

Hello, all.

Sonny and I want to thank the Klamath County Board of Commissioners for inviting us to the Crescent Lake open house last evening to discuss the OR 58: Salt Creek Tunnel and Half Viaduct project.

It was great having Chair Al Switzer available, with his extensive transportation experience, to help put issues like state and federal transportation funding into perspective. With his direct relationship with ODOT, and his communication with Director Matthew Garrett, your community and others in the county are well served.

The evening's discussion was spirited; at times emotional; always frank and direct; and even accented with some adult language. Most importantly, it was all honest, heartfelt and genuine communication. We value that and appreciate your input.

### **Where We Are**

By now, we're all convinced that the top issue associated with this project is how the complete road closures are scheduled.

- The economic impact of complete road closures is clearly understood by ODOT staff and executives.
- Community members at this meeting and previous meetings have left no doubt how economically destructive six, 4-day closures would be if experienced in a single construction season.
- July and August have been identified without doubt as the crucial months of income for businesses in the communities.
- Business owners and elected officials have asked repeatedly to avoid complete closures during those months.
- A letter has been sent from the Klamath County Board of Commissioners to the ODOT Director asking that July and August be avoided for complete closures.
- A personal conversation about the project has occurred between ODOT Director Garrett and Board Chair Switzer.
- The ODOT Director has been in direct contact with Region 2 Manager Select Sonny Chickering to discuss the seriousness of this request.
- Chickering and other ODOT staff are waiting for design engineers to make a final decision on how the closures will be scheduled to mitigate economic impact.
- Once a decision is made, we'll communicate it to you as soon as we can!

### **Next Steps**

The final decision on the scheduling of the complete closures will be a major milestone but it's only one step toward addressing the issues you've raised. After that decision is behind us, we have to:

- Coordinate closure times with business owners so that appointments and labor can be scheduled.
- Make sure that overnight closures are scheduled to mitigate economic impact.
- Finalize our communication plan for businesses, community leaders, motorists and freight haulers.
- Coordinate with emergency services.
- Collaborate with other state and federal agencies.

Some of that can happen before a contractor is brought onboard. Some of it will have to wait until then. Either way, our goal is to keep you informed all the way through the process so that you will experience few, if any, surprises once the project gets underway next spring.

We'll be back in touch, hopefully next week, with more information. In the meantime, if you have questions or additional comments or concerns, don't hesitate to contact me.

### **ODOT Web Links**

Here is the link to the ODOT website for the project. It will be updated next week to reflect the latest public outreach events.

[http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/REGION2/OR58\\_salt\\_creek\\_tunnel.shtml](http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/REGION2/OR58_salt_creek_tunnel.shtml)

Here is a link if you'd like to learn more about the STIP, which is our funding program.

<http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/STIP/>

Here is a link to the Oregon Transportation Commission.

[http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/COMM/otc\\_main.shtml](http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/COMM/otc_main.shtml)

And here's a link to Area Commissions on Transportation, which play an important role in taking a local transportation need and turning it into to a funded project.

[http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/COMM/act\\_main.shtml](http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/COMM/act_main.shtml)

We talked last night about public involvement and when the public should be engaged in discussing a project. There are many opportunities for that. If you're interested, please read the web material and stay involved in transportation issues. We need active citizens like you!

We look forward to being back in touch next week.

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