

**Northwest Area Commission on Transportation
Meeting Minutes
December 12, 2024**

The meeting was called to order at 1:00pm by Co-Vice Chair Marsha Kirk in Vice Chair Casey Garrett's absence.

Clatsop County

Commission (v) Mark Kujala
 Commission (a) Terry Hendryx
 Large City (v) **Elisabeth Adams***
 Large City (a) **Steve Wright***
 Small City (v)
 Small City (a)
 Citizen-at-Large **Kathy Kleczek***
 Citizen-at-Large **John Nygaard***

Columbia County

Commission (v) Casey Garrett
 Commission (a) **Mike Russell***
 Large City (v)
 Large City (a) **Dave Sukau***
 Small City (v) Bob Brajcich
 Small City (a) **Scott Jorgenson**
 Citizen-at-Large **Rosemary Lohrke***
 Citizen-at-Large **Betsy Johnson***

Tillamook County

Commission (v) **Doug Olson***
 Commission (a) **Chris Laity***
 Large City (v) Aaron Burris
 Large City (a) Nathan George
 Small City (v) **Liane Welch***
 Small City (a) **David McCall***
 Citizen-at-Large
 Citizen-at-Large **Patrick McHugh***

Washington County

Commission (v) **Jerry Willey***
 Commission (a) **Stacy Shetler***
 Large City (v)
 Large City (a) Jolynn Becker

Small City (v) **Marsha Kirk***
 Small City (a)
 Citizen-at-Large **Don Odermott***
 Citizen-at-Large

Transit Districts

Columbia Co (v)
 Columbia Co (a) **John Dreeszen***
 Clatsop Co (v) **Debbie Boothe Schmidt***
 Clatsop County (a) **Craig Johnston***
 Tillamook Co (v) Mary Johnson
 Tillamook Co (a) **Brian Vitulli***

Ports

Port of Astoria (v) Frank Spence
 Port of Astoria (a) Will Isom
 Port of Columbia Co (v) Nancy Ward
 Port of Columbia Co (a) **Sean Clark***
 Port of Tillamook Bay (v) **Michele Bradley***
 Port of Garibaldi (a) Mike Saindon

Others in attendance:

Caroline Crisp, ODOT NWACT
 Bill Jablonski, ODOT NWACT
 Arla Miller, ODOT Transit
 Benjamin Burgener, Scappoose City Manager
 Mark Buffington, ODOT District 1
 Chris Wheatley
 Cynda Bruce, Lincoln County Transit
 Tony Walters, citizen at large
 Jeff Harrington, City of Astoria
 Jay Blake, Planning Manager Clatsop County
 Gail Henrikson, Clatsop County

*Members denoted with asterisks were in attendance.

Item 1: Welcome and Introductions

Marsha Kirk calls the meeting into order and welcomes introductions.

Item 2: October 2024 NWACT Minutes/Updates

Don Odermott noted that Representative Cyrus Javadi was noted as being present in the previous meeting, but he was not. Also noted that the Tillamook transportation system project was not completed but commencing and the contract is now underway. Updates to the minutes will be made. No public comments were received.

Motion: Steve Wright

Second: Liane Welch

All in favor voted unanimously to approve with amendments.

ODOT Public Comment:

- Bill Jablonski shared updates that US101 Garibaldi project is moving forward including east side concrete work progressing.
- Caroline Crisp notes that ODOT is advancing the Killiam Creek \$12 million bridge project alongside Lane county emergency bypass project.

Columbia County Transportation Update:

- Mike Russell shared the history of the John Gumm Building. He provided an update on Columbia County roads, including focus on maintenance and pavement preservation. The County received a Safe Streets grant to develop a safety action plan to identify “hot spots” on local, county and state roads. The County anticipates an agreement to select a consultant for this work will be executed shortly.
- Commission has also participated in safety fairs and community events to promote traffic and pedestrian safety.

Item 3: NWACT Leadership

As of October 10th meeting, it was confirmed that Clatsop County Commissioner Lianne Thompson stepped down from her position as chair and a nominating committee was approved then. The following slate was proposed:

Casey Garret as chair

Liane Welch as vice chair

Marsha Kirk as vice chair 2nd position

Motion to Accept: Steve Wright

Second: Jerry Willey

Approved unanimously. Mayor Liane Welch accepts her nomination for vice chair and thanks the community.

Item 4: Update – 2025 Transportation Package

Representative Susan McLain was called into a special session so was not available to present package updates during the meeting.

Item 5: Report – PROTECT Grant for US101 Killam Creek funding

Caroline Crisp, ODOT Senior Transportation Planner, presented the proposal for the Killam Creek Proposal in Tillamook County, including eligibility criteria, design components, and demographic data sourcing.

- The project is considered a high priority for salmon superhighway and will be prioritized in the grant program as such. The current funding ask includes seeking \$12.2 million in CON funds.
- The project also represents a fix-it priority route and designated evacuation route with no short state roadway accessible.
- The presentation included design details that are captured in the slideshow that will be provided to the group in the meeting notes. The impact of flooding on disadvantaged communities is a significant consideration in the prioritization of the project. In the instance of a catastrophic event, the region is disproportionately vulnerable to its damaging effects.
- Caroline Crisp welcomes comments on the presentation.

