

Summary of Public Comments

Introduction

Community involvement is an important part of the metropolitan transportation planning process. A summary of public comments received during development of the AAMPO Regional Transportation Plan is included as below. The summary of comments is organized by major themes based on input from each of the input methods described below. Also listed are potential actions that can help respond to general and specific comment areas. Each potential action is only listed once, although it may respond to several comment areas. Those marked with a checkmark are potential actions that are already underway, in part or in full.

The summary of comments includes input received through March 16, 2016 from the following methods:

Direct outreach: AAMPO staff conducted direct outreach to several to community organizations representing or working with transportation disadvantaged groups. These include seniors, individuals with disabilities, minority groups, youth, and low income families.

Stakeholder Interviews: Stakeholder Interviews were conducted with individuals who either represent, advocate for, or work directly with transportation stakeholder groups identified in the AAMPO RTP Public Involvement Strategy. Stakeholder groups include: pedestrians, bicyclists, economic development, freight, low income, youth, communities of color, seniors, individuals with disabilities, environmental advocates, and public safety.

Transportation Survey: A survey was conducted to gather information about how transportation is working in the area and to specifically seek input on how AAMPO residents use modes other than the passenger vehicle. The survey was available in Spanish, English, in hard-copy and online. It was distributed to the AAMPO Interested Parties list, to local community groups, and through direct outreach to a high-school class, the Greater Albany School District Welcome Center, and at a local grocery store.

Public meetings: A public meeting series was held in January 2016 to gather community input on draft goals statements and findings related to existing conditions and future transportation needs. Meetings were hosted in five locations at both day and evening times. An Online Open House was also hosted. A public meeting was also held in March 2016 prior to adoption of the RTP Framework. Additional public meetings will be held during the second phase of the planning process.

Ongoing Involvement Opportunities: Stakeholders and members of the public were able to directly contact AAMPO staff throughout the planning process, and provide input in-person, via email or by telephone. Public comment periods were also provided at all AAMPO meetings.

Summary of Comments

Safety

Themes from Stakeholder Interviews

Safety on Albany Area highways (OR34, US20 and I-5), key regional arterials, and at railway crossings is a regional concern. Distracted driving, driving under the influence on game days, speeding, business access points, conflicts with freight traffic, snow removal, and congestion were all identified as contributing factors to safety concerns. Recommended solutions included: engineering improvements, reader boards, solar powered radar display units underneath speed signs, and programs for free or reduced rides for those who would otherwise drive impaired. Public education and cultural change were identified as overriding needs.

Safety of at-grade rail crossings is also a concern, particularly if higher-speed passenger rail service is implemented. At-grade crossings limit access for emergency vehicles, bisect communities and neighborhoods, and create safety issues for all travelers. Additional input is included under the 'Rail' section.

Themes from Public Input

Survey results showed that safety improvements were the top recommendation for travel improvements in the AAMPO area, comprising 53% of the open-ended responses.

Key themes related to safety that came up during public outreach include:

- Multi-modal safety issues at the rail crossings, particularly in Jefferson and Albany
- Safety concerns on US 20, especially bicycle and pedestrian access along the corridor and across the Willamette River
- Earthquake resiliency of Lyons & Ellsworth Bridges
- High travel speeds and lack of pedestrian crossings on OR 99E through Tangent
- At-grade rail crossings and major roads running through neighborhoods limit safe routes to school

Potential Actions

- ✓ Indicates action already taken. Actions only listed once, but may be appropriate solutions to a numerous comments listed.

Support increased enforcement along major corridors

Work with law enforcement on safety campaigns

Work with ODOT to identify management & operations solutions on major arterials

- ✓ Prioritize safety projects
- ✓ Regional coordination for snow removal
- ✓ Continue to participate in ODOT Passenger Rail project
- ✓ Connect Oregon grant received to alleviate delays at Albany rail crossings

Pursue pedestrian safety improvements at rail crossings

Pursue Safe Routes to School programming

- ✓ Support installation of sharrows or other bicycle improvements on Lyons & Ellsworth in downtown Albany

Consider resiliency of MPO area bridges in RTP

- ✓ Consult ODOT regarding a n OR 99E speed study in Tangent, sidewalk construction and feasibility of crosswalks

