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# Oregon's Acts, Cross-jurisdictional Collaboration and Improved Transportation Planning

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**OREGON'S ACTS, CROSS-JURISDICTIONAL  
COLLABORATION AND IMPROVED  
TRANSPORTATION PLANNING**

**Final Report**

**SPR 671**



Oregon Department of Transportation



**OREGON'S ACTS, CROSS-JURISDICTIONAL  
COLLABORATION AND IMPROVED TRANSPORTATION  
PLANNING**

**Final Report**

**SPR 671**

by

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16. Abstract  The Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) created Area Commissions on Transportation (ACTs) to improve coordination, help prioritize infrastructure investment, and provide input on statewide transportation issues. The structure of the ACTs is designed to provide a cross-section of input from the state, regional, local, private, and community sectors. A research project was initiated to: assess the role and experiences of ACTs, research comparative approaches in the state and nationally, and develop and assess options for improving coordination and increasing effectiveness. This study used interviews, an on-line survey, case studies from Oregon and comparative studies from three other states to assess ACTs and identify options. The findings reveal that ACTs have improved the state prioritization process and increased communication across the parties involved, but they face challenges in relation to cross-regional coordination, strategic investment decisions, and regional problems such as urban travelsheds. The study highlights a range of options for improving ACT functioning under its current structure, and more significant options that would require policy and structural changes.					
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## SI\* (MODERN METRIC) CONVERSION FACTORS

APPROXIMATE CONVERSIONS TO SI UNITS					APPROXIMATE CONVERSIONS FROM SI UNITS				
Symbol	When You Know	Multiply By	To Find	Symbol	Symbol	When You Know	Multiply By	To Find	Symbol
<b><u>LENGTH</u></b>					<b><u>LENGTH</u></b>				
in	inches	25.4	Millimeters	mm	mm	millimeters	0.039	inches	in
ft	feet	0.305	Meters	m	m	meters	3.28	feet	ft
yd	yards	0.914	Meters	m	m	meters	1.09	yards	yd
mi	miles	1.61	kilometers	km	km	kilometers	0.621	miles	mi
<b><u>AREA</u></b>					<b><u>AREA</u></b>				
in <sup>2</sup>	square inches	645.2	millimeters squared	mm <sup>2</sup>	mm <sup>2</sup>	millimeters squared	0.0016	square inches	in <sup>2</sup>
ft <sup>2</sup>	square feet	0.093	meters squared	m <sup>2</sup>	m <sup>2</sup>	meters squared	10.764	square feet	ft <sup>2</sup>
yd <sup>2</sup>	square yards	0.836	meters squared	m <sup>2</sup>	m <sup>2</sup>	meters squared	1.196	square yards	yd <sup>2</sup>
ac	acres	0.405	hectares	ha	ha	hectares	2.47	acres	ac
mi <sup>2</sup>	square miles	2.59	kilometers squared	km <sup>2</sup>	km <sup>2</sup>	kilometers squared	0.386	square miles	mi <sup>2</sup>
<b><u>VOLUME</u></b>					<b><u>VOLUME</u></b>				
fl oz	fluid ounces	29.57	milliliters	ml	ml	milliliters	0.034	fluid ounces	fl oz
gal	gallons	3.785	liters	L	L	liters	0.264	gallons	gal
ft <sup>3</sup>	cubic feet	0.028	meters cubed	m <sup>3</sup>	m <sup>3</sup>	meters cubed	35.315	cubic feet	ft <sup>3</sup>
yd <sup>3</sup>	cubic yards	0.765	meters cubed	m <sup>3</sup>	m <sup>3</sup>	meters cubed	1.308	cubic yards	yd <sup>3</sup>
NOTE: Volumes greater than 1000 L shall be shown in m <sup>3</sup> .									
<b><u>MASS</u></b>					<b><u>MASS</u></b>				
oz	ounces	28.35	grams	g	g	grams	0.035	ounces	oz
lb	pounds	0.454	kilograms	kg	kg	kilograms	2.205	pounds	lb
T	short tons (2000 lb)	0.907	megagrams	Mg	Mg	megagrams	1.102	short tons (2000 lb)	T
<b><u>TEMPERATURE (exact)</u></b>					<b><u>TEMPERATURE (exact)</u></b>				
°F	Fahrenheit	(F-32)/1.8	Celsius	°C	°C	Celsius	1.8C+32	Fahrenheit	°F

\*SI is the symbol for the International System of Measurement

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  - Gary Farnsworth, ODOT Area Manager, Region 4
  - Tom Kloster, METRO
  - Lisa Nell, ODOT Planning Section
  - Cynthia Solie, Cascades West COG
  - Tom Schwetz, Lane Transit District
  - Satvinder Sandhu, FHWA, Oregon Division

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# 1.0 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) initiated the formation of Area Commissions on Transportation (ACTs) in the mid-1990s to improve communication and interaction between the OTC and local stakeholders, and to facilitate cooperation among local governmental jurisdictions. In 2003, the OTC adopted a policy on the formation and operation of ACTs and, as of 2008, 10 ACTs operate throughout the state of Oregon, except in the areas of Lane County, Hood River County and the Portland metropolitan region.

This research study was sponsored by the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) to examine the role ACTs have played in addressing regional transportation issues, and to identify possible options for the future. The research was undertaken with the understanding that all levels of government must work across jurisdictions to address regional transportation issues. These issues include transportation corridors and travel sheds, which typically extend beyond the boundaries of local government jurisdictions, Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), and Area Commissions on Transportation. In addition, effective transportation solutions for both rural and urban areas of the state require the involvement and ownership of the private sector and citizens.

In light of this situation, the following **research objectives** were identified for this study:

- Assess the current role and experience of ACTs and MPOs, and their interactions with each other, in addressing travel shed, cross-jurisdictional and cross-sector (public-private) issues.
- Research comparative practices (including collaborative processes and governance approaches) in Oregon and elsewhere in the nation for effectively bridging jurisdictional and institutional barriers.
- Develop and assess options available to ODOT, ACTs, and MPOs for improving coordination of transportation and land use across jurisdictions, corridors and travel-sheds.

This research study is not intended to be a comprehensive evaluation of ACTs, but rather to focus on certain aspects of the roles of ACTs and the relationship between ACTs and MPOs in addressing key transportation challenges.

## **1.2 RESEARCH TEAM & TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

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- Bob Parker, Director, Community Planning Workshop, U of O
- Community Planning Workshop Graduate Students, U of O
- Research team also received advice from Dr. Connie Ozawa, Professor, PSU

### **ODOT Technical Advisory Committee:**

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- Tom Kloster, METRO
- Lisa Nell, ODOT Planning Section
- Cynthia Solie, Cascades West COG
- Tom Schwetz, Lane Transit District
- Satvinder Sandhu, FHWA, Oregon Division

### **ODOT Project Champion:**

- Jerri Bohard, ODOT Transportation Development Division Administrator

## **1.3 ORGANIZATION OF REPORT**

The following chapters and appendices summarize the background, methods and findings from this study:

- Chapter 2 provides the overall context and problem statement for the research effort, the results of the literature review, and the research methodology.
- Chapter 3 contains the findings of the research based on information from a variety of sources, including: interviews, focus groups, an online survey, and case and comparative studies. These findings focus on the key themes and issues that emerged from the research.

- Chapter 4 highlights regional transportation planning and project development practices in three other states: Iowa, California and Washington. In addition, this chapter discusses collaborative governance approaches that are proving effective in addressing cross-jurisdictional and cross-sector issues.
- Chapter 5 describes possible options for improving the coordination of transportation across jurisdictions, as well as ways to enhance multi-sector involvement in the development of transportation solutions in both rural and urban areas of the state.
- Chapter 6 identifies topics for future research that could be helpful in developing and refining regional transportation approaches.
- The Appendices contain the full results of each of the research components: the literature review, the online survey, the interviews, the ACT and MPO profiles, the case studies, and comparative studies. The appendices are located on the web and are available at: [http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/TD/TP\\_RES/docs/Reports/2008/ACT\\_Appendices.pdf](http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/TD/TP_RES/docs/Reports/2008/ACT_Appendices.pdf)





## **2.0 BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT**

Commuting, freight movement, and other transportation patterns routinely cross multiple jurisdictions and go beyond the boundaries of existing planning structures. This situation makes it difficult for Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) to respond to travel shed issues with effective transportation strategies. Oregon's Area Commissions on Transportation (ACTs) were created, in part, to broaden the regional transportation perspective, to improve communications between the public and private sectors, and to improve coordination of state highway project prioritization across jurisdictions. But, as with the MPOs, the current scope, authority and geographic boundaries of the ACTs do not always correspond to existing travel patterns and transportation corridors. It is important to determine how ACTs are functioning, to determine the appropriate relationship of the ACTs to the MPOs, and to improve collaboration and coordination among the ACTs.

#### **2.1.1 ACTs and MPOs**

Oregon currently has 10 ACTs and six MPOs. A map showing the boundaries of the ACTs, MPOs and Counties is shown in Figure 2.1.

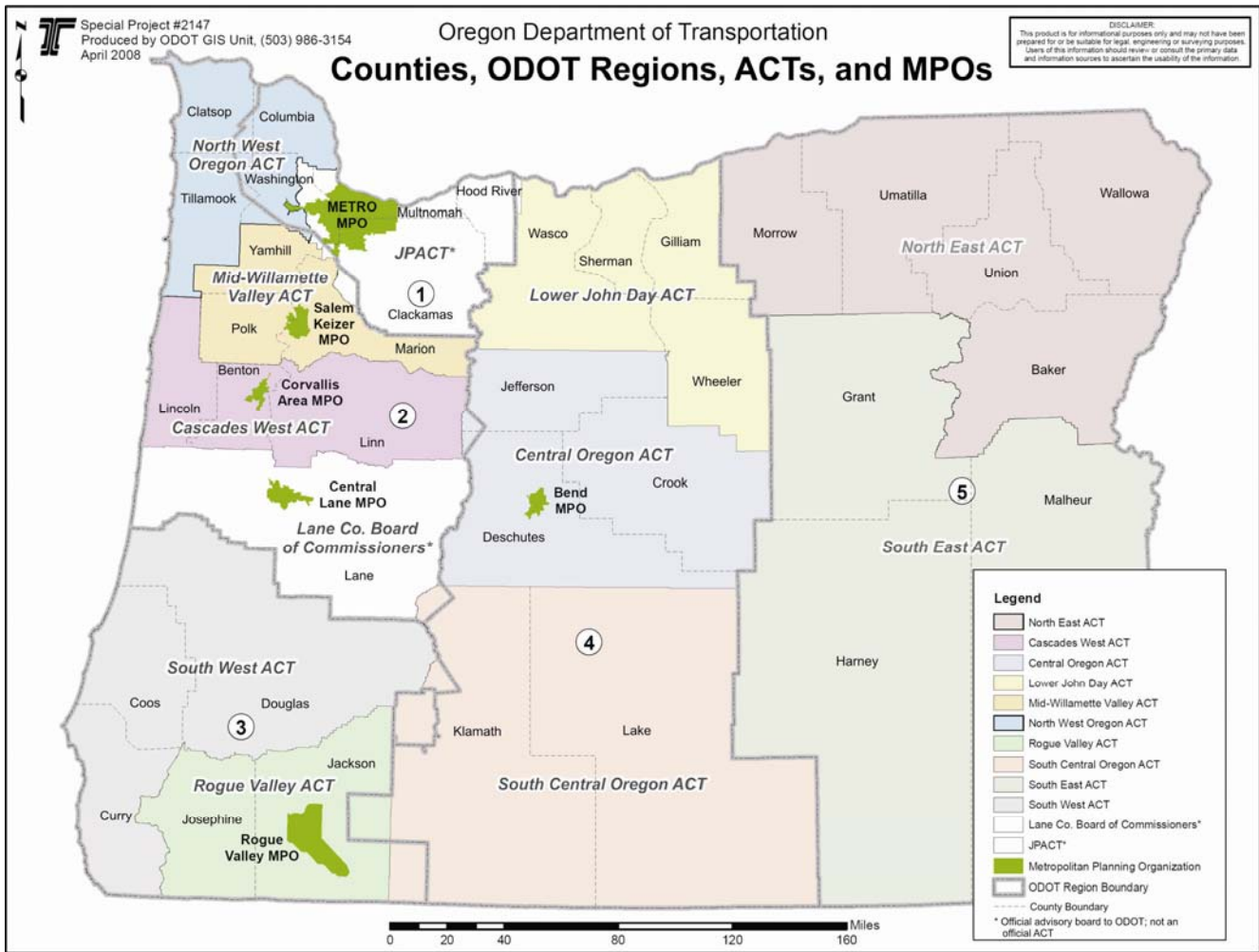
ACTs were established as advisory bodies to the Oregon Transportation Commission. They are composed of voluntary associations of governmental and non-governmental transportation stakeholders and have no legal, regulatory, policy or administrative authority.

