



Leadership Council Meeting Summary

Tuesday, December 8, 2015

Broadway Commons
1300 Broadway St, Salem, OR 97301

Members Present

Tom Boyatt – *City of Springfield Alternate*
Andy Cotugno – *Metro Alternate*
Gary Gillespie – *Lane Transit District*
Sharon Konopa – *Mayor of Albany*
Alan Lehto – *Trimet Alternate*

Greg Macpherson – *Land Conservation and Development Commission*
Ron Pate – *WSDOT Alternate*
Kitty Piercy (Co-Chair) – *Mayor of Eugene*
Anna Peterson – *Mayor of Salem*
Mike Quilty – *Out-of-Corridor*

Members Absent

Lee Beyer – *State Senator*
Matt Garrett – *ODOT*
Sara Gelser – *State Representative*
Rod Monroe – *State Senator*
Charlie Hales – *Mayor of Portland*
Nancy Nathanson – *State Representative*
Sean O'Hollaren – *Oregon Transportation Commission*
John Russell (Co-Chair) – *Russell Development Co.*
E. Walter Van Valkenburg – *Oregon Business Development Commission*

Staff and Project Team

Karmen Fore – *Governor's Office*
Jim Cox – *ODOT*
Bob Melbo – *ODOT*
John Schnaderbeck – *ODOT*
Stacy Snider – *ODOT*
Jonathan Bartsch – *Council Facilitator*
Theresa Carr – *CH2M*
Scott Richman – *David Evans and Associates*
Stacy Thomas – *JLA Public Involvement*
Sylvia Ciborowski – *JLA Public Involvement*

Audience

Jim McFarlane
Rob Inerfeld – *City of Eugene*
Thomas Matting
Bill Holmstrom – *Department of Land Conservation and Development*
Cindy Robert – *Union Pacific*
Mark Ottenad – *City of Wilsonville*
Thomas Botty – *Oregon City*
Tom Schwetz – *Lane Transit District*

Jim Howell – *AORTA*
Dan McFarling – *AORTA*
Ryan Tribbett
Edward McGlone – *Lane Transit District*
Leah Craft
Julie Warncke – *City of Salem Alternate*

Welcome, Introductions and Agenda Review

Kitty Piercy welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked members for their continued participation. The purpose of the meeting is to review analysis of the alignment alternatives and the project team's recommended Preferred Alternative, and determine whether Leadership Council members can support taking the recommended Preferred Alternative into the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

Presentation: Project Update and Schedule

Jim Cox, ODOT, provided a project update that included the following main points:

- Completing the Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision will make Oregon eligible to compete for federal funding for passenger rail improvements. It will *allow* Oregon to move forward with the final Selected Alternative, but will not *require* us to do so. There is also flexibility to make identified improvements incrementally, as passenger rail demand increases.
- At the December 2013 LC meeting, members supported the project team's recommendation to move two alternatives into the Draft EIS: Alternative 1: a route that generally follows the existing Amtrak Cascades route, along the Union Pacific Railroad line between Eugene and Portland and Alternative 2: a primarily 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..
- At the December 2013 meeting, the LC asked the project team to look at the long-range possibilities for high speed rail. ODOT formed a group to consider the potential for high speed rail in Oregon and they developed the [High Speed Rail Concept Vision Report](#). The findings indicated that Oregon is not currently ready for high speed rail, and that the State is not expected to be able to effectively support high speed rail in the foreseeable future, due mainly to projected population and ridership, and laid out a 4-phase process to reach high speed rail.
- At the LC's last meeting, in December 2014, the group asked the project team to optimize Alternative 1 to increase ridership and reduce costs. The team worked with key stakeholders including the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and Amtrak, and conducted additional analysis and modeling for both build alternatives. The team found that with the improvements outlined in Alternative 1, the current route could handle six roundtrips per day and increase ridership by 90% over the next 20 years. As part of the current project, ODOT will develop a plan for increasing service incrementally.

The original Alternative 1 analysis was based on a projected six round trips per day. This additional analysis and modeling considered six, four and three round trips per day and helped the study team update Alternative 1 to reduce costs, substantially increase ridership, and gain FRA support the recommended Preferred Alternative.

