

Hello, all,

ODOT Area 5 Manager and Region 2 Manager Select, Sonny Chickering and I had the opportunity to meet with the Gilchrist/Crescent Community Action Team on Monday morning, September 12. It was a very good conversation about the OR 58: Salt Creek Tunnel and Half Viaduct project.

We were joined by ODOT's South Central Oregon Area Manager Butch Hansen and Public Information Officer Peter Murphy.

Concerns

The CAT's concerns were very similar to the concerns voiced at previous open houses in Crescent Lake and Oakridge, and the concerns voiced by the Oakridge City Council.

- The number one concern is impact to income of business owners by the six, 4-day closures of OR 58 as currently planned.
- Once again, the July and August months were identified as the most important months for area businesses with one business owner present saying those two months represented 60% of his total annual income.
- All CAT members encouraged ODOT to find a way to avoid complete highway closures during July and August.

Klamath County Board of Commissioners

Klamath County Commissioner Cheryl Hukill was present at the CAT meeting and shared a letter that had been sent to ODOT Director, Matthew Garrett, on behalf of the Klamath County Board of Commissioners.

- The letter requested ODOT to consider the economic impact of the project on local business owners and requested that the complete highway closures not occur in July and August, and that they not occur during weekends over the 2012 and 2013 construction seasons.
- Commissioner Hukill and the other CAT members understand the need for the project but stress that six, 4-day closures could result in business failures for the businesses which rely on the highway to carry customers and products.
- The Commissioner also invited ODOT representatives to the Klamath County Commission Open House on the project to be held in Crescent Lake on Tuesday, September 13, 2011 at 7 p.m.
- ODOT Region Manager Select, Sonny Chickering and I will attend the open house.

ODOT Considers Changes to Project Staging

Since receiving input from citizens at the very first open house in Crescent Lake, ODOT project staff have been forwarding the comments and information to the Project Design Team. The team has been looking for ways to mitigate the impacts on the business communities along and near OR 58.

During the CAT meeting, Chickering shared with the group some of the discussions and considerations now underway within ODOT.

- A change of project staging could reduce the total number of complete highway closures necessary.
- A change of staging would spread the total number of closures over the two year

construction period, rather than having them occur only in the first year, thereby reducing the number of complete closures per season.

- A change in staging could avoid the need for closures in July and August.
- Chickering explained the proposed mitigation can not be promised at this time because the final decision on how the project can be successfully constructed rests with bridge engineers who will study the proposed changes. Project staff anticipates a decision by September 20.
- There is no alternative to complete closures, given the nature of work to be done on the west viaduct and tunnel.
- Offer incentives to the contractor to complete work early and/or reduce the number of complete closures.

More Creative Ideas

There were more creative ideas offered by CAT members during discussion Monday.

- While tunnel repairs are being completed, add a pedestrian escape door from the tunnel.
- While tunnel repairs are being completed, create or enhance the tunnel's vent system to exhaust smoke and fumes during accidents
- Add a camera inside the tunnel, if technically possible, to alert ODOT's Salem Traffic Operations Center of problems in the tunnel.
- Work with Amtrak to reinstate train stops in Crescent Lake and Crescent/Gilchrist during highway construction and promote train usage as an alternate form of transportation for customers.

Once again, we'd like to thank everyone for taking time to discuss this project and for offering their insights. We continue to learn a lot about your communities and your needs and look forward to another session in Crescent Lake this evening.

Until then, best wishes.

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