MPOs are federally-created transportation organizations made up of representatives from local government and transportation authorities. The MPOs are required by law and regulation to carry out certain transportation planning and coordination responsibilities. MPOs are formed in "urbanized areas" (population of 50,000 or more) of the state, as defined by the US Census Bureau.

The geographic boundary of an ACT is established through the ACT's Operating Agreement, which articulates the rationale for specific boundaries. According to the OTC "Policy on the Formation and Operation of ACTs" (2003), these boundaries should be consistent with the "geographical community of interest," such as similarity of population, land use, economy, infrastructure, and other interests. There are some areas of Oregon, however, that have not formed an ACT. In Lane County and Hood River County, the Board of County Commissioners serves as the transportation advisory body to the OTC. The Portland metropolitan area elected not to establish an ACT for the urban portions of Multnomah, Washington and Clackamas counties, currently governed by METRO. In this area, ODOT coordinates with the METRO Council and the Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation (JPACT), a body of elected officials and transportation agency representatives. Coordination includes transportation project planning and prioritizing through the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), and the coordination

of funding priorities through the Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP). In areas outside of METRO's boundaries, ODOT works with various county committees to coordinate transportation project planning and construction.

For the most part, ACTs and MPOs have developed mechanisms for communicating and coordinating with one another. It is anticipated that there will be additional MPOs formed in the next 10 years, which would likely increase the coordination and communication challenges. The urbanized areas of Albany, Grants Pass, and Klamath Falls all have the potential to reach the population threshold of 50,000, set by the federal government for establishment of an MPO.



(ODOT 2008)

Figure 2.1: Map of Oregon Area Commissions on Transportation and Metropolitan Planning Organizations

## 2.1.2 Broad Trends & Challenges

A number of broad trends create transportation challenges for local and state government. The following challenges affect both urban and rural areas in different ways:

- economic and population growth and the land use patterns associated with this growth;
- funding shortfalls, including decreasing gas tax revenues and the increasing demands of maintaining, operating and constructing transportation facilities; and
- focus on ‘sustainable mobility’ and the need to respond to environmental and social equity issues with multi-modal transportation solutions and transportation-land use integration.

In addition to the trends and challenges listed above, significant cross-regional issues relating to travel sheds and transportation corridors will also need to be addressed.

### **2.1.3 Travel Sheds**

Starting in 2006, and over the last two years, the Oregon MPO Consortium (OMPOC) has been examining MPO planning boundaries and how they relate to actual travel sheds across the state. They found that MPO boundary limitations can make coordinating regional transportation issues a challenge. OMPOC mapped the 45-minute travel sheds for three centers of economic growth in the state: Willamette Valley, Rogue Valley, and Central Oregon (*OMPOC 2008*). These maps will be available in the future on the OMPOC website.

In the ‘Greater Bend Region,’ in Central Oregon, they found that only 43% of the population, and 23.2% of the urbanized land within the travel shed, resides within the MPO boundary. The Bend MPO boundary is slightly larger than the Bend urban growth boundary (UGB). However, the Bend travel shed extends west to Sisters, north past Redmond, east to Prineville, and south to La Pine. For the Rogue Valley, OMPOC found that within the 45-minute travel shed, 61% of the population resides within the MPO boundary. This effort also identified significant portions of urban travel sheds that are outside urban growth boundaries (UGBs) and MPO planning areas in the mid- and northern areas of the Willamette Valley. For example, the travel sheds of the Portland MPO and the Salem MPO share Woodburn; the Salem and Corvallis MPO travel sheds share Albany, Dallas and Independence/Monmouth; and the Corvallis and Eugene MPO travel sheds share several cities between one another.

### **2.1.4 Transportation Corridors**

Transportation corridors are significant highways and roads that provide important connections between regions of the state for passengers, goods and services. Transportation corridors contribute to local economies in many ways, including providing for freight and tourist-related transportation. These contributions can be particularly important in rural areas. ODOT initiated a comprehensive effort to develop plans for transportation corridors in the early 1990’s. That effort has shifted in focus to transportation facility planning.

Transportation corridors cross the geographic boundaries of ACTs and MPOs with sometimes problems originating in one section of a corridor having an impact on transportation in other sections of the corridor. For example, Portland METRO and the Northwest ACT (northern Oregon coast) share an interest in Highway OR-26, a critical transportation link for connecting travelers to Washington County and the coast. This transportation facility not only crosses MPO

and ACT boundaries, but also ODOT Region 1 and 2 boundaries. Cross-boundary coordination and communication is needed to develop effective transportation strategies for travel corridors.

## **2.2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

To help inform the methods and recommendations for this study, the research team reviewed the literature on collaboration and coordination from several different fields, including urban planning, transportation, and environmental management. This summary is based on a review of published articles and reports and other documents of experiences from practice. A full review of this literature is summarized in **Appendix E**.

### **2.2.1 Cross Jurisdictional Problems & Collaboration**

Over the past several years, there has been increasing research relating to regional and cross-jurisdictional problems. Historically, these problems have been addressed through the creation of new organizations with the authority to encompass these problems. However, this is difficult when the problems are large in scale and multi-faceted in scope. In these situations, there has been an increase in the use of collaborative approaches in planning and management as a means of involving a range of perspectives in a shared process of decision making. This means that participants retain their autonomy and work together voluntarily, as opposed to decision making through a central authority, mandate or organizational merger (*Gray 1989; Innes 1996*). In practice, collaborative approaches have been used to address regional planning, metropolitan transportation, social services, and particularly environmental management (*Bonnell and Koontz 2007; Colby and Murrell 1998; Conley and Mooto 2003; Darlington, Feeney, and Rixon 2005; Helling 1998; Koontz et al. 2004; Margerum 2005; Moore and Koontz 2003; NPCC 2006; Sabatier et al. 2005; Taylor and Schweitzer 2005*).

Research indicates that when the collaborative process is effective, it leads to plans that reflect local conditions, incorporate a wider range of information and perspectives, and garner greater support that carries over into implementation (*Burby 2002; Cortner and Mooto 1999; Innes 1996; Innes and Booher 1999; Wondolleck and Yaffee 2000*).

There are several hypothesized effects of these collaborative and consensus-based approaches. First, researchers assert that consensus produces greater satisfaction with the process, because participants have better opportunities to communicate and develop an enhanced understanding of the information (*Bingham 1986; Gray 1985, 1989; Innes 1996; Margerum 1999, 2002b*). Researchers have also found that consensus leads to better outcomes, because the process includes a broader array of information and perspectives that should lead to more creative and integrative solutions (*Gigone and Hastie 1993; Stasser, Stewart, and Wittenbaum 1995; Susskind and Cruikshank 1987; Wondolleck 1985*). Thirdly, researchers contend that participants have greater ownership of, and commitment to, outcomes, which increases the likelihood of implementation (*Gray 1989; Susskind and Cruikshank 1987*).

## 2.2.2 Evaluating Collaboration

The elements important to collaboration, as defined by the literature, can be broadly grouped into the following categories: structure, commitment, process, and outputs and outcomes. Table 2.1 summarizes each of these elements and describes some of the common factors identified from the literature, which are described in more detail in **Appendix E**. These elements were used by the research team to develop the interview, survey and case study questions.

**Table 2.1: Evaluation Elements**

<b>Evaluation Category</b>	<b>Elements</b>	<b>Selected References</b>
<b>Structure:</b> Scope of group and participants in relation to the problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate scope and authority</li> <li>• Appropriate scale</li> <li>• Clear role</li> </ul>	<i>(Beierle and Konisky 2000; Gray 1989; Mitchell 1986; Susskind and Cruikshank 1987; Susskind, McKearnon, and Carpenter 1999)</i>
<b>Commitment:</b> Participants are committed to the group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committed participants</li> <li>• Committed organizations</li> </ul>	<i>(Kingdon 2003; Mazmanian and Sabatier 1983; Sabatier, Jenkins-Smith, and Lawlor 1996)</i>
<b>Process:</b> The group operates with good information flow, decision making and agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well facilitated and led</li> <li>• Adequate support</li> <li>• Open communication</li> <li>• High quality information</li> <li>• Clear decision making rules</li> <li>• Well focused process</li> </ul>	<i>(Beierle 2002; Gigone and Hastie 1997; Gray 1989; Innes 1994, 1998; Innes and Booher 1999; Julian 1994; Margerum 2002a; Mattessich, Murray-Close, and Monsey 2004; McKearnon and Fairman 1999; Selin and Chavez 1995; Selin, Schuett, and Carr 2000; Stasser, Vaughan, and Stewart 2000)</i>
<b>Outputs/ Outcomes:</b> Achievements in group in relation to mission; quality of products; influence; spin-offs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High quality products</li> <li>• Improved communication</li> <li>• Improved understanding</li> <li>• Influence on decision making</li> <li>• Improved coordination</li> </ul>	<i>(Frame, Gunton, and Day 2004; Innes 1998; Innes and Booher 1999; Margerum 2002c; Mattessich et al. 2004; Mazmanian and Sabatier 1983; McKearnon and Fairman 1999; Schulz, Israel, and Lantz 2003; Selin et al. 2000)</i>

## 2.3 RESEARCH PROJECT APPROACH & COMPONENTS

The research team used a range of approaches to examine the current and potential roles of Area Commissions on Transportation (ACTs) in cross-jurisdictional collaboration. The goal of the research was to assess how ACTs currently operate from a broad range of perspectives, and to understand, in detail, some of the issues, concerns, and approaches being used in Oregon and elsewhere to address these kinds of cross-jurisdictional issues. To this end, the research team undertook interviews with key individuals, conducted an online survey, and conducted case and comparative studies. The following section provides an overview of the methods used in this study, which are explained in more detail in the appendices.