Specific Public Input

- Bike lane maintenance on major arterials (debris, salt, obstacles like garbage cans) on major arterials/highways is a safety issue
- Safety and business access along US 20 is a concern as North Albany grows
- Umatilla Street: Safe routes to school issues with increasing cut-through traffic
- Pedestrian crossing desired on Geary Street between 14th Avenue and 15th Avenue near Heritage Plaza Shopping Center
- Crosswalk on Gibson Hill Road at Grandview Drive. There is currently a crosswalk and pedestrian signal on Gibson Hill Road at Pulver Lane, but majority of pedestrians cross at Thorn, Crocker, or Grandview to use the recently constructed sidewalks
- Speeds on Gibson Hill Road and Grandview Drive are an issue. Drivers use Grandview Drive in order to avoid the speed humps on Laura Vista
- Lack of rumble strips on rural roads
- High travel speeds along OR 99E can be dangerous for people walking or on bicycles.
- Sidewalks are lacking on OR 99E south of Barenberg. There is a desire for a pedestrian crossing on OR 99E between North Lake Creek Drive and Tangent Drive.
- Safety along the Hwy34 corridor is a big concern

Motor Vehicles

Themes from Stakeholder Interviews

Congestion is a concern along I-5, OR 99E, and US 20 and at at-grade railroad crossings. Several stakeholders recommended additional capacity be added along the I-5 corridor. Local congestion issues were tied to safety concerns; for example, when collector streets are seen as congested, speeding and through traffic increase on parallel neighborhood streets. Stakeholders also identified a need for multi-modal solutions, including transit, park and rides, and carpooling to address congestion on US 20 between Albany and Corvallis.

Actions

- ✓ Indicates action already taken

Provide information on street-sweeping schedule

- ✓ Highway 20 Safety Study
- ✓ In the RTP process, consider intersection improvements along Highway 20

Consider traffic calming on streets near schools (e.g. Umatilla)

Consider feasibility of pedestrian improvements along Geary, noting existing crosswalk at 14th

- ✓ Sidewalk gap on Gibson Hill scheduled to be constructed within 3 years. Crosswalk at Pulver avoids conflicts with emergency vehicles exiting Fire Station and allows for ped-activated signal.

Continue to pursue ARTS and other funding for safety improvements on rural roads including OR 34, US 20, OR 99E

Prioritize safety projects, safety programming, and operations improvements in the RTP

Pursue Highway Corridor Refinement and Safety Plans for US 20 (Albany to Lebanon) and OR 34 (Corvallis to Lebanon)

Secure funding for basic roadway, bridge and sidewalk maintenance and repair was identified as a need. Stakeholders discussed the need to build community support for this.

Stakeholders saw a clear linkage between transportation system improvements, economic development, and land use planning. Transportation was linked to economic development both in terms of creating vibrant and walkable downtown areas and in terms of ensuring freight mobility. There is concern regarding closure of the Port of Portland Terminal 6 and a desire to improve rail freight to transport local agricultural goods.

Coordination with local planning efforts was recommended, including a desire to ensure that development standards fit with local neighborhood character.

Stakeholders saw a need to build a transportation system that is welcoming and accessible to all users, including providing options for the transportation disadvantaged and those who are not able to drive due to age, disability, affordability, or lack of a driver card.

Themes from Public Input

The majority of survey respondents (76%) stated that they drove all the time, 24% said they sometimes drove. When asked how they got from one place to another, 51% said they sometimes walked, 37% of respondents said they sometimes rode a bike, 12% said they rode the bus, and 4% said they used other means such as a skateboard.

Key themes related to motor vehicle travel that came up in public comments include:

- A need to better accommodate commute trips between Albany and Corvallis.
- Desire for a bridge/bypass connection between North Albany and Millersburg, but also interest in knowing what the project costs and economic impacts would be
- Traffic calming strategies in Tangent (Tangent Drive) and Albany (Gibson Hill Road).

Actions

- ✓ Indicates action already taken

Increase coordination with transportation options programs

- ✓ Regional park and ride planning (underway by OCWCOG)
- ✓ Coordinate with regional partners to improve regional transit service including Linn-Benton Loop
- ✓ Prioritize system preservation and maintenance projects
- ✓ Establish Special Transportation Area and pursue pedestrian improvements in downtown Albany

Further engage local planning departments in MPO activities

Support consultation of transit providers during development review process

Complete ADA transition plans to identify gaps in accessibility

Transit system improvements, including increased frequency, longer service span, improved reliability, and information in Spanish

Consider 'Albany Bypass Bridge' as an unconstrained project in the RTP planning process

