



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

MINUTES
Oregon Travel Information Council
Quarterly Meeting – October 19, 2015
Ashland Oregon

Council Members:

Gwenn Baldwin, Chair
Kathy Watson, Secretary
Charlotte Lehan (by phone)
David Lohman
Mike Marsh

Bob Russell, Vice Chair
Mike Drennan
Ed Washington
Ryan Snyder

OTE Staff:

Nancy DeSouza, Executive Director

Tim Pickett, Operations Director

Convening: The public meeting of the Travel Information Council was called to order by Chair Baldwin at 8:05 a.m. Chair Baldwin noted attendance for the record.

Introductions: All in attendance in person except for Councilor Lehan by telephone.

Approval of minutes: Secretary Watson – Telephonic Meeting – with minor corrections of typos, language regarding current ratio, and discussion of Mike Marsh’s appointment date – July 1 vs. actual date of June 19. Approved as amended and corrected.

Transportation Commission minutes – Corrections of typos, added list of attendees to joint meeting minutes, added parenthetical notes to OTC quoted minutes regarding clarifications of TIC perspectives, including role of Travel Oregon in setting the “brand” for various public restroom facilities throughout the state. Russell noted that there were some items presented by ODOT that need to be presented as their language, not OTE’s. Lehan noted that French Prairie rest area on both sides actually has four million visitors each year, and southbound has two million. Approved as amended (Snyder abstained because he had not been at that meeting). Watson praised Lehan’s excellent presentation on the Grove of the States and the Highway Beautification Act.

Public Comment: None.

Business Meeting:

Committee Reports:

Finance Committee: Drennan discussed July and August financials and committee minutes for information to the Council. Drennan praised staff efforts to keep Accounts Payable current. Drennan noted the budgeting is from a bottom-up perspective, and individual rest area supervisors are responsible for reporting any variances. More data will improve projections for future budgets. Pickett updated on Moss Adams report, saying the field work is complete.

Heritage Trees: Washington reported the committee decided not to pursue Oregon Administrative Rules for the program at this time, believing operating practices and procedures are sufficient for effective operations. Baldwin requested that notice of meetings and events for the Heritage Programs be copied as far in advance as possible to all members of the Council to facilitate more participation.

Historical Markers: Lehan discussed work to revise the Administrative Rules to update them and the criteria for markers. Baldwin asked about the process for reviewing existing marker language. Lehan said there are limitations on the capacity of the committee to even identify the universe of markers. Lehan invited Councilors to bring any markers of concern to the committee for review and to determine whether it is already on the maintenance list. Baldwin how to review the content of markers created decades ago and how to develop a cohesive way to look at them. Lehan said that there are few markers that are rehabbed without updating the text.

Lehan said the Historic Cemetery Commission wants increased coordination with the state's heritage programs. Lehan would like maps in rest areas to identify where all types of historical assets are located in the vicinity. Russell supports a statewide effort, with Lehan, Washington and Watson taking the lead. A heritage conference will be sponsored by Oregon State Parks in May in Salem, and Lehan would like a mini-summit to spark conversations among key stakeholders, particularly in how it relates to tourism.

Lehan said the committee is discussing how proactive to be about developing and installing new markers and how to identify the 50-year anniversaries of events for potential markers. Lehan reminded that maintenance costs are borne by the agency. She expects the OAR draft rules will come before the Council in December or at the first meeting in 2016.

Executive Committee: Baldwin reported that there has been no meeting since the last Council meeting. The legislative agenda and Executive Director review are on an upcoming agenda, date to be determined. The evaluation timeframe is that DeSouza will have her anniversary in January, and expect the review in the first quarter of 2016.

Chair's Update: Baldwin discussed the status of rest are funding and the relationship with ODOT. As an organization, the relationships at various levels of the staff are working very well

together, and she is pleased and impressed with the work being done. Baldwin reported the lawsuit related to the former CEO has taken a tremendous amount of DeSouza's time, as did the computer failure with DeSouza and Pickett. It has been a large amount of work, but the agency is getting the work done and continuously improving.

Executive Director/Staff Reports: DeSouza said she is looking for awareness and discussion on a number of topics with Council:

- **Sponsorships:** Moving forward following the OTC support of the program, DeSouza and Pickett are working directly with DOJ and ODOT on the drafting of the rules, and a framework. ODOT wants more of a dollar-amount/percentage framework in rule before to acknowledging sponsorships with a mainline sign or a sign in the rest area. ODOT Director Matt Garrett supported the TIC's ability to use RFPs to maximize revenues in a more open framework that would not restrict the ability to recognize sponsorships, without putting specific thresholds in either ODOT or TIC administrative rules. This would put the bulk of the decision making on the Council, instead of ODOT. DeSouza continues to work through ODOT to ensure we are not violating any federal rules, and on asking the feds for approval from higher-level Oregon leaders, possibly as a test program for the Grove of the States. It is our goal to keep dollar/percentage thresholds out of the ODOT rules.