### 2.3.1 Interviews with Key Individuals

Interviews were conducted with a total of 48 individuals, including local government officials, staff and community members, as well as ODOT policy makers and key staff. Interviews were completed with 36 individuals who currently or historically participated on, or interacted with,

Oregon Area Commissions on Transportation (ACTs) or Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). Though interview subjects were not selected using a scientific sampling technique, every effort was made to include a cross-section of interests, representing those involved with ACTs and MPOs from geographic areas throughout the state where ACTs have been formed. In addition, 12 interviews were conducted in two areas (Lane County and Portland metropolitan region) where ACTs have not been formed. Of these 12 interviews, six were conducted in Lane County and six in the Portland metropolitan area. A summary of the interviews can be found in **Appendix A**.

### **2.3.2 Online Survey**

To assess the current role and experience of ACTs and MPOs, the research team administered an online survey to approximately 350 ODOT, ACT, and MPO officials, as well as other appropriate individuals. The primary purpose of the online survey was to understand more about the current roles and experiences of ACTs, including:

- perspectives on how well they are functioning;
- how they are coordinating with each other;
- how they are coordinating with MPOs; and
- how well they are addressing cross-jurisdictional issues.

The secondary purpose of the survey was to inform the identification of options for ODOT, ACTs, and for MPOs to consider in addressing select transportation planning issues.

The survey was designed to provide both internal and external perspectives on the ACTs. All respondents were asked to provide information about themselves, assess ACT effectiveness, assess coordination across different jurisdictions, and provide open ended comments about ACTs and transportation planning. Respondents associated with an ACT were asked to assess ACT structures, processes, outputs, outcomes and the commitment of participants. For ACTs that contained an MPO within its boundary, respondents were asked questions about ACT-MPO relationships. Most questions used a Likert Scale (e.g., ratings on a scale of 1-5 or strongly disagree to strongly agree), while others allowed for respondents to write brief comments.

In consultation with ODOT staff and the Technical Advisory Committee, the research team identified 349 individuals associated with ODOT, ACTs and MPOs. For the most part, the survey did not include officials connected with Lane County or the Portland metropolitan area because of the unique structures in those regions.

The survey was administered online using the commercial vendor Survey Monkey (surveymonkey.com). The research team used a survey methodology developed by Dr. Don Dillman in *Mail and Internet Surveys: The Tailored Design Method (2007)*. The tailored design method emphasizes the use of multiple contacts to boost survey response rates. These contacts included:

- an initial email letter from the ODOT Transportation Development Division Administrator, describing the purpose of the study and encouraging individuals to respond;
- a first follow-up was sent out one week after the initial survey contact;
- additional follow-ups were sent at 14 and 21 days; and
- ODOT Area Managers sent emails to their ACT and MPO officials, urging them to participate in the survey.

A total of 178 individuals responded; however, the number of people answering each question varied because not everyone answered every question. Some people stopped taking the survey midway through and there were two skip sequences in the survey. A more detailed discussion of the respondents, their characteristics, and the findings from their responses is provided in **Appendix B**.

### **2.3.3 Profiles of ACTs & MPOs**

To understand the range of structures and approaches to regional transportation planning in Oregon, the research team prepared summaries of all 10 ACTs, Lane County, and all of the Oregon MPOs. Using online documents, meeting minutes and other information, the team summarized the geographic extent, membership, structure, priorities and accomplishments, as well as other key issues for all 17 entities (see **Appendix F**).

To learn more about the range of ACTs and their issues and approaches, the research team conducted detailed investigations of three case studies: the Mid-Willamette ACT, Northeast ACT, and Rogue Valley ACT. These ACTs were chosen in consultation with the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) because they represented some of the range of geographic, political and economic settings found in Oregon. The investigations were carried out using document reviews, interviews with key individuals involved with the ACTs, and focus groups with participants familiar with the groups. For each ACT, the team also analyzed survey data from the larger ODOT Area Commission on Transportation Online Survey. The summaries of these three Oregon cases can be found in **Appendix C**.

### **2.3.4 Comparative Studies of Other States**

To learn more about different approaches to transportation planning, the research team conducted comparative studies of transportation planning and programming systems in California, Iowa and Washington. These states were chosen in consultation with the ODOT Technical Advisory Committee, because all had developed regional arrangements. The studies are based upon online research, document reviews and telephone interviews with participants from each state. A full summary of these cases is available in **Appendix D**.

The research team used both primary and secondary research methods for the comparative studies. For each study, the team conducted 5 to 10 telephone interviews of individuals affiliated with organizations closely involved in transportation planning and programming. These individuals included state DOT employees, regional transportation planners and members of the



regional decision-making bodies. Information gathered from state DOT websites and links, websites of the regional decision-making bodies and other documents were particularly helpful in completing the studies. A draft of these findings was also sent for review to staff at each state transportation agency. Review comments were received from Iowa and Washington and incorporated into the document.

## **2.4 POLICY FRAMEWORK**

### **2.4.1 Federal**

There are a variety of federal laws, programs and initiatives that affect transportation planning and funding at the state and local level. The primary federal law is SAFETEA-LU (Safe, Accountable, Flexible and Efficient Transportation Equity Act—a Legacy for Users) (2005). For the purposes of this study, a few federal elements are highlighted that have particular relevance to the research objectives.

#### ***2.4.1.1 Metropolitan Planning Organizations***

Federal regulations (23 CFR 450.300-338) prescribe the functions of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). An MPO is a transportation policy-making organization made up of representatives from local government and transportation authorities. MPOs were created by Congress to ensure that existing and future expenditures for transportation projects and programs are based on a continuing, cooperative and comprehensive planning program. MPOs are required for any urbanized area with a population greater than 50,000.

An MPO governance structure typically includes a ‘Policy Committee’ as the decision-making body for the organization. In most MPOs, the Policy Committee includes: elected and appointed officials from local government, representatives of different transportation modes and state agency officials. Core functions of MPOs include: maintaining a long-range transportation plan, evaluating transportation alternatives, developing a transportation improvement program, and involving the public.

The metropolitan planning process establishes a comprehensive framework for making transportation investment decisions in metropolitan areas. The policy for the metropolitan planning process is to promote consistency between transportation improvements and state and local planned growth and economic development patterns. The transportation improvement program (TIP) is to be updated every four years.

MPOs that have a population size between 50,000 and 200,000 individuals receive a portion of the state’s allocated federal Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds. MPOs in areas with a population greater than 200,000 are called Transportation Management Areas (TMAs), and these areas receive federal STP funds directly.

### ***2.4.1.2 Consultation Requirements***

Under SAFETEA-LU (2005), consultation requirements for both States and MPOs were expanded. Federal regulations have been adopted to implement SAFETEA-LU (23 CFR 450.208 and 23 CFR 450.214). At a minimum, states must coordinate with MPOs and consider the concerns of local elected official with responsibilities for transportation in non-metropolitan areas (23CFR450.208). Long range statewide transportation plans must be developed in cooperation with the affected MPOs within each metropolitan area (23 CFR 450.214). Outside these MPO areas, the plan is to be developed in consultation with affected non-metropolitan officials.

## **2.4.2 State of Oregon**

Three documents adopted by the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) are especially significant in establishing the policy framework in which the State, ACTs and MPOs function:

- Oregon Transportation Plan (2006);
- OTC “Policy on the Formation and Operation of ACTs” (2003); and
- STIP Criteria

In addition, the Oregon Land Use Program’s Goal 12 and Transportation Planning Rule provide a framework for local government transportation planning in the state.

### ***2.4.2.1 Oregon Transportation Plan***

The Oregon Transportation Plan (OTP) has a number of policies that speak to the importance of coordinating transportation planning, project development and operations across jurisdictions, as well as the need to form public-private partnerships (2006).

**Goal 7** of the Oregon Transportation Plan (OTP) is titled ‘Coordination, Communication and Cooperation’. This goal specifically addresses the importance of cross-jurisdictional coordination in transportation planning and project development. The overview section of Goal 7 states the purpose and policies of the OTP as follows:

System integration is necessary at many levels, and new partnerships are needed to share information, technology and facilities and provide services...Creative solutions are needed to remove the barriers and share risks to improve the delivery of transportation. Institutional relationships can also impede the ability to efficiently address transportation challenges and seize opportunities across modes and jurisdictions.

**Policy 7.1** A Coordinated Transportation System:

It is the policy of the State of Oregon to work collaboratively with other jurisdictions and agencies with the objective of removing barriers so the transportation system can function as one system.

**Policy 7.2 Public/Private Partnerships:**

It is the policy of the State of Oregon to maintain, expand and provide tools to encourage partnerships to improve efficiency.... Partners include transportation providers, public agencies and private businesses at all levels across jurisdictions and ownerships.

**Policy 7.3 Public Involvement and Consultation:**

It is the policy of the State of Oregon to involve Oregonians to the fullest practical extent in transportation planning and implementation in order to deliver a transportation system that meets the diverse needs of the state.

Two of the strategies listed under this policy are also relevant:

**Strategy 7.1.2** Promote decision-making at the level most appropriate to operate the transportation system. Plan for system improvements in a regional or inter-regional context, and involve local governments, Metropolitan Planning Organizations and neighboring states where appropriate. Develop procedures to enable the state or the appropriate entity to consolidate decision-making authority for projects of statewide or regional significance.

**Strategy 7.1.5** Coordinate tribal, federal, state, regional and local planning to protect transportation facilities, corridors and sites for their identified functions and to facilitate community development...

**2.4.2.2 OTC ACT Policy**

On June 18, 2003, the Oregon Transportation Commission adopted the “Policy on Formation and Operation of the Area Commissions on Transportation.” The policy was developed with input from a 17-member stakeholder committee assisting ODOT with review of the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) process. The full policy document is available at [www.oregon.gov/ODOT/COMM/docs/acts](http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/COMM/docs/acts).