Specific Public Input

- Desire for GHG emission reductions to be considered in the RTP process, including addition of measurable targets, establishment of a baseline GHG emission level, and partnering with local organizations.
- Concern about the resiliency of the bridges across the Willamette River
- Concern about the impacts of household growth in North Albany on motor vehicle traffic.
- There is a large population in our area that cannot legally drive, but have to make the decision on whether or not to drive. Driver cards are an important issue.
- Increased transportation options between Jefferson, Millersburg, Albany and Corvallis
- Concern about potential impacts of I-5 interchange projects on adjacent neighborhoods
- Are there plans for an extension of Timber Street to the north? If so, what is the timeline?
- The OR 99E and US 20 junction in Albany is confusing and congested. Out-of-town drivers get confused and take the wrong route or go against one-way traffic.
- There is signal congestion on 29th Avenue at OR 99E.
- A signal at OR 164/Hazel Street might improve travel in Jefferson
- Desire for a bridge between Millersburg and North Albany. The bridge could connect Conser Road to Springhill Road as a way to reduce congestion in downtown Albany, lessen wear and tear on city roads and provide an alternative route if US 20 (between downtown Albany and North Albany) is closed
- Desire for easier access to Millersburg city center / City Hall without using major roads
- Improvements to Old Salem Road to make it more welcoming - trees, buffer, lighting and aesthetic greenway
- Better lighting at the I-5 NB and SB Ramps on OR 99E (Jefferson/Millersburg)
- OR 164 and I-5 Ramps need to be improved
- Tangent Drive is a major regional connection that could benefit from wider shoulder to accommodate emergency vehicles and other users

Actions

✓ Indicates action already taken

Consider strategies to slow traffic, ensure access for emergency vehicles, and provide appropriate bike/ped access on Tangent Drive and Gibson Hill

Consider environmental impact and GHG emissions, to the degree possible in Scope of Work, during the current RTP process. Consider pursuing GHG emission reduction work during next RTP update

✓ Utilize travel demand model to project future travel impacts of growth in North Albany

✓ Continue to participate in I-5 South Jefferson – US 20 EA

Develop web-based maps of planned transportation system improvements

Improvements to local roads are not within AAMPO's purview, but the MPO can consider a policy to support local connectivity

Consult ODOT regarding feasibility of an additional signal in Jefferson

Consider lighting and landscaping improvements as part of Old Salem Rd safety and preservation work

Consult ODOT regarding highway ramp recommendations

- Create a more multi-lingual transportation system, including signage and wayfinding with universal imagery

Bicycles and Pedestrians

Themes from Stakeholder Interviews

Sidewalk improvements are a priority, particularly to improve connectivity, safe crossings, and accessibility for all users. Pedestrian improvements were seen as a way to support healthier lifestyles, access to local parks, and more attractive and vibrant communities. Identified improvements included pedestrian refuges, crosswalks with yellow and tactile surfaces and chirping signals, and rapid-flashing beacons.

Improvements to bicycle infrastructure and bicycle safety programming for all roadway users is also a priority. Stakeholders noted that the area has good bike lane coverage, but also that designated bike lanes may still not be a safe and comfortable for people on bicycles or driving.

Themes from Public Input

Responses to the transportation survey showed that 51% of respondents sometimes walked, 37% sometimes rode a bike, 12% rode the bus, and 4% used other means such as a skateboard. When asked ‘what would help you bike or walk more often’, the most common responses were bike lanes, destinations being a shorter distance from home, more off-street paths, and safer routes.

Key themes related to bicycle and pedestrian travel that came up through public comments include:

- The AAMPO area, and particularly the City of Albany, has a good foundation of local bikeways and walkways, and community members desire more trail, bikeway, and walkway connections particularly to make longer trips along regional corridors
- Bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure should be appropriate to the community context and roadway character while still providing safe access for people walking or on bicycles

Actions

- ✓ Indicates action already taken

Consider trail connections, development of a trail network, and access to parks in the RTP

- ✓ Include a goal to support public health in the RTP
- ✓ Support efforts to fund bike boulevard treatments on low-volume local roads: <http://nacto.org/publication/urban-bikeway-design-guide/bicycle-boulevards/>
- ✓ Establish a policy in RTP to support regional multimodal connectivity

Make available street design guides with bike/ped infrastructure appropriate for a variety of contexts

- Consider implementation of bike boulevards, way-finding signs, and traffic calming, on low-stress roadways to support a safe and better connected local bicycling network

