



# Oregon Travel Information Council

1500 Liberty Street SE, Suite 150  
Salem, Oregon 97302

Minutes – Rest Area Committee Meeting  
OTE Offices  
Thursday, March 3, 2016

## Members Participating:

Bob Russell; Mike Marsh; Ed Washington; Kathy Watson (by phone); Ryan Snyder (by phone)

## OTE Staff Participating:

Nancy DeSouza, Executive Director; Tim Pickett, Operations Director; Jason Nash, Rest Area Division Administrator; Heather Swanson, Rest Area Operations Manager; Annie von Domitz, Community Assets Officer; Jeremy McQuain, HR Manager; Jessica Carbone, Office Assistant; Bryce Guske, Rest Area Supervisor Memaloose; David Patton, Rest Area Supervisor Ontario-Weatherby; David Schrom, Rest Area Supervisor Tillamook; Jeremy Mitchell, Rest Area Supervisor Gettings Creek - Cabin Creek; John Garmon, Rest Area Supervisor Government Camp; John Horton, Rest Area Supervisor French Prairie; Joleen Odens, Rest Area Supervisor Boardman – Stanfield; Kevin Smolich, Rest Area Supervisor Manzanita – Suncrest; Mark Baker, Rest Area Supervisor Charles Reynolds – Baker Valley - Deadman Pass; Shawn White, Rest Area Supervisor Santiam – Oak Grove.

The meeting of the Travel Information Council Rest Area Committee was called to order by Chair Russell at 10:10 a.m.

**Roll Call:** Washington, Marsh, Russell. Watson and Snyder were present by phone.

## Business Meeting:

- **Sponsorships:** Snyder delivered his research on other state's sponsorship programs. He worked with Carol Astley, Director of Industry & Visitor Services for Travel Oregon for national data. His research found no set structure to sponsorships. Snyder emphasized data is very important in articulating the value to the potential sponsors.

Texas has seen great success with the sponsorships of branded vehicles. Colorado gauges the value of sponsorship to 10 cents per visitor to the rest area. Those numbers are a major driver and it allows for marketing locally. Snyder suggested having the visitor data for both sides of the rest area. Swanson said that visitor counts for the rest area as a whole are currently tracked, but the rest area visitor counts per side could be collected. South Carolina uses a statewide map of the rest areas as a tool to display all the advertising/sponsorship opportunities. This map displays advertising/sponsorship opportunities for local and regional DMOs, local business and what businesses and events are down the road from where the rest area is located. Regional DMO's use to highlight their local businesses has the biggest draw. There was no information provided from other states on overall rest area sponsorships.

Russell requested that the focus remain on sponsorships, and that advertising be discussed at a later meeting. Watson asked if there was any state involvement in shaping the marketing messages. Snyder did see a pattern that the only advertising/sponsorships seen in the rest areas were for regional tourism.

Snyder requested information on the leadership and structure of the “adopt a highway” program. DeSouza replied that this is an ODOT program and specifics would be sent out to the committee.

- **Sponsorship Rule:**

DeSouza said that ODOT and FHWA have agreed to draft rules, which are going to DOJ for approval before filing with the Secretary of State. DeSouza explained draft rules to the Rest Area Supervisors. Pickett explained sponsorship versus advertising in rest areas. The agency currently provides information to the public and directs them to locations in categories dictated by federal law and rule. Information centers are constrained to the same categories. In general, advertising is prohibited, although it may be allowed inside restrooms. Marsh clarified that it is not in ORS, but it is in federal regulations.

In cases where information is being delivered on interstates and federal aided highways, FHWA has authority over how information can be delivered. Russell suggested developing a packet of sponsorship opportunities and how to make those available. DeSouza said that can happen after the sponsorship rules are formally adopted and templates approved by FHWA. The group discussed options of using requests for bids and price lists for different types of sponsorships. Watson recommended looking into outside resources or marketing research to find the best way to set rates.

DeSouza said the next step in the Grove of the States’ sponsorships is to send templates for the three levels of sponsorship available to FHWA for approval. She agreed that overall sponsorship marketing and sales could include outside resources and potentially the need to pay for marketing assistance. Marsh believes that rate information from other states’ programs can provide a firm basis on how we might set our rates.

Von Domitz asked Snyder if the advertising rates mentioned were just in welcome centers or in rest areas as well. His research only included data from welcome centers. At Washington’s request, Pickett gave a brief description of the FHWA concerns regarding advertising. Russell returned the conversation to whether to use bidding or set pricing for sponsorships. DeSouza said that what was discussed with Council and with ODOT and FHWA was to begin with bids, because we did not want specific amounts written into the rules that would restrict our ability to accept the best offer if it didn’t meet a threshold. The three tiers for sponsorships agreed upon with ODOT and FHWA are 1) Overall Rest Area Sponsorship; 2) Major Rest Area Features; and 3) Component Parts (of a major feature).

Russell requested a concept approach on the rate scale to present to the Council at the next meeting. He also requested estimates for professional marketing help either to consult on the project or to handle the complete marketing and sales of the project.

*Watson joined the meeting in person at 11:00 a.m.*

- **Performance Measures:** Pickett went through a compilation of information on measurable data for categories including Condition of the Rest Areas, Tourism and Economic Development, Safety, and Use of Rest Areas.

Nash introduced the new Rest Area Inspection Form. He schedules regular trips through all managed rest areas, and the inspection ratings will be recorded and also used as a component of the rest area supervisors' annual evaluations. Snyder recommended adding digital imagery to the rating reports. The committee will bring this measure before the committee for approval in concept at the next Rest Area Committee meeting.

Marsh wants rest area contractor and vending ratings as internal measures. DeSouza would include ratings for information centers. Marsh wants to use Rest Area Comment Cards for an overall traveler satisfaction external measure, with the other categories on the cards as internal measures. The committee will discuss the remaining measures – safety and tourism, and economic development – at the next meeting.

At Russell's request, Pickett explained that the data on cost per person is generated by comparing people counts to the operational costs of the rest area. There is at least 18 months' of consistent data for our rest areas. Russell sees this as a fifth performance measure. The committee requested three things for the next meeting: rest area inspection measures, a way of reporting out the information on the comments cards, and the average annual cost per visitor.

- Grove of the States: Von Domitz reported the project team is working on a detailed planting plan that includes trees to be removed, landscaping, paths, and species of trees. Once the planting and sponsorship plans are approved by ODOT thing will move quickly. The project team includes foresters, arborists, Friends of Trees members, and Council members.

#### **Other Business:**

**Minutes Approval:** Marsh moved to approve the February 24, 2016 minutes as submitted. Watson seconded. Minutes were unanimously approved.

The committee agreed to move the next meeting to April 6, 2016 at 8:30 a.m., before the quarterly Council meeting.

**Adjournment:** Meeting was adjourned at 11:34 a.m.

**Next meeting:** April 6, 2016, 8:30 a.m. at the OTE Salem offices.

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