 visitors between October 1 – November 23, 2015. 826 unique visitors visited the online open house between November 2 – November 22, 2015. The open house was also announced on the ODOT Rail Division website with a link to the Oregon Passenger Rail website.
- **Stakeholder Database Emails-** In addition to the email circulating the newsletter, emails were sent out to the approximately 2,700 stakeholders on the following dates:
 - **November 2, 2015:** Email sent to 2,725 stakeholders announcing the launch of the Online Open House.
 - **November 6, 2015:** Email sent to 25 Spanish-speaking stakeholders containing Fall 2015 Newsletter and link to Spanish Online Open house.
 - **November 10, 2015:** Email sent to 2,712 stakeholders reminding them of the Online Open House.
 - **November 18, 2015:** Email sent to 2,705 stakeholders reminding them of the Online Open House.
- **News release and radio interview** – ODOT distributed a news release about the online open house on October 30, 2015. Jim Cox was interviewed by Jefferson Public Radio on November 19, 2015 and KGAL radio on November 19, 2015.

- **Community Newspapers and Newsletters** – The project team reached out to cities, chambers of commerce, and community organizations throughout the study area to collaborate on outreach for the public meetings. As a result of this outreach, 14 cities, agencies and organizations included information about the online open house in their newsletters and online calendars. See the appendix for a full list of this effort.
- **Social Media** – ODOT advertised the November online open house via social media outlets including approximately 20 tweets.
- **Email to blogs** – The project team sent information to Travel Oregon and Oregon Business about the online open house.

Public Comment Summary Overview

Overview

This round of outreach was primarily informative and no specific input was solicited. A general comment form was provided at the end of the online open house. During this outreach phase, a total of approximately 120 public comments from the online open house, emails, phone calls, and tabling events were received. These comments are summarized below.

Key Themes

- Many participants commented that increased frequency of trips and reliability of schedule would attract more commuters to rail.
- Many participants submitted comments that supported Alternative 1 as the recommended Preferred Alternative.
- Many participants want high speed rail to be considered incrementally.
- Many participants mentioned alternative station location preferences.
- Some participants expressed concern that cost of the project and ticket prices were prohibitive.

Many participants commented that increased frequency of trips and reliability of schedule would attract more commuters to rail.

- Many participants cited more round trips as the most important goal to them.
- Many participants said they would use passenger rail to commute to work or for leisure travel if the schedule had more favorable times.
- Some participants commented that schedule reliability was important to them.

Many participants submitted comments that supported Alternative 1 as the recommended Preferred Alternative.

- Many participants submitted comments that were in support of Alternative 1.
- Some participants submitted comments indicating general support of the project.

Many participants want the high speed rail to be considered incrementally.

- Many participants mentioned they wanted to see high speed rail incorporated as part of the project.
- Some participants think that the analysis on high speed rail wasn't sufficient to rule it out as an option.
- Few participants point to Washington State working towards high speed rail as a reason we need to have it integrated into our plans.

Many participants mentioned alternative station location preferences.

- Many participants believe passenger rail will have a higher annual ridership if it incorporates Corvallis into the alignment.

- Few participants requested that a Woodburn station be considered.

Some participants expressed concern that the cost of the project and ticket prices was prohibitive.

- Many think the 15 minutes saved with Alternative 1 isn't enough to warrant the high cost of the project.
- Some think the 15 minutes saved with Alternative 1 isn't sufficient to attract commuters to ride passenger rail.
- Few participants cited ticket costs as being too high.