Specific Public Input

- How well does the existing transportation infrastructure provide accessible access to healthy food and services?
- Provide comfortable and safe places for all families to get out and active
- There are good biking facilities, but drivers and cyclists need to follow the rules.
- Albany has a great trail system. Could bicycle, pedestrian and transit programming be increased? For example, provide wayfinding signs for safe routes to school.
- Albany’s size and topography make it a great city for cyclists. Albany has a fairly complete network of bike lanes on major roads. Albany does not, however, have a connected network of low-stress bikeways, which is a necessary element to appeal to residents who are interested in riding, but not as comfortable in traffic, particularly important to families with young children.
- Connect Periwinkle Path, Dave Clark Path and trails in the vicinity of Talking Waters to form large trail network. Bring this connection to downtown Albany.
- Geary/Pacific: Improve signal timing and bicycle facilities, such as contra-flow bike lane on Pacific Blvd that extends from Hill Street to Geary.
- Roundabouts at intersections of Geary and Oak with Queen Ave, and completion of Oak through diagonal ROW by OCWCOG office
- Diagonal bike crossing or a protected intersection at Queen and Geary to support Periwinkle Path connectivity. Potentially extend Periwinkle Path past 9th Ave.
- Northbound bike lane on Waverly terminates on the approach to Santiam Highway – consider a protected intersection
- Direct and safer bicycle connection between Goldfish Farm Road and Three Lakes Road that avoids Santiam Highway
- Lighting, sidewalk and crossing improvements on Santiam Highway.

Actions

✓ Indicates action already taken

Collaborate with health and community development departments to address access to transportation and healthy foods

Support family-oriented bicycle education and safety programming

Collaborate with public safety officials on Rules of the Road educational programs and enforcement activities

Support installation of wayfinding signage with universal imagery

Corridor plan for US 20 and OR 99W through Albany, with consideration for connecting arterial roadways

✓ Albany upgraded all signal controls on Pacific and 9th (Burkhart to Hill) during the Oak extension. Short block s and high volumes create challenges. A contra-flow bike lane on Pacific could create safety concerns at driveways. Signal timing adjustments and contraflow bike lanes are not recommended at this time.

Roundabouts at Geary and Oak are not likely feasible

✓ Protected bike intersection at Queen & Geary could be installed with planned signal modifications and additional right turn lanes. Extension of Periwinkle path north across 9th is not likely feasible.

- Traffic calming on Center Street to support sharrows currently there
- There is a need for a bicycle/pedestrian path across the southbound bridge into downtown Albany. There are narrow sidewalks, no dedicated bike lanes, and safety concerns related to large vehicles, vehicles leaving their lanes, and the narrow shared right of way. Sidewalks are also too narrow for bicycles. Consider bike/ped bridge.
- Concern about congestion and traffic volumes on US 20 between Corvallis and Albany, and a desire for a multi-use path or better accommodations for bicyclists along that corridor. There was a recommendation for a trail segment parallel to US 20 that would follow Hickory Street and West Thornton Lake Drive.
- Some roads with LTS 1 (e.g. 5th Avenue) are not actually suitable for children.
- Pedestrian crossing in Jefferson at OR 164 / Union Street, to provide access to the Post Office, grocery stores and City Hall.
- Trail connections in Millersburg - north/south path connecting Millersburg Drive to Alexander Lane; connecting Millersburg Park and Bain Street; and connecting new developments to city center.
- Desire for bicycle and pedestrian improvements to be consistent with the ‘rural feel’ of Tangent
- Desire for a pathway along Tangent Drive along the drainage unpaved pathway

Public Transit

Themes from Stakeholder Interviews

Public transportation was identified as a key linkage for ensuring people have access to healthcare and services, and several areas for improvement were identified. However, there is a misconception that transit works for everyone. If someone has not used it throughout his or her life, they are unlikely to start using transit as a senior citizen; taking transit can be challenging physically and mentally.

Recommended transit improvements include: increased frequency and coverage, better regional coordination, travel training for drivers and clients, and ensuring appropriateness of the service for individual users. The need for a more multi-lingual transportation system was also identified, including

Actions

- ✓ Indicates action already taken
- ✓ Speed bumps have been installed on Center Street. Consider feasibility of additional traffic calming measures.
- Installation of protected bike box at Waverly & Santiam Hwy can be considered when planned turn lanes and through lanes are completed. Protected bike lane not recommended.
- ✓ Improvements on Goldfish Farm and Three Lakes will occur with annexation or development.
- ✓ Ped-activated signal is planned east of Waverly on Santiam Hwy. Additional crossings not recommended until ODOT approves Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB) installations.
- ✓ Consider community input alongside Bicycle Level of Stress to identify bicycle infrastructure needs

Continue consultation with ODOT regarding potential pedestrian improvements on OR 164. Pursue Jefferson TSP update to better analyze needs.