Russell reiterated that TIC needs flexibility to initiate and grow the sponsorship program. DeSouza said that TIC would set different levels of recognition for different levels of financial support, and used the example of the Grove of the States and what recognition signage would be warranted. Russell wants to look at sponsors providing ongoing maintenance of the asset. Lohman said it seems odd to have a set percentage in rule, because sponsorships at French Prairie might be much different than at Eastern Oregon. DeSouza said it is the traffic count on the highway that is the exposure-value to a mainline sign, not the number of rest area visitors. There may be as many people driving past Oak Grove as French Prairie, but the number of people who enter the rest area will be vastly different, with vastly different costs of operating the rest area.

DeSouza said that hitting that balance of responsibility, authority and trust to maximize revenue is our goal. The first year may result in lower bids for a mainline sign, but potential sponsors seeing that sign may wish to enter a bidding war for that mainline sign the next year.

Lohman suggested that it would be helpful to have FHWA's Oregon representative be part of the discussions regarding the rules and being involved in the conversations, particularly in appealing to him for an interim decision on the Grove of the States as a pilot project. He would like to request assistance clearing the way with Washington, D.C. Marsh reminded that the request would need to come through ODOT.

Grove of the States: The timeliness of removing the trees and grinding the stumps is vital, so we will ask for the 2015-17 biennial budget to include \$100,000 in Other Funds start-up funding for the Grove work, with the full intent to seek sponsorships to replace those funds as soon as the agency is legally able to acknowledge sponsorships in our rest areas. Russell asked if proceeds from the trees could offset the costs. DeSouza will seek ODOT permission to do so, as the net value of the trees will be less than cost of the removal and stump clearing.

Government Camp Parking Lot: DeSouza discussed the challenges in the lack of maintenance on the portion of the total lot controlled by the Summit Ski Area. OTE is working to finalize an agreement with the US Forest Service and Summit to provide patching and overlay of the lot to ensure its viability this winter, while a long-term solution and corresponding funding is discussed. Baldwin discussed the larger conversation that needs to happen politically, as this is an important site in the overall transportation and tourism activities in the area. There will need to be capital maintenance and improvements beyond the immediate fix for any major restructuring/repair. Russell asked if developing a different access and egress area for the rest area is feasible. DeSouza reported it would cost an estimated \$1.5 million or more, and still would not provide adequate parking for trucks and buses. Washington and Drennan pointed out the lack of other rest area facilities in the area, and the importance of Government Camp.

Clackamas County Electronic Kiosk: We are working with Mt. Hood Territory/Clackamas County Tourism to install an electronic kiosk at Government Camp. DeSouza said that as we get more analytics from we may begin conversations with other potential partners.

Kiosks Update: Instructions from Council to evaluate kiosk financial feasibility led to the removal of the Woodburn Factory Outlets information center. With the removal of the related highway signs, OTE was able to install new six-board restaurant signs. In the process of vacating the Lincoln City kiosk and facilitating a new interagency agreement for that location between Oregon Parks and Lincoln City Tourism. These two changes bring the overall kiosk program into the black. Staff continues to evaluate individual locations for ROI and ongoing viability. Watson talked about developing a coalition for the Memaloose Rest Area, and that will be a topic for the Rest Area Committee in the future.

Tourism Linkages: Russell wants a joint meeting between the Council and the Tourism Commission/Travel Oregon. Baldwin discussed suggested meeting on some specific Travel Oregon-OTE alignments after the 2016 session. Watson suggested topics be messaging in our facilities, and how to convene the larger conversation about better coordination among all the agencies related to travelers and tourists.

Snyder asked if there is any information about the “Track Town” 2021 Championships and a possible increase in the Transient Lodging Tax to fund that effort and then ongoing projects. Baldwin gave a brief overview.

Performance Measurement Status: DeSouza and Pickett have not had time to advance much on performance measures reporting, but that data is being collected. She will meet with Troy Costales to discuss the topic of reporting out on the data we are already collect, and what could be of best use in making decisions and in measuring and documenting our progress and accomplishments. We also need to develop measures for outcomes in non-rest area programs and activities. Russell suggested working with Greg Dal Ponte from ODOT. Cost-per-visit is clear by rest area, and we can use that to benchmark efficiency in operations. Customer satisfaction is qualitative. Drennan said Dean Runyon Associates is a commercial resource in Portland that measures Oregon travel data results.