The original Alternative 2 analysis was also based on a projected six round trips per day. The additional analysis and modeling did not consider fewer round trips because of the limited opportunities to reduce infrastructure and costs. Most of Alternative 2 is on a new alignment with a few sidings to allow passenger trains to pass. Fewer round trips may allow elimination of one or two sidings but would not significantly reduce the cost of the alternative. In addition, FRA has advised ODOT that a new alignment should only be considered if much more frequent train service (e.g., one trip per hour) is intended to run on that alignment, and this level of service does not appear to be cost-effective.

- **Basis for Evaluation and Criteria:** At the beginning of the project, ODOT conducted a public process to develop the project purpose and need, and goals and objectives. The project goals and objectives were used to develop evaluation criteria, which served as the basis for the analysis of the preliminary alternatives and the recommended Preferred Alternative. Historically, the selection of a Preferred Alternative happens *after* public review of the DEIS for environmental review processes under a U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) lead agency. Recently, however, the federal government included directives to their departments and agencies through the most recent federal transportation funding authorization (known as “MAP-21”) to shorten their environmental review procedures. As one way to shorten their procedures, the FRA advised that state agencies identify a Recommended Preferred Alternative in the DEIS where possible. Identification of a Preferred Alternative does not remove any of the other alternatives from consideration. The Draft EIS will fully consider Alternative 1, Alternative 2 and the No-Action Alternative. The final decision on a Selected Alternative will occur after the DEIS goes through public review and comment.

Ron Pate, WSDOT, provided an update on ODOT and WSDOT coordination regarding their passenger rail plans. He explained that Washington and Oregon have been working to build a corridor approach that links the two states. The recently passed federal transportation bill - FAST Act - includes funding for passenger rail. According to Pate, being ready as an Oregon-Washington Corridor, with a final plan in place that focuses on increasing ridership, puts us in a position to receive federal funding.

Kitty Piercy recommended using this story about state cooperation as a means to encourage the legislature to pursue federal rail funding and to build interest in the passenger rail system.

Presentation and Discussion: Assessment of OPR Alternatives

Scott Richman, David Evans and Associates, provided a presentation on the key differences between Alternatives 1 and 2, and the initial assessment of the alternatives.

Description of Alternatives 1 and 2: For presentation and analysis purposes, the project team organized the corridor into three sections:

- **Southern Section:**

- Alternative 1 includes adding tracks in some sections, but not in some sensitive areas (such as major river crossings) or through some densely developed/downtown areas. Alternative 2 would build a mostly new alignment parallel to I-5 from Springfield to Albany.
- Alternative 1 would use existing stations (Eugene and Albany). Alternative 2 would require a new station in Springfield, and either building a new Albany station or using the existing Albany station.
- **Central Section:**
 - Alternative 1 includes adding tracks in some sections, but not in the downtown core areas of Albany or Salem. Alternative 2 would build a new alignment generally parallel to I-5 between Albany and Salem/Keizer, and follow the former Oregon Electric rail line north of Keizer.
 - Alternative 1 would use existing stations in Salem. Alternative 2 would include a new station near I-5 (either in Salem or Keizer). Either alternative could include a new station in Woodburn.
- **Northern Section**
 - Alternative 1 would add additional tracks through the Milwaukie/south Portland metro area. There would not be additional track through constrained areas around Oregon City. Neither alternative would make major changes through or north of Portland Union Station.
 - Both alternatives would use the same Union Pacific alignment between Oregon City and Portland Union Station. Both would include adding one additional track in this area. Alternative 2 includes a cut and cover tunnel north of Brooklyn Yard through a portion of the Portland Central Eastside industrial area.
 - Alternative 2 would include a new station in either Wilsonville or Tualatin.

Initial Assessment of the Alternatives: Scott Richman provided an overview of the initial analysis:

- **Travel Time:** Alternative 1 would provide a 15 minute travel time savings over the No Action Alternative, while Alternative 2 would provide a 33 minute travel time savings over the No Action Alternative. The No Action Alternative is assumed to keep the current travel time of 2:35. Reliability would substantially increase from current conditions under both alternatives. Both alternatives would align schedules with Washington passenger rail.
- **Stations and transportation connections:** More people and jobs are potentially served with Alternative 1 because the existing stations are located in urban and employment centers. Alternative 2 stations near I-5 would contribute to lower ridership.
- **Ability to build incrementally:** Alternative 1 can be phased and built in reasonably fundable segments, whereas Alternative 2 cannot. Alternative 2 would have to be built in large sections. Improvements would have to be made on the current alignment to allow

additional round trips. Those improvements would be bypassed when Alternative 2 is completed.