Some of the purposes stated by the OTC for creation of the ACTs include:

- Broaden opportunities for advising the OTC on policy issues
- Improve project recommendations and coordination at the local level
- Broaden the regional transportation perspective
- Increase stakeholder support for and commitment to projects
- Control project costs and facilitate private sector capital investments

- Support timely completion of projects and maximize ODOT's capacity to deliver projects
- Improve Oregon's economy by addressing transportation challenges

The policy lists the following **primary roles** of the ACTs:

- Provide a forum to advance public awareness/understanding among transportation stakeholders
- Establish a public process that is consistent with state and federal laws, regulations and policies
- Provide recommendations to the OTC regarding program funding allocations for the STIP, balancing local, regional and statewide perspectives
- Prioritize Area Modernization project recommendations for the Development STIP and Construction STIP based on state and local transportation plans related to the area
- Make recommendations to ODOT regarding special funding opportunities and programs
- Communicate and coordinate Regional priorities with other organizations, including: other ODOT Regions and ACTs; MPOs; Economic Revitalization Teams (ERTs); Regional Partnerships; Investment Boards; and advisory committees
- As applicable, consider all modes and aspects of the transportation system in formulating recommendations, taking into account the provision of elements and connections between air, marine, rail, highway, trucking, transit, bicycle and pedestrian facilities
- Provide documentation to the OTC of the public process and recommendations; provide report to the OTC at least once every two years

Optional Activities listed for the ACTs are:

- Provide advice on Corridor Plans or Transportation System Plans (TSPs) that contain projects of regional significance
- Review projects and policies for other STIP funding programs (e.g. Bridge, Freight, Rail, etc.)
- Advise the OTC on state and regional policies
- Provide input into prioritizing long-range planning projects (especially refinement plans)
- Establish and monitor benchmarks for regional transportation improvements
- Other transportation related policy or funding issues relevant to a particular ACT

Geographical Boundaries of ACTs:

The policy states that the rationale for ACT boundaries should be consistent with a geographical community of interest for the state transportation system and be coordinated with existing regional intergovernmental relationships. It requires ACTs to develop an Operating Agreement that articulates the rationale for its boundaries and encourages participation of adjacent ACTs.

#### Membership:

The policy requires ACTs to have a voting membership which is reflective of its population and interests, as well as representative of those who would be impacted by ACT recommendations.

The policy specifies that, at minimum, representation shall include at least 50% elected officials—city, county and MPO officials. It also states that tribal governments, Ports and Transit officials are to be invited to participate as voting members. ODOT is a voting member on each ACT. In addition, the policy goes on to suggest that ACTs should include appropriate ex-officio members such as state legislators, other state and federal agencies, interest groups, etc.

#### Criteria for ACT Decision Making:

The policy allows ACTs to use consensus or majority vote. Criteria for recommendations shall be based on local, state and federal adopted transportation plans and policies. ACTs may use additional criteria to select and rank projects, provided the criteria do not conflict with criteria established by OTC. ACTs shall apply regional and statewide perspectives to their considerations, refining recommendations after consultation with any affected MPOs.

#### Coordination Requirements:

Coordination is a primary obligation of ACTs and is intended to ensure that recommendations have been reviewed for local, regional and statewide issues and perspectives. ACT coordination is to include: the OTC, other ACTs within and across ODOT regions, an ODOT advisory committee, Economic Revitalization Teams (ERTs), regional partnerships and investment boards, tribal governments, MPOs, local governments, transit and port districts, and stakeholder groups (environmental, business, federal and state agencies with land holdings in the ACT boundary). ACTs are also instructed to coordinate with other ACTs as needed (e.g., priorities along a specific highway corridor) and to include adjacent ACTs on ACT mailing lists.

The policy also specifies the need for coordination of ACT and MPO efforts to assure a better decision making process and better coordination of projects. The policy notes that when ACT and MPO boundaries overlap, a higher level of clearly defined coordination is needed and it is important that ACT activities fully coordinate with the MPO planning process. The MPO and ACT should jointly agree on a process for maintaining consistency between ACT recommendations, the MPO Plan, and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). ACTs are to include an MPO representative as a voting member if an MPO is within the same geographic area as an ACT.

Public Involvement:

The policy states that ACTs must comply with Oregon’s Public Meeting Law (ORS 192.610 to 192.690) and involve the public and stakeholders in their decision-making processes. It also notes that the public involvement process should identify a strategy for engaging minority and low income populations in transportation decision-making.

### ***2.4.2.3 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Guidelines***

A key responsibility of ACTs is to recommend transportation project priorities to the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) for the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). In June, 2007, the OTC approved the “Project Eligibility Criteria and Prioritization Factors and Process Guidance” to assist ACTs, MPOs or regional or statewide advisory groups in advising the OTC on the selection of STIP projects. The document gives basic definitions, funding information and provides guidance pertaining to roles and responsibilities, project selection criteria and documentation. The document states, in part that:

The OTC will consider the advice and recommendations received from ACTs, MPOs, and regional or statewide groups. ODOT will provide tools necessary to enable an ACT to carry out its responsibilities under these criteria. Geographic areas that do not have an ACT must adhere to the same standards of accountability as ACTs... and demonstrate to the OTC that recommendations were developed in accordance with these criteria and factors.

The **Project Eligibility Criteria** represent the first screening mechanism for projects. Projects must satisfy these criteria, at a minimum, before they are given further consideration. For ‘modernization’ projects, the eligibility criteria require that the projects be consistent with the applicable transportation system plans (TSPs), or, in the absence of an applicable TSP, the applicable acknowledged comprehensive plan. The projects must also be consistent with the Oregon Highway Plan (OHP) policy on major improvements.

The **Prioritization Factors** are to be used to ensure consistent consideration of the relative merits of projects by ACTs, MPOs, and others. To provide for regional differences, ACTs, MPOs and regional or statewide advisory groups may use additional factors to rank projects, provided they are consistent with the OTC-adopted factors. The prioritization factors for ‘modernization’ projects in the Construction STIP are as follows:

- readiness (this has more weight than the other factors);
- supports the Oregon Highway Plan policies;
- supports freight mobility;
- leverages other funds and public benefits; and
- completes an environmental milestone (Record of Decision–ROD or Finding of No Significant Impact–FONSI).

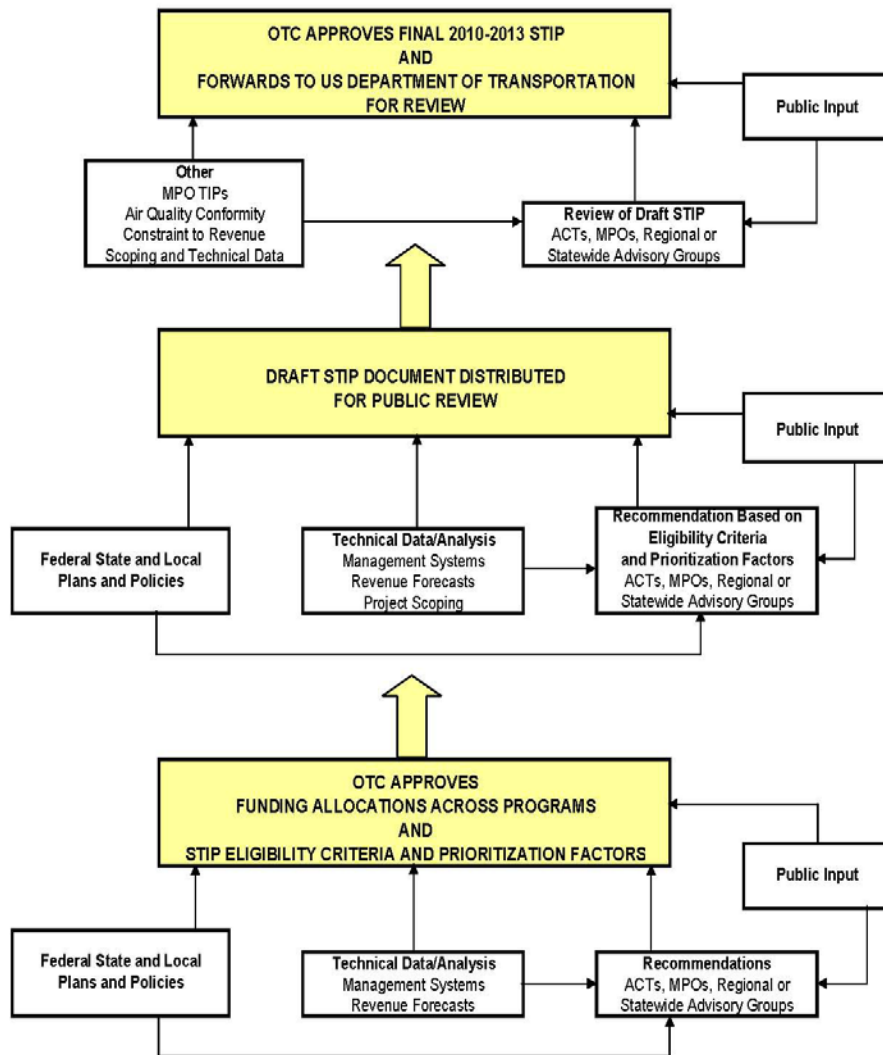
#### ***2.4.2.4 Land Conservation & Development Commission (LCDC): Goal 12 and the Transportation Planning Rule***

The Oregon Land Conservation and Development Commission's Goal 12, Transportation, is one of 19 State land use goals that constitute the framework for Oregon's planning program. State law requires each city and county to adopt a comprehensive plan that complies with the statewide goals. The broad objectives of Goal 12 are "to provide a safe, convenient and economic transportation system, while addressing the needs of the transportation disadvantaged."

The Transportation Planning Rule (TPR) (Oregon Administrative Rule - OAR Chapter 660, Division 012) implements Goal 12. The TPR requires preparation of state, regional and local transportation system plans in compliance with Goal 12. Transportation system plans are long-range (20 year) plans that guide the identification of, and investment in, future transportation facilities and services. Transportation system plans consider all modes of transportation, energy conservation, and reducing reliance on any one mode, in order to meet transportation needs.

The TPR requires ODOT to prepare a transportation system plan (TSP) to identify transportation facilities and services to meet state needs. Metropolitan Planning Organizations and counties must prepare regional TSPs consistent with the adopted state TSP. Cities and Counties must prepare local TSPs that are consistent with the state TSP and applicable regional TSPs. Local governments must also regulate land uses to protect transportation facilities, corridors and sites for their identified functions, and coordinate with ODOT on potential land use changes that have a significant effect on transportation facilities. Cities with a population of less than 10,000 and counties with a population of less than 25,000 may qualify for a whole or partial exemption from the requirements of the TPR from the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD).

Figure 2.2 illustrates how ACTs, MPOs, and others participate in the STIP process.



KEY  
 ACT: Area Commission on Transportation  
 MPO: Metropolitan Planning Organization  
 TIP: Transportation Improvement Program

Figure 2.2: Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Decision Process (ODOT 2007)



## 2.5 ACT & MPO SUMMARIES

In January and February of 2008, the research team reviewed ACT and MPO documents and prepared individual summary profiles of each of the ACTs and MPOs in Oregon. The researchers reviewed a variety of sources, including: ACT charters, operating procedures, and meeting minutes from January 2006 to December 2007 for all Oregon ACTs and MPOs, and for Lane County. The purpose of the review was to provide a snapshot of geography and membership, as well as a review of topics addressed and coordination activities.

The researchers identified that the following topics were routinely addressed at meetings: transportation modes (in addition to highway, trucking or transit); specific funding programs (such as the STIP and *ConnectOregon*); and policy recommendations. The research also identified instances of coordination between ACTs, between ACTs and MPOs, and between MPOs and other governmental bodies.