Snyder asked how visitor counts work in our rest areas. Pickett explained people counters measure the number entering the restrooms, but that this doesn't count people who don't enter the building, the number of pets that are exercised, the number of visitors coming from out of state, etc. Snyder would like to find a way to track type of vehicle and if it comes from another state. Russell said that license plate readers are becoming more affordable and reliable, and may be a possibility, with a computer program converts the letters and numbers into usable data. There are portable LPRs that would be able to be moved among rest areas.

Marsh said that performance measurement needs to be simple, clear and we should have about 5-7 measures for an agency our size. Baldwin said one of these must be safety, from quantitative and qualitative standpoints. Snyder said there are two key questions: How likely are you to return? And, How likely are you to refer to a friend? The second question is key, as some people are just passing through Oregon with no plans to return.

Pickett said Florida and Minnesota are doing well in measuring the value of rest areas in safety. DeSouza said that measuring things beyond our control and responsibility is problematic. For example, ODOT reports that traffic fatalities have gone up recently, even though our rest area visitor counts are increasing. Lohman said that is an important point, and it is easy to spend huge amounts of time measuring things that aren't valuable. We don't want to artificially create measurements that waste time. Marsh agreed we need to focus on those that offer value. We also need anecdotal information that can illustrate value. DeSouza said this will be a key topic for the Rest Area Committee moving forward.

Continuing Communication Improvements: DeSouza said she has been talking with individual Council members about the information they want and need, and is looking for ongoing feedback. Russell said he likes the phone calls and reports in between meetings, and is comfortable with the level of communication. Marsh agreed. Lehan would like more information on the logistics of significant events in rest areas in the future, including staff responses.

Administrative Rules Update: The Heritage Tree program will not be developing rules. The Historical Marker Committee is making good progress on updates to their rules. Nancy will

convene the ad hoc rules committee (Russell, Watson and Marsh) to review the changes to the Coffee Program rules/housekeeping. The two sets of rules may be noticed and scheduled together or separately. Watson confirmed that the rules committee meetings can be telephonic, as she will be unavailable in person in December and January.

Russell asked about the Sign Fees in rule and if we are interested in increasing those fees, what type of schedule would be needed. Baldwin would like to get it in our regular schedule of TIC meetings. Russell said we did a full restructure, and going forward, should set a percentage increase to adopt overall and not review each fee geographically, and that we have a defensible fee schedule.

ADA Update: Former OTE CEO Cheryl Gribskov had engaged a private individual to do an informal ADA analysis of rest areas in 2011-12. Many of his recommendations were adopted, but some were not required by the ADA and were fiscally unfeasible. He contacted DeSouza recently asking for a status update. Jason Nash reviewed and identified additional improvements. The agency will seek an independent review of our rest areas from an Oregon-based disability rights organization in 2016 and will incorporate that information into plans as appropriate.

OPRD Valley of the Rogue Inquiry: OPRD asked informally if OTE is interested in taking over the Valley of the Rogue restroom maintenance in southern Oregon. OPRD is paying only \$10,000 a year for twice-weekly cleaning. OTE evaluated the estimated cost to run our model at that location as being above \$100,000 per year. Baldwin noted this site is on I-5, with a blue rest area sign that isn't differentiated from OTE's rest areas. Baldwin discussed how important it is to understand the resources and liabilities that might be attached to any given rest area.

Lunch Break – Recess 12:05 p.m. to 1:03 p.m. Reconvened with all attendees except Lehan.

Valley of the Rogue Site, continued: Drennan asked about next steps. DeSouza said she will discuss this with OPRD leadership at her next meeting with them, and discuss how that feeds into the larger conversations. DeSouza feels strongly that any new responsibilities accepted by the agency must come with the capacity and funding for the long-term commitment involved to ensure we can do the job properly and sustainably.

Rest Area Committee: Established by Council is a new Rest Area Committee, which has not yet met. The Rest Area Committee could be able to review and recommend projects and issues that would improve the flow of work with the Finance Committee and full Council. The number of Council members serving on the Rest Area Committee may be a quorum of the full Council, and this is allowed so long as the meeting is properly noticed and that no actions binding on the full Council are made by the committee, only recommendations. Baldwin said that Russell, Watson, Washington, Ryan and Marsh had volunteered for the committee. The first meeting was agreed to be November 2, 2015 at 9:00 a.m. at the OTA offices in Portland.

Computer Issues: Baldwin asked about cost recovery from Center Logic for the computer server crash and catastrophic data loss and recovery work. DeSouza explained that DOJ had approved moving to a month-to-month contract that continues the protections for the agency. As her and Pickett's workload permits, they will investigate other vendors for computer services and begin pursuing options with the DOJ Contracts unit for recovery. Changing vendors will be disruptive to staff and operations, which are still being taxed by heavy workloads, and this change is not to be rushed into. Switching to DAS computing services as a vendor is not financially feasible for the agency, as their costs have increased significantly in recent months, with further cost increases anticipated in 2016. OTE continues to use the private contractor to ensure the agency's data is secure and the contractor is meeting the terms of the contract. Pickett discussed the new computer server and the coming upgrade to the accounting system.

