



Oregon Travel Information Council
1500 Liberty Street SE, Suite 150
Salem, Oregon 97302

Minutes – Rest Area Committee Meeting
OTE Offices
Wednesday, April 06, 2016

Members Participating:

Bob Russell, Chair; Mike Marsh; Ed Washington; Kathy Watson; Ryan Snyder

OTE Staff Participating:

Nancy DeSouza, Executive Director; Tim Pickett, Operations Director; Jason Nash, Rest Area Division Administrator; Heather Swanson, Rest Area Operations Manager; Jessica Carbone, Office Assistant

Guest:

Gwenn Baldwin, OTIC Chair

The meeting of the Travel Information Council Rest Area Committee was called to order by Chair Russell at 8:30 a.m.

Roll Call: Marsh, Snyder, Russell, Watson and Washington

Minutes Approval: Watson moved to approve the March 3, 2016 minutes. Marsh seconded the motion with the amendment to change “categorize” to “categories” on page three, line three. The motion was unanimously approved.

Business Meeting:

Update on sponsorship rule status with ODOT and FHWA: DeSouza said the proposed sponsorship rules are being filed with the Secretary of State’s office for public comment, which closes May 23. Watson commented on the quick work done by ODOT to accomplish this. DeSouza stated that this could not have happened without the support and leadership of Director Garrett and his staff.

Draft Templates for FHWA approval: Because of legislative changes, DOJ and DAS restructured contract processes and templates for the State of Oregon that all agencies must follow. For TIC sponsorships, the agency will have three tiers as previously discussed, with varying approval levels required. Watson appreciates the flexibility afforded by the rules to issue RFPs without set dollar amounts. Russell asked how prices for tier three sponsorships were to be set. DeSouza said OTE will specify the items available for sponsorship (bench, tree, etc.), the length of the sponsorship period, and the total cost including maintenance for each item. Russell asked staff to consider how pricing could be affected by the volume of customers to the rest area and potential of exposure. Pickett handed out draft sponsorship agreements.

Professional sales/marketing options: DeSouza reported that there hasn't been staff capacity to research outside marketing options since the last meeting. Snyder suggested developing a plan around a middle-volume rest area instead of using French Prairie. Watson said that having more than one option, from our busiest rest area to our lowest, is an important selling point. Russell felt that same point could be made for tier-three sponsorships. The group discussed seeking a consultant for the Grove of the States project. Watson expressed the importance of finding an agency that is free from outside interests. More information will be available at future meetings, including learning how the State Capitol Walk of Flags program conducts flag sponsorship.

Advertising: Pickett's research found that there is a fine line between sponsorship and advertising. FHWA will not allow advertising. Gas, food, lodging, camping and attractions are the categories we are limited to on signs and in kiosks.

Discussion followed on how to broaden these categories to open options for more vendors. Russell would like to use the administrative rule making process to define the advertising aspect. It is a public process and everyone has their appropriate role. For now, sponsorship will take priority over advertising. When sponsorships are set, the Committee can pursue proposed rulemaking with ODOT, as they are the owners of the kiosks, and TIC operates them under an interagency agreement.

Performance Measures – Rest Area Inspection Form: Nash reviewed the updated rest area inspection form, which was updated with a numeric score for each category and sections for photos and additional comments. The form will be used for both external and internal measures for the condition of rest areas.

Marsh expressed concern that by keeping the comment cards as an internal measure, there is no way to speak to the customer experience in the rest areas. Snyder suggested using a brief survey to allow Wi-Fi access as a way to get that information. Nash noted that none of the rest areas currently have public Wi-Fi. DeSouza said that it may be option for future sponsorships.

The committee discussed the attributes and challenges of making the comment cards a public measure. Watson suggested using the cards, but dropping the top and bottom 10% to equalize outliers. Marsh responded that it was statistically viable, but the most accurate representation is the goal. Baldwin suggested a simple customer survey done by staff or volunteer groups once a quarter, although that may be costly. The committee decided to use comments cards as an external measure with the addition of a "Safety" category. Snyder would also like to see the quantity of comment cards added to the data.

The committee discussed current vending options in the rest areas and how, with the new evaluation forms, OTE will work with the Commission for the Blind to update and improve the cages and machines. OTE also is working to add vending to unserved rest areas.

Safety performance measures can be tracked by exclusions and incident reports. DeSouza expressed concerns on tracking exclusions as a measure because the program is new, and varies widely in its consistent use by Oregon State Police from rest area to rest area. Nash suggested using data from the toll-free phone number. DeSouza recommend tracking that data by categories that could include urgent, non-urgent, emergency, serious, minimal and non-actionable. Baldwin said she would get information from the Lloyd Transportation Management Association, who dealt with the same data issue when their safety program started at Holiday Park.

Other Business:

Rest Area Capital Projects Discussion:

Nash reported on the progress of the potential Oak Grove expansion. He will meet with an engineer and should have estimates for a cost and design package soon. DeSouza added that family/ADA/gender-neutral bathroom needs should be considered in long-term planning.

Russell asked for a member of staff to sit on the subcommittee for the Trade and Logistics Task Force dealing with truck parking. Pickett will join him.

Adjournment: Meeting was adjourned at 10:27 a.m.

Next meeting: May 5, 2016, 9:30 a.m. at the OTA, Portland, Oregon.