The matrices on the pages that follow (Tables 2.2 and 2.3) summarize the information collected on geography and membership. The full profiles of the ACTs and MPOs are contained in **Appendix F**. Although this data is useful for reviewing ACT and MPO activities, it is not intended to be a comprehensive review. It is recognized that some activities may not have been mentioned in meeting minutes, and that researcher error may have caused some discussions to be overlooked or misinterpreted.

**Table 2.2: Oregon ACT Geography and Membership**

ACT	ODOT Region	ODOT Maint. Dist.	Counties	Number of Incorporated Cities	MPO	Membership						
						Voting	Ex-Officio	Committees	Chair(s)	Vice-Chair	Staff Support	Decision Making
Cascades West ACT	2	4	Benton, Linn, Lincoln	26	Corvallis Area MPO (CAMPO)	27: County (3), City (17), Private Sector (3), Tribal (1), ODOT (1), Port Authority (2)	37	Executive Committee, Technical Committee, Rail Task Force	1	0	3	Consensus 1st, voting (75%) 2nd
Central Oregon ACT	4	10	Crook, Deschutes, Jefferson	7	Bend MPO	14: County (3), City (7), Stakeholder (2), Tribal (1), ODOT (1)	18	Executive Committee	1	1	1	Consensus, voting only if necessary
Lower John Day ACT	4	9	Gilliam, Sherman, Wheeler, Wasco	16	None	14: County (4), City (4), Private Sector (4), Tribal (1), ODOT (1)	12+	Steering Committee	1	0	2+	Consensus
Mid-Willamette Valley ACT	2	8	Marion, Polk, Yamhill	36	Salem-Keizer Area Transportation Study (SKATS)	16: County (1), City (5), Private (3), Tribe (1), MPO (6)	Not known	Steering Committee, Technical Advisory Committee	1	1	3	Consensus
Northeast ACT	5	13	Morrow, Baker, Union, Umatilla, Wallowa	37	None	18: County (5), City (5), At-large (5), Tribe (2), ODOT (1)	23	Scenic Byways	1	1	2	Consensus 1st, voting (50%) 2nd
Northwest Oregon ACT	1 & 2	1, 2A & 3	Clatsop, Columbia, Tillamook, Washington (partial)	20	None	24: County (4), City (4), Transit District (3), Ports (3), ODOT (2), Citizen-at-large (8)	13+	None	1	2	1	Consensus, majority voting only if necessary
Rogue Valley ACT	3	2	Jackson, Josephine	13	Rogue Valley MPO (RVMPO)	26: County (2), City (13), Private (7), Transit District (1), ODOT (1), MPO (1)	Not Known	Jackson/Josephine Technical Advisory Committee	2	0	1	Consensus 1st, voting (50%) 2nd
South Central Oregon ACT	4	10, 11	Klamath, Lake	7	None	27: County (6), City (2), Tribe (1), Private (2), At-Large (5), ODOT (1), ECD (3), Higher Ed (2), Transit District (1), State Rep. (3), State Senator (1)	18+	Executive Committee, Technical Committee	1	1	1+	Majority voting
Southeast ACT	5	14	Grant, Harney, Malheur	17	None	19: County (11), City (3), Private Sector (3), Tribal (1), ODOT (1)	11+	None	1	1	2+	Consensus
Southwest ACT	3	7	Douglas, Curry, Coos	22	None	17: County (3), City (3), Regional Members, 3 of which must be private (8), ODOT (3)	Not Known	Steering Committee, Regional Sub-committees, Technical Advisory Committee	1	1	1+	Consensus 1st, voting 2nd

**Table 2.3: Oregon MPO Geography and Membership**

<b>MPO</b>	<b>ODOT Region</b>	<b>ODOT Maint. Dist.</b>	<b>Cities</b>	<b>Counties</b>	<b>ACT</b>	<b>Voting Membership</b>	<b>Sub-Committees</b>	<b>Decision Making</b>	<b>Meeting Frequency</b>
<b>Bend Area MPO</b>	4	10	Bend	Deschutes	COACT	5: County (1), City (3), ODOT (1)	Technical Advisory Committee, Citizen Advisory Committee	Consensus, allows for abstention	Monthly
<b>Corvallis Area MPO</b>	2	4	Corvallis, Philomath, Adair Village	Benton	CWACT	5: County (1), City (3), ODOT (1)	Technical Advisory Committee	Consensus 1st, voting 2nd	Monthly
<b>Eugene-Springfield MPO</b>	2	5	Eugene, Springfield, Coburg	Lane	None	10: County (2), City (5), ODOT (1), Transit District (2)	Citizen Advisory Committee, Transportation Planning Committee	Majority Vote	Monthly
<b>Portland Area MPO</b>	1	2A, 2B, 2C & 3	25	Clackamas, Multnomah, Washington (partial)	None	17: County (3), City (4), ODOT (1), Tri-Met (1), Ports (1), DEQ (1), State of Washington (3), Metro (3)	Bi-State Coordination Committee	Majority Vote	Monthly
<b>Rogue Valley MPO</b>	3	2	Ashland, Central Point, Eagle Point, Jacksonville, Medford, Phoenix, Talent,	Jackson	RVACT	10: County (1), City (7), Transit District (1), ODOT (1)	Public Advisory Council, Technical Advisory Committee	Majority Vote	Monthly
<b>Salem-Keizer Area MPO</b>	2	3	Salem, Keizer, Turner	Marion, Polk	MWACT	8: County (2), City (3), Transit District (1), ODOT (1), Public School (1)	Technical Advisory Committee	Majority Vote	Monthly

## **3.0 FINDINGS: THEMES AND ISSUES**

This chapter reviews the major themes and issues that were identified through interviews, the on-line survey and the ACT case studies. The findings have been organized under five topic areas: travel sheds and travel corridors; STIP prioritization process; representation and stakeholder involvement; communication and coordination; and transportation policy and strategic investment. There are some overlaps among the categories, with some themes and issues being relevant to more than one topic.

### **3.1 TRAVEL SHEDS & CORRIDORS**

#### **3.1.1 Travel Sheds**

One objective of this study was to assess the experience of ACTs and MPOs in addressing travel shed issues. The issue of boundary distinction is important because it affects the ability of MPOs and ACTs to coordinate regional transportation decision making and project recommendations across jurisdictions. To be effective, planning processes must be responsive to a region's travel needs and realistically assess regional travel demand and behavior.

A key concern is whether the boundaries of MPOs and ACTs are inclusive of commuting and other travel patterns. Many of the individuals interviewed for this research project noted that automobile and truck trips that originate outside of MPO and ACT boundaries clearly have an impact on transportation within those boundaries. Furthermore, intercity commuting is a major component of growth in vehicle miles traveled (VMT). The boundary issue is especially significant for MPOs because they cannot plan outside their boundaries and therefore cannot effectively address some of the land use and transportation issues (such as the jobs-housing imbalance) that influence commuting trips.

For the most part, interviewees indicated that MPO boundaries do not coincide with commuting and travel patterns. Interviewees indicated that the MPO boundaries for the Portland, Salem, Corvallis, Bend and Eugene MPOs are too small to encompass many 'home-to-work' and business-generated travel patterns. The Medford MPO was identified as an MPO where commuting patterns are somewhat more consistent with MPO boundaries.

A related issue, identified by several interviewees, was that the federal definition of "urbanized area," used to determine MPO boundaries, is based on population density and contiguity. Because Oregon's land use laws use urban growth boundaries (UGBs) to limit sprawl, there is intervening farmland and other resource land between federally defined urbanized areas. The result is that MPO boundaries are often smaller than the actual urban travel shed, and MPOs cannot adequately address regional transportation and land use issues.

Several interviewees also pointed out that although federal regulations allow MPOs to expand their boundaries, there is a financial disincentive for expanding boundaries because the federal funding allocation to MPOs would not increase.

Interviewees indicated that ACT boundaries do a better job of coinciding with commuting patterns than MPO boundaries. This view was supported by the survey. Seventy-one (71%) of the survey respondents felt that ACT boundaries coincide with commuting patterns. This perception did not vary considerably between ACTs with MPOs and ACTs without MPOs.

However, interviewees indicated that commuting does occur across ACT boundaries along the I-5 corridor between Eugene-Albany-Salem. It also occurs between Salem and Portland (a non-ACT area) and between Yamhill County and Portland. The Mid-Willamette Valley ACT (MWACT) focus group participants provided an example of this problem. A significant amount of travel within the MWACT boundaries originates within or is destined for the Portland metropolitan area. Focus group participants did not feel that they could address the root causes of congestion in some MWACT communities without coordinating with the Portland METRO's Joint Policy Advisory Committee on transportation and regional travel issues.

### **3.1.2 Transportation Corridors**

The need for cross-boundary communication and coordination along transportation corridors was also an issue that was mentioned in the interviews and case studies.

Many of Oregon's major north-south and east-west corridors cross the geographic boundaries of multiple ACTs. For example: Hwy US-101 extends through three ACTs (Northwest Oregon, Cascade West, and Southwest), as well as Lane County; Hwy OR-97 extends through the Lower John Day, Central Oregon, and South Central Oregon ACTs; Hwy US-20 extends through the Cascade West, Central and Southeast ACTs.

In recognition of the importance of scenic byways to tourism, Northeast ACT (NEACT) developed a subcommittee on Scenic Byways to work with regional stakeholders (including local, state and federal governments, private sector interests and non-profit organizations) to enhance and maintain these corridors.

Mid-Willamette Valley ACT (MWACT) focus group participants mentioned that MWACT's central location made it susceptible to congestion originating outside MWACT boundaries. For example, the use of Hwy OR-99W for transportation between Portland, the Spirit Mountain Casino, and the Oregon Coast creates congestion in the communities of Newberg and Dundee.

Interviewees provided several examples of the benefits of cross-jurisdictional coordination along travel corridors. For example, they mentioned coordination between the Lower John Day, Central Oregon, and South Central Oregon ACTs to prioritize the reroute of Hwy OR-97 through Redmond as the number one priority for the region. Several interviewees in rural areas mentioned the importance of developing connectivity in rural areas between interstate highways, state highways, city and county roads, and roads on federal lands.

### 3.2 STIP PRIORITIZATION PROCESS

The Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) policy on ACTs states that one of their primary responsibilities are to provide recommendations to the OTC regarding funding allocations for the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), including prioritizing area modernization projects. The interviews, surveys and case studies, revealed that this is one of the clearest roles for ACTs. This role, which consumes a majority of their time, includes some of the best outcomes of ACT work, according to the surveys and interviews. Almost three quarters of respondents in the statewide survey believed that ACTs were effective or very effective in this role (see Table 3.1).

