

1.0 MEETING SUMMARY – FREIGHT TRAVEL ADVISORY COMMITTEE JUNE 4, 2009

1.1 Meeting Synopsis

A summary of the meeting is provided below.

I. Introductions and Welcome – Linda Koenig, ODOT Long Range Plan Project Manager began the meeting and introduced John Bowman, ODOT Asst. Planning & Research Engineer who welcomed everyone. After brief introductions from all in attendance, John described the role of the Committee and the meeting purpose to be one of information sharing and the gathering of key input. It was stated that what the committee knows about transportation issues will be of great help in conducting the long range plan update. John concluded by reviewing the agenda topics for the meeting.

II. Long Range Plan Process – Tom Ryden, Consultant Team Project Manager described the basic format the Plan will take, the Plan's connection to current Federal regulations and SAFETEA-LU; the goal of the Plan; the project schedule; and the essential elements of the State transportation system to be covered by the Plan.

III. Types of Transportation – Modal Perspectives for People and Projects – Consultant Team members Becky Blatnica and Ira Hirschman provided an overview of the primary modes for personal travel and goods movement respectively. Key supply statistics and usage changes over the last 5 years were provided. It was particularly noted that highway usage has been declining recently and transit usage is increasing. Regarding goods movement, it was discussed that recent economic trends indicate a slow down in activity both statewide and nationally. It was noted that this will impact assumptions out to 2035, and must be carefully considered. Tom Ryden discussed the distribution of 2009 state level transportation expenditures by mode, and the fact that Oklahoma offers a wide variety of mode options with two thirds of the expenditures applied to roads and bridges.

IV. Summary of Interviews/Surveys – Tom Ryden and Becky Blatnica of the Consultant team reviewed the results of the Advisory Committee interviews. The review was in four parts:

1. System overview,
2. Transportation system objectives,
3. Funding and
4. Transportation system challenges.

Results were tallied by individual committee and combined where questions were asked of multiple committees. The results reflected 80 interviews completed in time for the meeting. From a **system overview** perspective, the interview comments received reflected both positive comments and room for improvement. Regarding **system objectives**, connectivity issues were noted and specific strategies to improve safety, air quality and energy were noted as those that seemed the most favorable. Preferences were given regarding possible new **funding sources** and specific priorities for use of those funds.

A number of transportation **system challenges** were summarized for person movement and goods movement based on individual comments obtained from each interview. Common themes regarding challenges included:

1. Insufficient capacity on highways and bridges,
2. Funding and
3. More modal choices.

V. Transportation Issues and Concerns – Committee Members – Linda Koenig next posed two questions to the Committee:

1. What issues should the Plan address going forward for person/passenger movement in 2035?
2. What issues should the Plan address for goods movement in 2035?

(Section 1.2 contains a summary of the comments by topic area from the meeting)

VI. Policy Themes – Tom Ryden provided a summary of the emerging federal transportation policies that may impact the Long Range Plan. He reviewed both topics under consideration as part of SAFETEA-LU re-authorization, as well as the potential for new federal legislation on climate change.

John Bowman next reviewed some policy themes that ODOT is suggesting be pursued as part of the Plan. Nine themes were discussed and these include: replacement of major structures such as bridges & interchanges; preserve the aging highway system; maximize efficiency of the existing system; maintain existing investments including major transportation corridors; improve transit and person transportation opportunities; emphasize safety of all modes; consider expanded options for goods movement; emphasize air quality and energy conservation; and explore new funding sources, concepts, and partners.

VII. Conclusions – Linda Koenig concluded the meeting by providing an overview of the themes from the discussion (also see section 1.2), and indicating that a summary of the meeting will be made available to all committee members. She reminded everyone that they should visit the project website to follow the progress of the study and thanked everyone for their time and participation.

1.2 Comment Summary

For this portion of the meeting, Committee members were asked to offer their comments on two questions as noted below. The Committee was advised of the guideline that this was meant to be a brainstorming session with no ideas debated, and with everyone being allowed to have a voice in the discussion.