- **True High Speed Rail:** Alternative 2 comes closer than Alternative 1 to supporting high speed rail. However, Alternative 1 helps build ridership that can potentially support moving toward a true high speed rail system in the future.
- **Cost and ridership:**
 - 2035 annual ridership is projected at 390,000 for the No Action alternative, 739,000 for Alternative 1, and 723,000 for Alternative 2. Annual ridership in 2013 was 283,000.
 - Capital cost would be \$660-775 million for Alternative 1, and \$3.65-\$4.47 billion for Alternative 2. Capital cost per new rider would be 5 times higher for Alternative 2 as compared to Alternative 1.
 - Annual operations and maintenance costs would be \$25 million for Alternative 1 and \$46 million for Alternative 2.
- **Community and social impacts:** Both alternatives have some impacts to parks and historic resources. Alternative 2 would cause unavoidable impacts to some parks including the Eastgate Woodlands adjacent to the Willamette River in Springfield.
- **Natural environment:** There was not a significant difference between analysis for Alternatives 1 and 2, except that Alternative 2 would potentially impact more acres of farmland (340 acres vs 90 acres) and would convert less farmland to non-farm uses than Alternative 2. In addition, Alternative 2 would require three new crossings of the Willamette River Greenway.

Committee Discussion

Members had these questions about the alternatives analysis:

- What are the Union Pacific's thoughts on the alternatives? Cindy Robert, Union Pacific, responded that UP's number one concern is safety, particularly on shared rail tracks. UP wants the state to do well and wants to balance the needs of passengers with the needs of producers. UP plans to fully engage in this process once ODOT selects a final alternative.
- How do the alternatives improve reliability? Staff responded that Alternative 1 includes lengthening some sidings so that trains would not need to come to a complete stop when they pass each other. It also includes some sections of double tracking, which improve reliability and provides more flexibility in operations.
- How much does the population in the Portland to Eugene corridor need to increase in order to support high speed rail? Staff responded that the population would need to more than double. Additionally, in order to have a dedicated track, Oregon would need to be a rail owner and pay for all ongoing maintenance and liability.

- Does the building of a high speed rail system have the potential to cause increased population? Staff responded that there is not a reliable way to study that. The project team used the state Office of Economic Analysis population projections as a credible source.

Jonathan Bartsch asked members to provide any observations they have on the initial analysis results. Members made these comments:

- Many members made comments in support of Alternative 1, with the caveat that the end goal should be to move towards high speed rail in the long term future. They made these comments:
 - Half of Oregonians live outside the Portland-Eugene corridor and are unlikely to support spending billions of dollars to construct Alternative 2, with no benefit to them. We need to be good stewards of our limited funding, without precluding the ability to build a bigger vision for the future.
 - The purpose of this study was intended to find a “rapid rail” alternative as opposed to true high speed rail. Alternative 1 seems to meet this original goal of building a faster, more reliable, cost effective system. It would make sense to add a statement in the EIS or final report that the long term goal (outside of this project) is to have true high speed rail.
 - Alternative 1 seems to meet Step 1 in the 4-phase high speed rail process. Alternative 2 is step 2, and would require abandoning much of what is built by Step 1. Step 3 is building a tunnel, and Step 4 is electrification of the rails. All of this is incredibly expensive and seems impossible. True high speed rail seems to be more a distraction; it makes more sense to pursue improvements that are realistic and fundable.
- Other comments in favor of Alternative 1:
 - Oregon and Washington function as a single corridor. Alternative 2 is problematic because it moves stations away from core centers and forces Oregon to become a railroad owner. Being a railroad owner has many difficult implications, such as high cost, safety issues, liability risks, and insurance implications.
 - Reliability is more important than speed, and the cost of operating a train increases with faster travel speeds.
 - Oregon lost out on previous funding because we did not have our NEPA work complete. Now we are poised to have the Tier 1 EIS complete in the next couple of years. Alternative 1 is a feasible alternative that can serve existing riders and attract new riders.
 - Alternative 2 seems incredibly expensive. Alternative 1 seems the better choice. Alternative 1 provides a lot of benefit, including reliability, at less cost.