**Table 3.1: ACT Effectiveness in Prioritizing Area Modernization Project Recommendations for the STIP**

	<b>Effective or Very Effective</b>	<b>Neither Effective nor Ineffective</b>	<b>Ineffective or Very Ineffective</b>	<b>Not Sure</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
All ACTs	82.4%	12.2%	1.4%	4.1%	148
ACTs with an MPO	85.3%	11.8%	2.9%	0.0%	67
ACTs without an MPO	82.4%	13.5%	0.0%	4.1%	75

Opinions about the overall influence of ACTs was more tempered, with a little over half the respondents indicating they had a significant influence on the decision making of the Oregon Transportation Commission and the Oregon Department of Transportation (see Table 3.2)

**Table 3.2: ACT Influence on Decision Making**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Agree or Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree or Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Not Sure</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
The ACT has significant influence on the decision making of other organizations within the region	39%	26%	18%	17%	137
The ACT has significant influence on the decision making of the OTC	53%	19%	16%	12%	137
The ACT has significant influence on the decision making of ODOT	55%	17%	18%	10%	136

Interviewees who had been involved in transportation prioritization prior to the formation of ACTs indicated it was a significant improvement in terms of communication, information exchange and learning about transportation funding at the regional level. ACTs are generally successful in getting local buy-in for project priorities and funding allocations for STIP, *ConnectOregon* and Oregon Transportation Investment Act (OTIA), and for cutting projects to meet statewide budgets. Furthermore, as a result of their involvement with ACTs, participants understand more about regional needs, state priorities and funding constraints, and communicate more about other issues facing the region.

### 3.2.1 ACT Prioritization Process

ACT members were very positive about the information they were using to make their prioritization decisions, with 73% indicating they have access to high quality information and 77% indicating that the information/materials provided to the ACT are adequate to make informed decisions. When asked about information difficulties, respondents noted that the clarity and volume of the information received was sometimes a challenge, and requested more concise executive summaries.

ACTs and other regional bodies use a range of methods for identifying potential projects for STIP funding. ACT participants, MPOs, ODOT staff and local governmental agencies all play a role in recommending projects for the list. In some cases, the ACT develops the initial list and in other cases it is delegated to a technical sub-committee. Most proposed projects originate from plans such as local Transportation System Plans and Regional Transportation Plans, or are from program data and management systems.

The Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) provides a list of statewide criteria for STIP funding. The list is developed for the purpose of providing consistency across the state in project prioritization. As explained in the STIP Users' Guide (available on the ODOT website) (2008), all modernization projects must meet the STIP Eligibility Criteria and Prioritization Factors approved by the OTC for each STIP cycle. Individual ACTs may also adopt their own criteria to aid in project selection, as long as the criteria do not conflict with the OTC-adopted statewide criteria. For example, some ACTs have weighted congestion as a higher priority. Other ACTs have added additional criteria, such as prior project commitments and regional equity of funding. ACTs have the option to revise their additional criteria every STIP cycle.

In reaching decisions about priorities, many ACTs have developed ways of resolving conflicts and producing equitable outcomes, which are often based on institutional memory. For example, several ACTs utilize a "trade-off" process, in which an ACT member agrees to support a project within a particular jurisdiction one year, with the understanding that a project in another jurisdiction will be funded in a subsequent year. This is often required when statewide funds are limited and when the particular transportation projects require significant investments.

Differences also arise over the expenditures in rural and urban portions of the ACT. Participants in the Mid-Willamette ACT noted that projects in rural areas tended to have lower benefit to cost ratios than urban projects, but they believed it was important to support them for equity reasons. In the past, the Rogue Valley ACT has dealt with conflicts in the allocation of funding between the two counties included within its boundaries, Jackson and Josephine. In response they developed a formal equity resolution that allocates a 70/30 funding split between the counties based on population, vehicle miles traveled (VMT), vehicle registration, and modernization needs. Although this has improved decision making in the region, members of the ACT noted that it is still difficult to achieve an exact 70/30 split.

Another role of ACTs in the prioritization process is to help develop funding partnerships for transportation improvement projects. The study found that ACTs have had limited success with developing these partnerships. Only 39% of survey respondents indicated that ACTs have had a significant influence on decision making of other organizations in their region. The majority of

leveraging and partnerships occurs with local governments in the region, whose financial or in-kind support for projects lead to a higher ranking on the project priorities list. For example, there was \$15 million in local commitment to a South Medford interchange project. In another example, the Newberg-Dundee bypass project was supported financially by the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde. However, the limited budgets of cities and counties, and the difficulty of timing partnership investment with the STIP process, limits the number of funding partnerships.

### **3.2.2 State and Regional Prioritization Process**

One of the issues raised by ACT members was the process by which the OTC and ODOT prioritized projects within the ODOT Regions and on a statewide basis. Some concerns were expressed in the survey and interviews about the amalgamation of STIP priorities from multiple ACTs. Some ACT members were concerned that adding additional criteria or weighting factors at the ACT level might increase a project's priority within an ACT, but decrease its statewide ranking. Some ACT participants indicated they were unclear about how these ODOT Region prioritizations were made.

There is variation in the approach used by each of the five ODOT Regions to develop the region-wide project prioritization recommendations. In general, ODOT Region staff work with the ACTs to resolve differences and reach agreement. As an example, in Region 2, ODOT staff conducts "All Area" meetings that consist of the chairs and co-chairs of the three ACTs and Lane County representatives. Prior to these meetings, ODOT staff review the priorities from the ACTs and Lane County, and distribute the draft priorities for all of Region 2. The ACT and the Lane County representatives then discuss these priorities at the All-Area meeting. ACT interviewees involved in this process believed it was effective for making decisions and increasing communication between ACTs and ODOT. However, cross-ACT prioritization was difficult because some ACTs use additional criteria or weight ODOT criteria in varying ways.

As a result of regional needs, there have also been several examples of ACTs coordinating with each other on project priorities. For example the Rogue Valley ACT (RVACT) agreed to contribute funds to a Southwest ACT (SWACT) interchange project with the understanding that SWACT would contribute to an RVACT's project in the next STIP cycle. The Lower John Day, Central Oregon, and South Central Oregon ACTs all worked together to prioritize the reroute of Highway OR-97 through Redmond as the number one priority for the region.

Although participants indicated that the current STIP process is significantly better than prior approaches, there were still areas where they believed it was lacking. Most commonly cited was a need to provide better feedback to ACT members once their priorities are sent to the OTC. Some participants were not clear how the OTC made their decisions or the rationale for why certain projects were not funded. STIP guidelines were developed to provide greater consistency across the state in project prioritization. The use of optional, locally-generated prioritization criteria is an issue that ODOT may need to review.

## **3.3 REPRESENTATION & STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT**



One of the goals of ACTs is to create a forum for public and stakeholder involvement in transportation investment decision making. The findings from the interviews, case studies and survey indicate that the ACTs have generally provided a good forum for bringing together a range of local representatives. Seventy percent (70%) of the survey respondents agreed with the statement that ACTs were structured so that all appropriate interests were represented, and only 11% disagreed. Furthermore, 80% of respondents believed that participants were committed to the ACT and its mission, with only 1% indicating they were not committed. In interviews and written comments, participants also noted that ACTs provided an improved approach for local interests to be involved in transportation investment decisions.

**Table 3.3: ACT Representation and Commitment**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Agree or Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree or Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Not Sure</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
The ACT is structured so that all appropriate interests are represented	70%	16%	11%	4%	138
The ACT participants are committed to the group and its mission	80%	17%	1%	2%	139

### **3.3.1 Stakeholders Represented**

In reviewing the ACT memberships, the research team found a wide range of approaches to structuring membership. The size of most ACTs fell between 17 and 24 voting members, with the most common types of members representing:

- Counties
- Cities
- Private sector or at large
- Tribes
- ODOT Area Managers
- Transit districts
- Ports

The ACTs also involve a large number of non-voting members that includes state agency staff, representatives from neighboring ACTs, legislators, local officials, and representatives from other states.

The differences in stakeholder composition are most often accounted for in the way in which local governments are represented. For example, of the 26 voting members of the South Central Oregon ACT, six are county representatives (representing Klamath and Lake Counties) and seven are individuals representing the seven cities in the region. In contrast, the South East ACT is governed by a 19 member committee, with 11 people representing the three counties and three

members representing the 17 cities in the region. The Mid-Willamette Valley ACT, which has 36 cities and three counties within its region, divided the region into five transportation corridors and created one seat for each of the five board members to represent these five corridors.

Based on the review of the meeting minutes, four of the 10 ACTs have MPO representatives who attend the ACT meetings. The ways in which this MPO representation is structured varies, but participants noted that this structure had an important effect. For example, in the Rogue Valley, one ACT member is a formal representative of the Rogue Valley MPO (RVMPO); currently this member is the Chair of the MPO Policy Committee. Other MPO members on the ACT primarily represent their home jurisdiction. In the Mid-Willamette Valley, the ACT includes all members of the MPO; these members represent the Salem Keizer Area Transportation Study (SKAT). In this instance, there is no one member who is designated as the MPO representative, because each member tends to represent their own jurisdiction and thus no MPO-wide perspective is provided.

### 3.3.2 Public & Private Sector Representation

Another goal of ACTs is to provide a forum for public input and interaction with the private sector. As noted in Table 3.4, a majority of survey respondents believed that ACTs were creating these opportunities, although they assessed this role less positively than other outcomes of the ACTs. Overall, some of the interests that survey respondents identified as not being well represented include: private business interests, multi-modal interests (air, rail, freight, bike and pedestrian), land use interests and tribal governments.

**Table 3.4: ACT Public and Private Sector Involvement**

Question	Agree or Strongly Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree or Strongly Disagree	Not Sure	Response Count
The ACT creates opportunities for communication between the public and private sectors	64%	23%	10%	3%	137
The ACT provides opportunities for public input and involvement	69%	23%	7%	5%	137
The ACT adequately considers public input	64%	24%	7%	5%	135

Most ACTs involve the public by providing opportunities for public comment at meetings and by including citizen or private sector positions on the governing board. However, they do not participate in active outreach to the public, and there is generally little public involvement at meetings. Interviews indicate that the general public has limited involvement in ACT meetings except through their elected local government representatives. Participants also noted that opportunities for public involvement are limited because meetings are usually held during working hours, and because the public often does not understand the transportation funding process or the roles played by the ACTs or the MPOs.

However, other interviewees noted that public involvement can also occur outside of ACT meetings. Some individuals said that the ACTs have provided a way for a core group of individuals from government and the private sector to become educated about a range of

transportation issues. These ACT members then communicate and share their knowledge with a broader group of people through their day-to-day interactions, or by making presentations.

The representation of citizen and private sector interests in ACTs ranges from two to seven positions on the governing board. These representatives include individual citizens, business owners, university representatives, and others with education interests. The Northeast and Northwest ACTs have “at-large” positions that provide opportunities for citizen and private sector representation. In the case of the Northeast ACT, the five at-large members are appointed by the five counties with the commissioners asked to ensure that ACT membership includes representatives “from the mandated constituencies and provides a well balanced perspective on transportation in their county” (*NEACT Bylaws 2006*).

In interviews and survey comments, respondents indicated that private sector involvement was important because the group offered important perspectives. However, it was acknowledged that it was generally difficult to engage them in the process because the process sometimes appears bureaucratic, is long-term, and addresses regional issues. The relevance for many citizens and private sector interests is often not clear. However, several respondents pointed out that many elected officials involved with ACTs are from the private sector themselves, and offer this perspective. In Lane County and the Portland Metro (JPACT), where ACTs have not been formed, advisory committees are used to gain private sector perspectives.

