

Mount Hood Multimodal Transportation Plan

APPENDIX B

Outreach (1 of 5)



Document: Mt. Hood Multimodal Transportation Plan (MHMTP) Final Public Involvement Summary

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Description

This report summarizes the public involvement process conducted for the MHMTP. It includes an overview of the stakeholder groups involved in the decision-making processes and a description of the outreach process.

Status Update

Decisions in the MHMTP were informed by the outreach process, as discussed in this document. As new projects move into planning and implementation, the Project Partners will continue to engage stakeholders and the public.

MHMTP PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT SUMMARY



The Mt. Hood Multimodal Transportation Plan (Project) presented some unique public involvement challenges. The project area not only encompasses a broad geographical area, but diverse stakeholder interests as well. Stakeholders with a keen interest in shaping transportation options on Mt. Hood included mountain resorts, business owners, property owners, summer and winter mountain recreationists, neighborhood and business groups, transit providers and riders, pedestrian and cycling advocates, multiple jurisdictions, tribes, and the freight community, among others. The public involvement process was designed to: (1) draw out the specific interests of each stakeholder group, (2) discover common interests that could lead to decisions on the types of projects that would be implemented on the mountain, and (3) solicit input on specific projects.

PROJECT TEAM AND DECISION-MAKERS

The three main groups that made decisions, provided recommendations or gave technical input during the planning process for the Project were:

1. The Project Leadership Group (PLG) – composed of one official from each of the four partner jurisdictions (Oregon Department of Transportation, Clackamas County, Hood River County, and the U.S. Forest Service). The PLG was responsible for final project decisions.
2. The Project Management Group (PMT) – composed of staff members from each of the four jurisdictions, plus the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)-Western Federal Lands Highway Division, and consultant staff from David Evans and Associates. The PMT was responsible for managing the planning process, conducting outreach, reviewing materials, and producing project recommendations for consideration by the PLG.
3. The Technical Working Group (TWG) – composed of major stakeholders (mountain resorts, neighborhoods, transit district) plus agency transportation experts, local knowledge experts, and consultants. The TWG was responsible for confirming data and technical accuracy, providing input on community issues for baseline conditions, and providing guidance on project criteria during the evaluation stage. The TWG also considered the formation of a management entity (such as a Transportation Management Association—TMA) to help make transportation decisions along the highway corridor. The TWG did not provide recommendations for projects to be included in the Mt. Hood Multimodal Transportation Plan.

PROJECT VALUES

The 2009 Omnibus Public Land Management Act and the Oregon Transportation Commission called for a feasibility analysis of several kinds of projects to improve safety and congestion in the Mt. Hood National Forest. This action led to the formation of a multi-jurisdictional effort to respond to the requirement of the Act.

The jurisdictional entities involved in developing the Mt. Hood Multimodal Transportation Plan then established the following charter, which includes the goal of the Project and two of the project values:

Based on guidance outlined in the 2009 Omnibus Public Lands Bill and from the Oregon Transportation Commission, and in a partnership among ODOT, Forest Service-Mt. Hood National Forest, Clackamas and Hood River Counties (Partners), in cooperation with FHWA-Western Federal Lands Highway Division, the goal is to develop a transportation Plan for the Mt. Hood Highway/US 26-OR 35 corridor to and through the northern portion of the Mt. Hood National Forest.

This planning effort will strive for affordable and achievable solutions by focusing on: *1) improving highway safety for all users and; 2) on expanding travel options year round to enhance mobility and access recreation and rural communities.*

Initially, 12 interviews were held with staff and decision-makers at the Project's four partner agencies to identify their preferred outcomes for the Project and determine project values. Through the interviews with the partner agencies and the PMT members, and subsequent interviews with major stakeholders including the mountain ski resorts, additional project values were identified. Two that were commonly held were added to the Mt. Hood Multimodal Transportation Plan's two already existing core project values of focusing on solutions that: *(3) are financially feasible and sustainable; and (4) can be implemented within 15 years.* The four project values were used in the initial screening of the 300-plus potential projects derived from previous planning documents and stakeholders.

Secondary values, those that had support from some interviewees and stakeholders, were also used during the initial screening. However, projects had to meet the four core project values, or goals, before secondary values were applied. Secondary values stated that projects should:

- Show environmental stewardship
- Meet the needs of multiple stakeholders
- Provide economic benefit or opportunity
- Strengthen relationships between stakeholders

- Yield “bang for the buck” – that is, have a high benefit-to-cost ratio

GAINING CONSENT

With such a diversity of missions, needs, and opinions among stakeholders, the project staff utilized a component of Systematic Development of Informed Consent (SDIC), a process that explores a stakeholder’s level of acceptance for project options. It recognizes that most people don’t view decisions in absolutes, that there are varying levels of support for different decision options. By gauging levels of support, it is possible to derive which alternatives may be unacceptable, as well as which alternatives have good support from all parties.

STAKEHOLDERS WEIGH IN

PROJECT SURVEYS

Two surveys were conducted that generated a total of more than 3,000 responses.