Stacy Shetler asked about the green infrastructure design components mentioned in the presentation. Caroline Crisp responded that the project will leverage bioswales and sustainable steel to make the improvements.

Chris Laity noted that just upstream of the project in the county is a project that will complement the build-out of a larger bridge. He also notes that Tillamook will likely have to perform additional requirements in regards to the biological opinion towards the project.

Sarah Lu Heath asked what ODOT's determination for which projects are selected in any given year. Caroline Crisp described that ODOT has an internal project selection in which a small group, that she is a part of, creates presentations to advocate for specific projects that are sourced from community input. Bill Jablonski added that projects that have transportation-related, as well as interdisciplinary aspects (fish passage, ODFW alignment), are well positioned for selection.

Liane Welch noted that with the reality of the FEMA BiOp that ODOT should be working in tandem with Sarah Absher. Bill Jablonski notes that ODOT has to follow the federal nexus so automatically must work within floodplain regulation.

Item 6: Report – ACT/Model OTC Chairs Meeting

Due to illness, this topic was taken off the agenda.

Item 7: Upcoming Grant Opportunities

1. USDOT RAISE Grant

Sarah Lu Health shared brief updates on the nature of the grant. This is kept on the agenda for tracking in the future.

2. USDOT PROTECT Grant – Sarah Lu Heath noted that the application deadline is coming up on February 24, 2024.

Sarah Lu Heath recognized the transit district representatives in attendance including Brian Vitulli, John Dreeszen, Chris Wheatley, and Debbie Boothe-Schmidt. Benton area transit did not have a representative present at the meeting but were recognized as members of the Commission.

Sarah Lu provided a presentation on the NWACT to the group, including the services, mission, goals, and focus areas of the group. New features including online trip planning and navigation are now available on the northwest connector website. Sarah Lu Heath also highlighted the goal to provide online sales for multi-day passes currently only available onboard from the driver.

Steve Wright asks whether Finn Johnson from OCVA has been contacted. Sarah Lu Heath responded that staff had met with him last year and he made a presentation to the group. Following his presentation on OCVA's transportation initiative, the Commission's impression was ultimately that their plan presented duplicative efforts to the NWACT's efforts.

Brian Vitulli added commentary that when the transit group met with OCVA he felt blindsided by the proposal the team presented without engagement of district staff or opinion. The district relies on ridership numbers to capture federal funding and the possibility of introducing a duplicative service provider would detract from the current efforts and complicate the transit landscape. Brian previously relayed this commentary to OCVA and communicated this to the ODOT representative as well. Debbie Boothe-Schmidt echoed the risk of a summer-only operation initiative taking away district provided ridership and resulting revenue for the transit district.

David McCall inquired about the funding structure of the transit districts and how OCVA plans to fund their service. Brian Vitulli responded that he understand OCVA is pursuing state funding which complicates the financing strategies that the districts currently work with. He also brought up the complication of OCVA wanting to utilize the districts' transit hubs.

Liane Welch asked what the process/timeline of responding to this initiative would be. Sarah Lu Heath responded that there aren't any current protocols on addressing this issue but opened up the floor to suggestions.

Doug Olson recommended that Marcus Hinz should be invited to the next NWACT meeting to discuss the pilot proposal.

Item 8: NWACT Business/Member Updates

Liane Welch positively highlighted the efforts of Mark Buffington at ODOT to adequately respond to hazardous weather and ice events and the use of de-icing technology to keep road conditions adequate.

Rosemary Lohrke commented on the reckless driving from other drivers in icy conditions.

Stacy Shetler commented on the current information on winter icing on the ODOT website and asked whether information on de-icing is also available for the public. Mark Buffington was unsure if that information was available.

Michele Bradley updated the Port of Tillamook Bay's Airport CORE grant application progress.

Chris Laity updated the group on the Transportation System Improvement Plan kick off. There are several federal declaration projects that the agency is working on. Chria Laity also noted twenty-four bridge or culvert projects in progress.

Jeff Harrington comments on the safety improvements made to pedestrian walkways from ODOT funding.

Dave Sukau shared that Scappoose is getting winter ready including deployment of some plows and sand (no de-icer used). Depending on exchange dollars for improvements and well as local fuel tax being saved for sidewalk infrastructure improvements.

Stacy Shetler shared that timber road slide repair continues with completion in the Spring 2025. The AOC and county engineers are continuing to work together alongside JCT work groups.

Brian Vitulli recognized the high level of coordination being maintained with the ODOT contractors to address the need to improve bus shelters.

John Dreeszen announces his retirement from directing the Columbia county rider and notes the exciting hand off of control to Chris Wheatley.

Debbie Booth-Schmidt announced that she will serve as the interim director of the Sunset Empire Transportation District until the position previously held by Craig Johnston is filled.

Sarah Lu Heath noted that the Aerts Road project is receiving public comment

Steve Wright shared that a pavement improvement plan was presented to the Seaside council of which at least \$2 million would be needed to make baseline improvements.

David McCall provides updates on Bay City culverts. An OSG grant was recently approved by city council and is now going into agreement with engineers to repair five culverts and the construction of a fish ladder.

Bill Jablonski congratulated the group on great work accomplished in 2024 and looks forward to the funding opportunities in 2025.

Marsha Kirk called for additional comments and then with no response meeting was adjourned at 2:24pm.