1. What issues should the plan address going forward for person/passenger movement in 2035?

The Freight Advisory Committee commented primarily on goods movement; however comments on person movement included:

- Provide better connections between modes such as between local buses, Greyhound and AMTRAK
- The State owned rail network should also address passenger rail needs

- Need to provide transportation for elderly, visually impaired and others with disabilities to improve their social and economic participation in the community

2. What issues should the Plan address for Goods Movement in 2035?

The Freight Advisory Committee goods movement comments are provided for eight major topic areas:

- **Short Line Railroads –**
 - Undersized and unable to handle rail car weight of 286,000 lbs.
 - Bridges need replacement
 - Limited funds, repairs are costly; state needs to do more to assist Class II railroads
 - Rail ROW acquired and not being used – better inventory needed
 - Identify pieces of land along short lines, that the state owns, which could be used for economic development
 - Rail deterioration is a big issue for Agriculture
 - Rail deterioration keeps agri-business from being cost effective
 - Connect Tulsa – OKC – Lawton with a short line
 - Improvements could increase rail freight velocity and increase capacity; need greater than 10 mph operations
 - Improvements needed at destination points
 - Recognize cost-benefit of short line improvements
 - HR 1056 authorized the state to review needs of short line railroads
 - 100 unit trains need to be supported and be able to connect business, military customers and the waterway
- **Class I Railroads –**
 - Limited capacity because of a lack of electronic switching capability
 - Costly upgrades
 - Eastern Oklahoma has Class I lines needing upgrades
 - Need better connections to/from short lines
- **Waterways –**
 - Current access roads to ports result in lost business due to lack of maintenance and poor access;
Federal government funding shortfall is a problem
 - No interstate highway to handle the loads for waterway freight
 - Take advantage of the Waterway system's ability to handle large bulk items and increased freight within Oklahoma
 - Limited rail access to ports via a short line hampers business
 - The Waterway is less inhibited by environmental restrictions imposed on trucks
 - A 'Marine Highway' reduces congestion on roads and rail
 - Less expensive to ship by water
 - Consider shifting transportation of more hazardous materials to waterways

- **Military /Air Defense Comments –**
 - Expect more large and heavy trucks on highways - as ports have restricted access for military use and rail has limited weight capacity; existing roads (pavement and width) inadequate for heavier weights
 - Distribution westward is limited which causes congestion
 - Oklahoma military bases require a lot of freight movement
 - From and between Tinker AFB-OKC , Altus AFB, Vance AFB-Enid
 - From and Between Ft. Sill Army Base and Shepherd AFB in Wichita Falls, TX
 - Congestion problems exist on interchanges for large freight carriers
 - Research ways to increase east-west access
 - Fort Sill – Air defense military expansion (from El Paso Fort Bliss) will cause rapid growth in southwest Oklahoma and Lawton (next couple of years) for military operations

- **Communications/Safety etc.General -**
 - Need to improve/increase information from the public affairs office as frequent and strategic communication can be helpful
 - Look at school bus movement limitations and safety

- **Truck Freight, Road and Highway System-**
 - Need wider shoulders on rural two lane roads
 - Use shoulder lane for additional capacity (on hills, etc.)
 - Increase weight limits because of heavier tractors (due to environmental regulations)
 - Need to proceed with outer loop proposed for OKC and Norman
 - Need to plan ahead, county roads are suffering, bridges cannot support loads and air quality non-attainment issues need to be addressed
 - Problem with too many trucks is related lack of short line railroad options

- **Intermodalism -**
 - Need more rail/truck transload facilities
 - Consider a possible location study for intermodal/trans load facility

- **Funding –**
 - Better partnerships needed between state and counties on funding
 - Need to do something beyond fuel/gas tax

- **Permitting –**
 - Increase use of electronic options
 - Need one entity doing permitting and enforcement
 - Permit time is too short for special permitting loads
 - Too much duplication and inefficiency in current system