The project team created the Project’s first survey in May 2013. It asked respondents to provide personal travel data for their trips along the Mt. Hood Highway. It also asked people to rate their support for statements related to safety and travel options, and then to give their top three choices among broad categories of project types. This survey drew over 850 responses.

The results of the May 2013 survey (see “MHMTP Spring Survey Results” in Attachment B) were considered by the PMT when determining which of the initial pool of 300 projects best met the Plan’s goal and the values and desires of the stakeholders and survey respondents. A list of project criteria was also developed to use as an additional filter. These project criteria were:

- Funding potential (identified sources or potential sources)
- Permitting/regulatory compliance
- Administrative/organizational needs
- Capital cost
- Ongoing costs (maintenance, operations)
- Effective time frame
- Dependency on other projects
- Who would lead/champion

By applying the criteria, reviewing information provided by the TWG, and considering input from the public and agencies, the PMT recommended trimming the overall list of projects to 38 projects.

A second survey, conducted in August 2013, was designed to gauge the level of support by respondents for specific projects, and to solicit opinions on which projects should be implemented first. The survey was tied to an interactive map on the Project's website to help respondents understand where the projects were located and what each entailed. A total of 2,200 people responded to the August survey (see "Project Selection – Fall Stakeholder Survey Summary" in Attachment B).

Survey respondents, for the most part, concurred that the projects presented were well-reasoned, represented a wide variety of modal alternatives, and should move forward to implementation. Respondents suggested adding a handful of additional projects. These projects were evaluated against the Project's goal, values, and criteria to determine whether they should be added to the project list. None of the projects in this group met the goal, values, or criteria, and thus they were not added to the project list. PMT members considered the results of the August survey when determining which projects would go into the Implementation Plan component of the Mt. Hood Multimodal Transportation Plan.

Both of the surveys were promoted through the Project's website, the media, Twitter, and postcards (distributed at mountain resorts and by stakeholder groups). For each survey, emails were sent to, and a request was made to, the stakeholder organizations soliciting their help in promoting the surveys to their constituents. This effort proved to be very fruitful based on the number of survey responses received. In addition, those who took the first survey and provided contact information were sent notification of the second survey.

TRIBAL OUTREACH

Decision-making representatives of the Grand Ronde, Siletz, Yakama, and Warm Springs tribes were contacted before the Project's kickoff in December 2012. Representatives were briefed on the Project and its goals and were asked how they preferred to contribute to or be updated on the Project's progress. The Grand Ronde and Warm Springs tribes asked that they be sent email updates and meeting invitations, and that they have opportunities to provide feedback on choices of projects. The Siletz and Yakama tribes did not request updates on the Project or feedback opportunities.

Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) had several conversations and email exchanges with Warm Spring's Clay Penhollow and Grand Ronde's Michael Karnosh. Both tribal representatives told ODOT that they were particularly interested in projects once the projects

were in development and construction, and that their primary concern was preserving tribal resources from project impacts.

Priorities of the Warm Springs Tribe are: minimizing impacts on resources such as huckleberry yields, general stress on mountain resources, treaty rights impacts, and the Government Camp rest area (the Warm Springs Tribe wants to see the facility services continued and ultimately would like to see a facility farther south on US 26, but they recognize that such a project is not part of the Mt. Hood Multimodal Transportation Plan process).

Priorities of the Grand Ronde Tribe are: avoidance/minimization/mitigation of impacts to archaeological and cultural resources; avoidance/minimization/mitigation of impacts to fish and wildlife habitat; public education regarding Tribal culture and history; improvement of access, particularly for elderly or lower-income people; and improvement of safety for everyone.

ODOT pledged to work with the tribes during the implementation process of any project that impacts tribal priorities.

TITLE VI/ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

ODOT, its partners, and consultants performed this planning work in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Under Title VI and subsequent federal directives, no person in the United States shall on the ground of race, color, national origin, income, age, disability, sex or limited proficiency in English be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.

Before planning work for the Project began, the project team investigated U.S. Census and demographic trends in Clackamas County and Hood River County. (Tribal outreach is covered in the section above this one.) Following is a summary of the Census data investigation:

Hood River County's total population is 22,584 and –

- Hood River County's White population is 94.1% (versus a White population of 88.3% in the rest of Oregon). Its Black/African American population is 0.7% (versus 2% in Oregon). Hispanic or Latino populations make up 30.2% of Hood River County's population (versus 12.2% in Oregon).
- Persons 65 years and over make up 13.2% of Hood River County's population (versus 14.9% in Oregon).

- Six percent of businesses in Hood River County are Hispanic-owned (3.3% in Oregon), with 1.7% being Black-owned (1.2% in Oregon) and 23.2% being women-owned (29.8% in Oregon).
- Median household income is \$56,355 in Hood River County (versus \$50,036 statewide). About 10.1% of the population is below the poverty level (versus 15.5% across Oregon).