Support travel training programs for seniors, individuals with disabilities who are able to navigate transit on their own, service providers, and other interested users.

Spanish-language signage, bi-lingual bus drivers, and better promoted Spanish-language maps and information. Use of universal imagery was presented as a solution.

Regional connectivity was a common theme in stakeholder interviews, with public transportation and multi-modal connectivity key considerations for improving connectivity and decreasing current congestion. Stakeholders noted the need to improve the affordability and efficiency of passenger rail, increase frequency and integration of transit services, and increase transit coverage to areas such as Lebanon and educational institutions.

Stakeholders also recommended that local planning staff communication with public transit providers whose services (e.g. bus routes) may be impacted by development.

Themes from Public Input

Survey respondents stated that more frequent bus service, more direct bus routes, better regional connections, service to new areas, and improved trip planning information would help them take the bus more often. When asked about the service schedule, the most popular timeframe extended from 7:00 am to 9:00 pm, although many respondents expressed a desire for even later service.

Key themes related to transit that came up through public comments include:

- A desire for enhanced and expanded regional transit service, including service to Jefferson and Millersburg and improved service between Albany and Corvallis
- Increased transit coverage and frequency
- Increase availability of Spanish-language information
- Provision of services for those who cannot drive

Specific Public Input

- Desire for shorter transit loops in Albany
- Improved Corvallis – Albany transit connections, especially to connect with Amtrak
- Additional or increased transit service, especially to retirement communities (Mennonite Village) to provide convenient service for all

Actions

- ✓ Indicates action already taken
- ✓ Work with ODOT Rail and Public Transit Division and local partners to improve connections with Amtrak and better advertise existing services
- ✓ In the Transit Development Plan (TDP), consider scenarios for increased frequency and span of service
- ✓ In the TDP, consider scenarios to provide transit to Jefferson, Millersburg and Tangent
- ✓ Continue coordination with local STF agency and rural transit providers to improve the complete regional transit system

Increase availability of Spanish-language transit maps and schedules

Increase engagement of Latino community in TDP process

Increase engagement of transportation-disadvantaged groups in TDP process

- Is there an opportunity to integrate transit service with school buses?
- There is a need to provide travel information for non-English speaking residents, specifically for Spanish speaking residents such as wayfinding, brochures and bilingual transit drivers.
- The lack of legal ability to drive can have a ripple effect on families and individuals. Transit is often unreliable or does not go where it is needed.
- How does the system serve low-income residents and the increasing aging population?
- Transit connection between Albany and Salem
- Pedestrian Sidewalk Rating: Does it include access/proximity to transit?
- Desire for semi-fixed route rural service to Jefferson, running a few times a week.
- Increased transit coverage and frequency, including coverage near West Albany HS
- Improved pedestrian connectivity and lighting would make walking a safer and more viable option and would improve access to transit. For example, at Queen and Waverly or Waverly and 21st.

Actions

- ✓ Indicates action already taken
 - ✓ Invite Salem-Keizer Transit to participate in Transit Development Plan process
- Consider transit stop locations alongside Multimodal Analysis to identify key gaps in pedestrian access to transit.
- Review transit service near educational institutions during Transit Development Plan process
- ✓ Include policy statement in the RTP supporting improvements to freight rail operations

Rail

Themes from Stakeholder Interviews

Trains can have a major impact on emergency vehicles, transit buses, and school bus service – all of these users typically avoid rail crossings due to concerns of delay. The Queen Avenue crossing in Albany is a prominent concern, along with crossings throughout Tangent, Albany and Jefferson. Multimodal connections with Amtrak rail came up as a key interest, along with more affordable, frequent and reliable passenger rail service.

Themes from Public Input

- Queen Ave rail crossing is a safety and congestion issue.
- Railroads run through all cities in the AAMPO area and at grade rail crossings create safety, travel time, and connectivity issues throughout the MPO.

Specific Public Input

- At-grade crossings in Jefferson, Albany, and Tangent bisect the communities and create unsafe routes to school for school-age children and regular delays for residents.
- What is the status of Portland & Wester Railroad activities at the Albany train station and improvements at the Millersburg Yard?
- How will passenger rail impact Tangent rail crossings?