- Comments in support of Alternative 2:
 - Concern was expressed that if we neglect moving towards future true high speed rail with our short term improvements, we will never reach that future. We should find a balance between advancing a 50-year dream while pursuing an incremental approach in the meantime.
 - Waiting on a side rail for a freight train is problematic and makes passenger rail less appealing. Alternative 1 makes passenger rail subservient to freight rail. The appeal of Alternative 2 is that Oregon would own its passenger rail line.
- Other comments:
 - None of the options cut travel time a lot but they add more frequency, which makes rail travel more appealing.
 - Technology advances may completely change the way we travel and do things in 20 years.
 - A member commented on the station locations in Alternative 2. It is possible that businesses and commercial centers might choose to locate close to the freeway-oriented stations along Alternative 2 in order to be closer to passenger rail stations.

Presentation: Input from Public on Preferred Alternative

Stacy Thomas, JLA Public Involvement, gave a brief report on the fall 2015 public outreach effort. The process focused on online outreach (including an online open house and virtual briefings to the Corridor Forum and Community Advisory Groups) as well as some informational tabling at Portland Union Station and colleges and universities. The purpose of the outreach was to explain that ODOT is taking a recommended Preferred Alternative into the DEIS, and to provide information on the initial analysis results.

The Corridor Forum and Community Advisory Groups had questions about the cost/benefit of the two alternatives, location of proposed double tracking for Alternative 1, and how the alternatives coordinate with local transit agencies.

826 people visited the Online Open House and 97 people provided comments. Comments reiterated the common theme that train frequency and reliability are the most important factors (more important than speed). Many people expressed interest in using passenger rail for commuting purposes. People are still very interested and passionate about high speed rail. There was some concern about the cost of the project, and some comments about prohibitive cost of train tickets.

Public Comment

Dan McFarling, past Secretary of AORTA, commented that Oregonians support cost effective and efficient passenger rail. AORTA endorses the incremental approach of Alternative 1. It is consistent with the plan that AORTA published in the 1970s. If anything could change about Alternative 1, it would be more frequent trains and improved scheduling (particularly an early morning departure from Portland heading south). Connectivity in Portland will be very important. Oregon's Constitution limits the use of the gas tax to road projects. The restriction should be lifted or else the state cannot hope to reach a least-cost transportation system.

Jim Howell, AORTA, commented that there have been three Oregon rail plans in recent decades, each of which recommended something similar to Alternative 1. Studies have short shelf lives. The current proposal must result in some action soon or else the plan will be outdated and another planning process will have to be done. If Oregon chooses to take the incremental improvement approach of Alternative 1, these improvements do not have to be abandoned if and when Oregon shifts towards high speed rail. In France, for example, an old rail alignment was electrified and grade crossings were removed. At the same time a high speed rail line was built. Both lines are still functioning. If Oregon builds ridership on the existing route, then there is evidence and a reason to build ridership to support high speed rail.

LC Recommendation on Preferred Alternative

Jonathan Bartsch reminded members that their task is to decide whether they are comfortable with moving forward with Alternative 1 as the recommended Preferred Alternative.

- Upon initial polling, not all members supported moving forward with Alternative 1 as the recommended Preferred Alternative. A member interested in Alternative 2 indicated that it is a conflict for freight and passenger rail to operate on the same alignment. Separate tracks and rail ownership should be the state's goal.
- We need a commitment from the Governor that transportation is a priority and that passenger rail is part of that commitment. We need a commitment that *public transportation is separate from private business*. Alternative 2 accomplishes that and should not be lost sight of.
- Public comment shows that people are interested in high speed rail.
- Members discussed potential options for how to move forward with a recommendation. In the end, members felt that coming to a consensus recommendation would be the best course of action to advance rail.
- Members reiterated their reasons for supporting Alternative 1, specifically:
 - It is unlikely that Oregon will spend billions of dollars to construct Alternative 2.
 - Alternative 1 provides improved reliability and some areas of double tracking.

- It is hard to know whether the state and Oregon residents will embrace true high speed rail in the future.
- Alternative 2 is not attainable in a 20-year timeframe. Alternative 1 is attainable and brings good benefits.

Leadership Council Recommendation: Members made a consensus agreement in support of Alternative 1 as the recommended Preferred Alternative, with the following statement:

It is important that the state of Oregon strongly support public passenger rail service. The Governor and the legislature should develop a much more comprehensive transportation plan for the state of Oregon that includes support for public passenger rail transportation.

Closing and Next Steps

Staff explained that the project team is working on developing environmental technical reports and sending advanced chapters of the EIS to FRA. In the fall of 2016, ODOT will publish the draft EIS for public comment and review.