Clackamas County's total population is 383,857 and –

- Clackamas County's White population is 90.8% (versus 88.3% in Oregon). Black or African American residents make up 1% of the county's population (versus 2% in the state). Hispanic or Latino populations make up 8.1% of Clackamas County's population, (versus 12.2% in Oregon).
- Persons 65 years and over make up 15% of Hood River County's population (versus 14.9% in Oregon).
- About 2.7% of businesses in Clackamas County are Hispanic-owned (3.3% in Oregon), with 0.6% being Black-owned (1.2% in Oregon) and 28.9% being women-owned (29.8% in Oregon).
- Median household income is \$63,790 in Clackamas County (versus \$50,036 statewide). About 9.5% of the population is below the poverty level (versus 15.5% across Oregon).

Using demographic data and interviews with county officials and other stakeholders such as ski resorts, the project team targeted outreach for community groups representing seniors, and Latino and Hispanic, low-income, and youth communities. Outreach methods included e-mail correspondence and phone calls.

Hood River County and Clackamas County organizations contacted included: Oregon Human Development Corporation, One Community Health (formerly La Clinica), The Next Door Inc., Oregon Child Development Coalition, Columbia Gorge Fruit Growers Association, Columbia Gorge Wine Growers Association, Clackamas County Social Services Developmental Disabilities Advisory Council, Veterans Advisory Council, Sandy Senior and Community Center, Area Agency on Aging Advisory Council, Hoodland Senior Center, and Community Action Board (low-income communities).

The Project's website, surveys, and information packets were developed in English. However, based on feedback, survey and project information was offered in Spanish for those requesting translated material.

Mt. Hood ski resorts offered to share information with groups representing Title VI communities. These organizations included: U.S. Forest Service Interpretive Tour program and outreach to schools via the School Passport Program, Ski With A Ranger, U.S. Disabled Ski Team, Mercy Corps, Athletes 4 Cancer Research, Chill At High Cascades, Welches Middle School Friday Ski Nights, Welches 1st Graders Free Ski Day, Welches Family Snow Day, Boring Middle School Friday Ski Nights, Go With A Pro, Oregon Adaptive Sports Association, Portland Waldorf Fundraiser, Riding On Insulin, The Service Board, Troops Triumph, and Shriners. The goal of reaching out via the ski resorts was to provide information about surveys and other outreach opportunities.

OUTREACH ACTIVITES

PROJECT MEETINGS

Public involvement dovetailed with a parallel technical process. Meetings were iterative; each meeting created decisions to move to the next step in the process. The public received notice of the PLG meetings. Project meetings were as follows:

- Eight PMT meetings (included project Partner staff and consultants) held November 20, 2012, and March 19, April 18, June 13, August 7, September 10, October 17, and November 19, 2013.
- Five TWG meetings (included Project Partner staff, major stakeholders, and content experts) held February 12, May 23, June 5, October 23, and December 3, 2013.
- Four PLG meetings (included directors/elected leaders, one from each Project Partner organization) held December 3, 2012, and July 10, November 27, and December 19, 2013.

STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS/CALLS

Communications with key stakeholder groups took place at numerous times during the planning process with community planning organizations, tribal groups, chambers of commerce, and stakeholder groups such as the Mazamas, NW Trail Alliance, Pacific Northwest Ski Area Association, and Travel Oregon. A list of more than 250 specific stakeholder groups was created and used to gather input from members. Stakeholder groups also were asked to promote the project surveys to their constituencies. The help that the Project received from these stakeholder groups was critical to getting a high volume of survey responses. Additionally, many of the stakeholder groups provided representation at the TWG sessions,

hosted presentations on the Project, and provided links to the Project’s website on their own websites.

WEBSITE

Project staff developed an ODOT-maintained website that contained the Project’s background information and reports; an interactive map of potential projects; committee information including meeting agendas, minutes, and materials; and links to the two surveys and their results. Interested parties could sign up for email blasts about the Project, which provided notification about the surveys and opportunities to attend Project-related meetings. The Project had an email list of 1,100 interested stakeholders and stakeholder groups.

MEDIA

Local media was sent releases about the project meetings and surveys and other information about the Project. Project staff used their Twitter account to send announcements about the surveys. Some of the project stakeholders (e.g., ski resorts) placed their own ads in local papers and publications promoting the surveys. News stories appeared in the *Mountain Times*, *Sandy Post*, *Hood River News*, and *The Oregonian*. Online news and transportation issues sites ShredHood.com, BikePortland.org, and PortlandTransport.org also covered the planning process.

SUMMARY

The complexity and diversity of interests in the Mt. Hood corridor required a creative approach to public involvement. The goal was to produce a narrow project list that satisfied project values. It was important to: (1) set expectations for what the project could and could not address by developing goals and screening criteria, (2) establish the understanding that there were varying levels of support for projects, (3) discuss the nuances of the PMT ratings of projects, and (4) make certain that stakeholders understood the overall process and were briefed regularly about the steps being taken to ensure input was being received and factored into the selection of projects.

One outcome of the public involvement efforts was to gain support for the Implementation Plan component of the Mt. Hood Multimodal Transportation Plan. Stakeholders were also receptive to the partners’ agreement to revisit the planning document at regular intervals to assess progress and determine whether priorities should be changed.