### **3.4 COMMUNICATION & COORDINATION**

The OTC policy that created ACTs emphasized the important role ACTs play in communication and coordination. One of the primary roles of the ACTs is providing a forum to advance the public’s awareness and understanding, among transportation stakeholders, of transportation issues. Coordination is also identified as a primary obligation of the ACTs. ACTs are asked to coordinate across jurisdictions to ensure that their recommendations have been reviewed for local, regional and statewide issues and perspectives.

#### **3.4.1 Communication & Coordination within ACTs**

Online survey respondents and interviewees indicated that there is good communication among ACT members and that ACTs have created new opportunities for communication that have resulted in better understanding of transportation issues and problems, and increased cross-jurisdictional coordination on transportation issues.

Survey respondents had very positive impressions about overall communication among ACT members. Over 80% of respondents agreed with the statements that “People in the ACT communicate openly with each other,” and “All members of the ACT are heard and understood by one another.” Most survey respondents were also positive about the way the ACTs worked, with almost 90% indicating they were well-facilitated, 85% rating communication positively, 70% indicating that it effectively resolved differences, and 60% rating decision making as clear.

Sixty-four percent (64%) of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that ACTs create opportunities for communication between the public and private sectors. However, only 37% of

respondents felt that the ACTs were effective or very effective in addressing issues across sectors.

Survey respondents also indicated that ACTs have improved communication between organizations. Sixty-seven percent (67%) of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that communication among organizations has improved as a result of the ACTs. A very high percentage of respondents (84%) agreed or strongly agreed that ACT participants' understanding of issues and problems had improved.

Many believe that cross-jurisdictional coordination on transportation issues has improved among the jurisdictions within ACTs. Seventy percent (70%) of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that cross-jurisdictional coordination on transportation issues among the jurisdictions within ACTs has improved. This opinion was also expressed by many of the interviewees and in the focus groups.

Although survey respondents indicated that coordination had improved, they were somewhat less positive about the effectiveness of those efforts. Forty-five percent (45%) of survey respondents felt that ACTs were effective or very effective in addressing cross-jurisdictional issues among different local governments. Forty-seven percent (47%) felt that ACTs were effective or very effective in addressing cross-jurisdictional issues between different levels of government.

### **3.4.2 Communication & Coordination Across ACTs**

Survey respondents and interviewees were asked about the occurrence, effectiveness, and mechanisms of coordination across ACTs.

A number of interviewees and focus group participants indicated that communication and coordination between adjacent ACTs could occur more frequently and be more effective. Survey respondents also indicated concerns about the frequency and effectiveness of coordination across ACTs. Only 37% of survey respondents indicated that their ACT coordinates with other ACTs. Forty-five percent (45%) of survey respondents did not know if their ACT coordinated with other ACTs. Less than 20% of respondents rated their ACTs communication and coordination with neighboring ACTs as effective or very effective; and 36% were unsure how to describe the communication. Respondents from ACTs without MPOs held more positive views about the effectiveness of ACT to ACT communication and coordination; respondents from ACTs with MPOs were less sure or believed it was not effective.

Coordination between ACTs occurs most commonly through ODOT staff. Seventy-one percent (71%) of survey respondents indicated that ODOT staff for their ACT coordinated with ODOT staff from one or more other ACTs, while 43% indicated that the ODOT staff for their ACT attended other ACT meetings. The second most common coordination mechanism for coordination between ACTs was joint meetings or having ACT representatives attend other ACT meetings. Each of these mechanisms was identified by 26% of survey respondents.

Survey respondents and interviewees mentioned the *ConnectOregon* process and the ODOT Region 2 "All Area" meetings as good examples of ACT-to-ACT coordination:

- ODOT required ACTs to join with neighboring ACTs to form ‘Super ACTs’ in order to participate in the *ConnectOregon* funding cycles, and held a statewide meeting with representatives of all ACTs to prioritize projects. Many viewed *ConnectOregon* as a successful process, particularly *ConnectOregon II* where pre-designated scoring criteria were used.
- ODOT Region 2 has convened an “All-Area” meeting where Region 2 ACT chairs and co-chairs and Lane County representatives came together to perform regional project prioritization for the STIP. ACTs and ODOT staff have learned that this regional meeting proceeds more smoothly when all ACTs interpret the Oregon Transportation Commission STIP criteria in the same way, and when ACTs share their top prioritization rankings prior to the meeting. Prior to the “All Area” meeting, ODOT staff goes to each Region 2 ACT to discuss the priorities of other Region 2 ACTs. ODOT staff also develops draft recommendations for Region 2 STIP priorities and distributes these recommendations to Region 2 ACTs before the regional meeting.

### 3.4.3 ACT to MPO Communication & Coordination

Survey respondents and interviewees from ACTs that contain Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) were asked about the occurrence, effectiveness, and mechanisms of coordination between their ACT and the MPO.

Survey responses indicate that coordination between ACTs and MPOs is occurring. A very high percentage (85%) of survey respondents indicated that their ACT was coordinating with the MPO. Furthermore, over half (59%) of the survey respondents rated this communication and coordination as effective or very effective.

However, survey respondents were slightly less positive about whether coordination between ACTs and MPOs enhances the ability of MPOs and ACTs to address transportation issues within the MPO boundary. Forty-four percent of all respondents (44%) said yes; 13% said no; 21% said partially and 23% did not know or were not sure.

Looking specifically at the Mid Willamette Valley ACT (MVACT) and Rogue Valley ACT (RVACT) case studies, 50% of the 24 RVACT respondents rated coordination and communication between RVACT and the MPO as effective or very effective, whereas slightly over 60% of the 16 MWACT respondents described communication and coordination between MWACT and the MPO as effective or very effective.

Survey respondents identified MPO representation on the ACT as the most common mechanism for ACT to MPO coordination; 80% of survey respondents from ACTs with MPOs indicated that their ACT had MPO representation. For example, MPO policy board members are members of both the Rogue Valley and Mid-Willamette Valley ACTs. Other common coordination mechanisms are shown in Table 3.5.

**Table 3.5: Coordination Methods Between ACTs and MPOs (n=35)**

<b>Coordination</b>	<b>Percent</b>
MPO representation on ACT	80%
One or more ACT representatives attend MPO meetings	60%
The ODOT liaison attends MPO meetings	57%
ODOT staff coordinate with other ODOT and MPO staff	46%
The ACT staff person attends other MPO meetings	37%
Joint ACT/MPO meetings	11%

Source: ODOT 2008 ACT Survey, Community Planning Workshop

Interviewees also identified two additional mechanisms for ACT to MPO coordination: shared staff and development of formal guidelines for interaction. The Mid-Willamette Valley ACT and the MPO share staff through the Mid-Willamette Council of Governments (MWCOG). Cascade West ACT bylaws and Corvallis MPO policies and guidelines describe how the ACT and MPO will interact on decision-making. In 2004, the Cascade West ACT and Corvallis MPO jointly adopted *ACT-MPO Coordination Protocols*.

Survey responses about the ways to improve coordination between ACTs and MPOs had three common themes:

- Better identification of roles and responsibilities between ACTs and MPOs
- Increasing the information sharing between the two, including reporting ACT/MPO activities at meetings and joint meetings
- More or better cross-staff utilization between ACTs and MPOs

Some interviewees noted that the expected future creation of new MPOs in Albany, Klamath Falls and Grants Pass would increase the need for communication between ACTs and MPOs.

### **3.4.4 ACT Coordination with Other Regional Entities**

Shared staff and joint meetings are methods used to coordinate between ACTs and other regional entities. For example, four ACTs (Central Oregon, Cascade West, Mid-Willamette Valley and Rogue Valley) share staff with a Council of Governments (COG); and four ACTs share staff with a regional partnership (Lower John Day, Northwest, South Central, and Southeast ACTs).

## **3.5 TRANSPORTATION POLICY & STRATEGIC INVESTMENT**

The Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) identified both mandatory and optional roles for the ACTs (see Chapter 2). The optional activities included: providing advice on corridor plans or transportation system plans (TSPs) that contain projects of regional significance; advising the OTC on state and regional policies; and reviewing projects and policies for other STIP funding programs including bridge, public transportation, freight and rail.

### **3.5.1 Transportation Policy**

The agendas and minutes of ACT meetings indicate that ACTs tend to focus primarily on project prioritization for the STIP. However, ACTs have also discussed ODOT policy and planning documents at their meetings, including policies on public involvement, earmarks, and the transportation enhancement program. ACTs were asked to review the Oregon Transportation Plan (OTP) when it was updated and were an important part of the OTP outreach process. ODOT staff visited each ACTs in-person; feedback was received at the meetings and through written comments. Other topics appearing on some ACT agendas included: scenic byways, economic development programs, and a variety of transportation modes such as rail and bicycle.

The online survey asked if there are other primary roles or activities that ACTs should be engaged in, in addition to the current roles outlined in the OTC's ACT policy document. Almost a quarter (22%) of respondents replied that ACTs should engage in additional primary roles, identifying that transportation policy was one of those roles. (It should be noted that the OTC currently lists policy review as an optional activity for ACTs.)

In the interviews conducted for this research project, some individuals identified that transportation policy and planning could benefit from more attention by ACTs. However, in ACTs with MPOs, several interviewees said that involving ACTs in transportation policy development could create confusion about the respective roles and responsibilities of ACTs and MPOs.

The timing of ACT involvement in OTC transportation policy development was an issue raised by some interviewees. ACTs typically meet bi-monthly, which often does not coincide with the OTC decision making timelines. Interviewees noted that ACTs are sometimes brought into OTC's policy-making process late, when there is little opportunity to affect policy, and that ACTs are not always given sufficient lead time for comment on OTC policies.

### **3.5.2 Transportation System & Multi-modal Perspective**

Some interviewees identified the need to understand and address transportation issues from a systems perspective and argued in favor of involving ACTs in the broader vision for the transportation system. They felt that ACTs focused too specifically on highways and highway modernization projects. Issues identified as needing more attention included transit and other alternatives to the automobile for providing mobility and access (e.g., bike and pedestrian).

For the most part, survey respondents had a positive view of ACT effectiveness in considering all modes and aspects of the transportation system. Over two-thirds of survey respondents (69%) said that ACTs were effective or very effective in considering all modes and aspects of the transportation system in formulating recommendations.

Interviewees and some focus group participants commented favorably on the *ConnectOregon* process, an initiative that involved ACTs in developing recommendations on multi-modal transportation infrastructure, such as rail and transit. Through *ConnectOregon* I and II, ACTs were involved, for the first time, in prioritizing multi-modal projects on a statewide basis. They

identified the *ConnectOregon* experience as an example of effective work and as an educational process that broadened the ACT perspective.

### **3.5.3 Strategic Investments**

Interviewees expressed differing opinions about project ‘trade offs’ that are made within an ACT when they select STIP projects. Some interviewees who were ACT members tended to characterize these ‘trade-offs’ in a positive light, emphasizing the benefits of building trust, resolving disagreements over STIP priorities, and equitable distribution of highway funds. However, other interviewees felt that the ACT process sometimes resulted in lower priority projects being selected over higher priority projects because it was a jurisdiction’s “turn” for a project.