New Business

Action/Voting Items:

Approval of ODOT/TIC Interagency Agreement for Rest Area Funding: DeSouza reviewed the IAA approved September 17 by the Oregon Transportation Commission and provided an attorney-client privileged overview interpreting the lawsuit's potential impact on the IAA. This includes the possible reduction in rest area funding and the potential return of rest areas to ODOT with the commensurate return of advanced funding and reserves. Baldwin said the key issues are the actual suspension or reduction in revenues, and that it is the Transportation Commission that will be responsible to take the action following the court's determination. This will give the Council and agency time to have the conversation with ODOT and the Commission to redefine the relationship between the agencies.

Russell made a motion to authorize the Executive Director to execute the agreement between OTE and ODOT regarding the rest areas, with a second by Marsh. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Biennial Budget Approval to Move for Public Comment: Pickett introduced the budget and gave an overview of the financial history of the agency. The Finance Committee recommend the investment budget, authorizing more funding for repairs and maintenance, several capital investment areas, and initial funding for the Grove of the States (with anticipated reimbursement by sponsorships when authorized). Drennan discussed personnel costs, and the assumption on COLAs and salary schedule for the Executive Director and Operations Director positions. DeSouza explained how Pickett's salary had not been properly classed in relation to the agency head position, and how that had been corrected in June. This resulted in a salary cap for Pickett that is 7% below the top level of the ED position, preventing the compression issue that the Council had struggled with in 2014. Baldwin advised against undoing the carefully crafted space between the top two positions. She said it is the agency's responsibility to set the ranges within the parameters of the Council-adopted budgets, and to ensure sustainable compliance within that

budget. She urged the Council to support the agency's compensation plan as long as it is sustainable, defensible, and consistent with general practice.

Russell asked if the budget includes sign fee increases and the intent was to do more frequent, smaller increases, and would like to build a fee increase option. Baldwin said there needs to be a process in place to ensure consideration on a regular basis. Russell recapped the history of fees, how the structure was rebuilt last year, and that the agreement was for regular evaluations and incremental increases to avoid wide fluctuations. Council discussed moving cautiously and with political awareness of the issues.

The Council agreed to add a note to budget: "In 2016, the Travel Information Council will consider increases in Sign Program fees to reduce the impact of inflation in materials costs and to better meet customer demand. Any revenues from such an increase will be reinvested in Sign Program maintenance and installations. All proposed TIC fee increases are made in Chapter 733, Oregon Administrative Rules, and follow statutory and Secretary of State requirements for public notice and hearing prior to adoption."

Russell moved the budget note, seconded by Washington. Lohman clarified language. The motion passed unanimously.

Russell moved that the Council approve for public comment the recommended operating budget for the current biennium with the budget note approved earlier; seconded by Marsh. The motion passed unanimously.

Operating Procedures: The Council considered the submitted changes to align with Senate Bill 139 and other minor changes regarding the ability to call emergency meetings and remove requirement that the Council "amend" a budget prior to adopting.

Russell moved adoption of the revisions to the operating procedures as submitted, seconded by Watson. The motion passed unanimously.

Information/Policy Discussions:

Overview of Capital Maintenance Plans for Rest Areas and Sign Programs: Pickett gave an overview of the short and long-term plans. Baldwin discussed need for new resources to meet costs that will exceed the annual funding level for the rest areas, including long-term repairs and replacement of aging infrastructure and capacity limitations. Current funding level contains no inflation factor. Russell said that many of our rest areas are functionally obsolete and plans should include possible expansions and potential replacement of some facilities, such as Oak Grove; water and sewage issues can be costly. Russell said these issues should be on the work plan for the Rest Area Committee.

Discussion of Agency Mission: Council discussed increasing the prominence of traveler safety in the mission and directed staff to begin work. Other themes for the mission include connecting travelers with communities, economic development, and access to services.

Legislative Planning: Baldwin said the 2016 Session may provide an opportunity to start discussions with the Legislature, but there are no plans for particular legislative issues, with the expectation that we will not initiate any action.

Update on agency contracts for December Council approval: DeSouza anticipates janitorial and landscaping contracts, the French Prairie and Santiam Rest Areas LED lighting conversion, and proposed construction of an ADA Bathroom at Government Camp.

Adjourn:

- Next Meeting December 16, 2015 – OTE Offices, Salem
- Agenda will include budget, contracts, selection of officers and the at-large position for the Executive Committee, and next year's TIC schedule.

4:40 p.m. – Meeting adjourned to a non-working dinner.