Several interviewees stressed the need for investments in infrastructure to be as strategic as possible in order to make the most effective use of limited resources. Some noted that the process ACTs use to prioritize funding allocations for STIP projects may not result in the most strategic investments. Interviewees identified a number of factors that affect the ability of ACTs to make strategic investments, including the limited amount of available funding and the difficulty of balancing local priorities against projects of broader statewide significance. Several interviewees noted that there was a need for increased connection between transportation planning decisions and funding decisions. A few respondents also discussed the need for a strategic investment plan at the state and regional level.

### **3.5.4 Transportation & Land Use Integration**

Another issue that has arisen in transportation planning and project investment is the integration of transportation with land use planning. In the online survey, ACT effectiveness in integrating land use and transportation issues received a lower rating than ACT effectiveness in implementing OTC-defined roles. Nevertheless, 42% of survey respondents said ACTs were effective or very effective in integrating land use and transportation issues; 27% said neither effective nor ineffective; 19% said ineffective or very ineffective; and 12% said not sure.

In the interviews, some individuals identified the interaction between land use and transportation as a critical-cross jurisdictional transportation issue and voiced the opinion that ACTs should be paying more attention to land use-transportation coordination. They noted that separating transportation planning decisions from funding decisions has created a gap between the land uses that comprehensive plans anticipate and the funding for transportation infrastructure to support these uses. Several interviewees favored giving ACTs some responsibility and authority for transportation planning, while others raised concerns about expanding ACTs responsibilities and authority in this way.

Those concerned about expanding the role of ACTs, noted that MPOs are the regional transportation planning entities for their respective metropolitan areas. In their view, involving ACTs in transportation planning could increase the potential for overlap or conflict with MPO transportation planning efforts and create confusion over the relative transportation planning roles and responsibilities of ACTs and MPOs. Other concerns expressed about expanding the



role of ACTs were that it could demand too much time from ACT members, ODOT and ACT staff and that it would take time away from project prioritization and funding allocations.

## 4.0 COMPARATIVE PRACTICES

As noted in the literature review, cross-jurisdictional collaboration issues are common in public policy and planning. Over the past several years, there has been increasing emphasis on the structures and processes that allow organizations to work across these jurisdictions and address these kinds of problems. To help generate ideas and options for consideration in Oregon, the research team examined the literature and transportation planning in three states to identify some specific practices.

### 4.1 HIGHLIGHTS OF STATE COMPARATIVE STUDIES

The research team completed comparative studies of transportation planning and programming systems in California, Iowa and Washington. These states were chosen in consultation with the ODOT Technical Advisory Committee, because all have developed regional arrangements. The studies are based upon online research, document reviews, and 5-10 telephone interviews with participants from each state involved in the regional arrangements. A full summary of these cases is available in **Appendix D**.

#### 4.1.1 Washington

In 1990, Washington State legislature passed the Growth Management Act (GMA). The GMA established the Regional Transportation Planning Program, which requested the voluntary association of local governments into **Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs)**. The purpose of RTPOs is to create a formal mechanism for local governments and the state to ensure consistency and coordination in transportation planning and project prioritization for regional transportation facilities.

The Washington State regional transportation planning system is comprised of the Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT), 14 Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs), 10 Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), and the Tribal Transportation Planning Organization (TTPO).

Key highlights of the Washington system include:

- **Organizational integration of RTPOs and MPOs:** In Washington, RTPOs and MPOs use the same policy board for decision making.
- **Formal statewide meetings of regional planning organizations:** WSDOT holds quarterly meetings for all regional planning organizations in the state to coordinate activities and information.

- **The Tribal Transportation Planning Organization (TTPO):** Washington created the TTPO to more fully incorporate tribal participation in transportation planning and programming.
- **Dedicated funding for planning cross-boundary projects:** WSDOT offers funding to RTPOs that is dedicated to planning projects that cross multiple RTPO boundaries, in an effort to ensure these projects are not left out of planning efforts.

#### 4.1.2 Iowa

Iowa's transportation planning system is managed through a partnership involving the Iowa Department of Transportation (Iowa DOT), nine Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and 18 Regional Planning Affiliations (RPAs).

In its initial regional transportation planning, Iowa delineated areas outside MPO boundaries into 16 rural transit regions, which were each represented by a Council of Governments (COG). After the passage of the federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991, Iowa created a new process based on the existing rural transit regions. The new system created **Regional Planning Affiliations (RPAs)** to implement a relatively new method of collaboratively-based regional transportation planning for Iowa by including local governments in regional transportation planning, project prioritization and funding. Iowa established 18 RPAs, which conduct transportation planning and programming for all areas outside of MPOs.

Highlights of the Iowa system include:

- **Quarterly meetings:** The Iowa DOT holds quarterly meetings with directors and staff from all MPOs and RPAs to share information, train staff, and encourage regional collaboration.
- **Transportation Program Management System:** Iowa uses web-based Transportation Program Management System software to help keep RPAs and MPOs informed about the transportation improvement programming (TIP) process.
- **Institutionalized coordination:** RPAs and MPOs in Iowa are usually housed within the same Council of Governments (COG) and share staff, which encourages and facilitates coordination between the RPA and MPO.

#### 4.1.3 California

The California transportation planning system consists of the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), 18 Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), 26 Regional Transportation Planning Associations (RTPAs), and the California Transportation Commission.

State law requires areas to be represented by RTPAs, by agreement of cities and counties in each area. RTPAs are designated by the California Director of Transportation based on county boundaries and created from established regional agencies. These regional agencies can be a regional transportation planning agency (like an MPO), a Council of Governments, or a local transportation commission. Sometimes, particularly in small counties, the RTPA and a local

transportation commission are the same body, and their responsibilities are carried out by the county government. Most RTPAs share boundaries with one county; however, there are six variations on the formulation of RTPAs.

Key highlights of the RTPA system include:

- **RTPA configuration flexibility:** There is no one configuration for the relationship between RTPAs, MPOs, and counties. The configurations vary depending on the local needs of the region.
- **MPO and RTPA integration:** In most cases, MPOs, RTPAs, and COGs share the same boundaries and decision-making policy boards.
- **Scoring criteria:** Some RTPAs have criteria for scoring projects to help minimize political conflicts over project prioritization.
- **Regional funding authority:** The state has delegated, but not fully relinquished, funding authority for transportation projects to RTPAs.
- **Monthly coordination meetings:** Caltrans and the California Transportation Commission (CTC) coordinate monthly meetings for RTPAs to discuss statewide issues, items on the CTC agenda, and negotiate among themselves. There is also a monthly meeting for rural RTPAs to ensure rural representation at the statewide level.

#### 4.1.4 Summary

Across the comparative studies, the research identified several practices that are present in at least two of the transportation planning systems. These include:

- **Planning:** Unlike the ACTs, regional organizations in California, Iowa, and Washington have the authority and mandate to perform planning duties in addition to project prioritization.
- **Statewide coordinating meetings:** All three of the comparative study states have statewide coordinating meetings for their regional organizations.
- **Common MPO/regional policy board membership:** Washington and some of California's regional organizations share the same policy board membership with their local MPO.
- **Funding authority:** Regional organizations in California, Iowa and Washington tend to have greater final decision making authority on project funding allocations than Oregon's ACTs.
- **Use of information technology:** Iowa and California use a web-based system that allows easy access to the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) process by all involved parties

**Table 4.1: Regional Planning Practices in California, Iowa, Washington and Oregon**

	California	Iowa	Washington	Oregon
<b>Regional organization has transportation planning responsibilities</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	None
<b>Private sector representation on regional policy board</b>	No, but occurs in advisory committees	No, but occurs in advisory committees	Some regional policy board have private sector members	Yes
<b>Statewide coordinating meetings</b>	Monthly	Quarterly	Quarterly	None
<b>Web based software used to facilitate project prioritization</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
<b>Integration of regional organization and MPO</b>	Yes, with several exceptions	No, but usually housed in same organization	No, even where RTPOs and MPOs are run by the same organization they are rarely coterminous	No, but usually overlap in policy board membership
<b>Special funds for planning across regional boundaries</b>	Yes	No	Yes	No
<b>Majority of public involvement and project deliberation occurs in subcommittees</b>	Yes	Yes	No, the majority of public involvement occurs at the local jurisdiction and during the MPO TIP approval process	No
<b>Examples of non-transportation responsibilities assigned to some regional organizations</b>	Housing, airports, hazardous waste, air quality, water quality, solid waste, econ. development, financial services, sales tax authority	Rural water, sewage, landfills, housing, main street, CDBG, other grants	Economic development occurs in regional organizations with co-managed organizational missions	None

Source: Community Planning Workshop

## 4.2 COLLABORATIVE PRACTICES

To identify potential options for cross-jurisdictional collaboration in Oregon, the research team reviewed the literature from fields such as urban planning, transportation, and environmental management. This review focused on the elements of effective consensus building, and the factors supporting ongoing collaboration. A full synthesis of this review is provided in **Appendix E**.

### 4.2.1 Elements of Effective Consensus Building

The following summary lists some of the common findings related to effective consensus building from the review of the literature by the research team.

**Structure:**

- Group has appropriately defined scope and authority
- Appropriate scale has been developed for problems that the group is addressing
- Role of group has been clearly defined

**Commitment:**

- Committed participants
- Committed organizations

**Process:**

- Well facilitated process and effective leadership
- Adequate support for consensus building efforts
- Open communication among participants
- High quality information
- Clear decision making rules
- Well focused process

**Outputs/ Outcomes**

- High quality products
- Improved communication among participants
- Improved understanding of issues and perspectives
- Influence on decision making of important parties
- Improved coordination among participants

In addition to the factors affecting consensus building among the stakeholders involved in Oregon's ACTs, the research also identified the question of how cross-jurisdictional efforts are sustained over time. Sustained efforts extend beyond the role of stakeholders to the array of organizations and leaders involved in transportation in Oregon. Furthermore, because ACTs are advisory bodies to the Oregon Department of Transportation, this raises unique questions about how ODOT approached the role of this group.

**4.2.2 Elements of Sustaining Cross-Jurisdictional Collaboratives*****Support from Leaders***

While collaborative efforts emphasize horizontal governance and broad-based stakeholder involvement, it is also important for there to be support from agency and political leaders for these efforts. This kind of leadership ensures that the agencies participating in the efforts are engaged and committed. It also ensures that the

collaborative efforts are incorporated into decision making. There are a number of examples from the literature where cross-jurisdictional issues have succeeded or failed due to the extent of high-level champions' willingness to lend support (*Connell 2007; Little Hoover Commission 2005*).

There is also evidence that leaders from the government, private sector and civic sector can be effective conveners and chairs of collaborative groups, helping to legitimize the process and bring parties together across all sectors. This has been demonstrated, in part, through the work of Oregon Solutions ([www.orsolutions.org](http://www.orsolutions.org)).

### ***Clear Goals and Scope***

One of the common lessons identified across a number of case studies is for cross-jurisdictional arrangements to have clear scope and authority. Because so many issues are interconnected, there is a significant potential for participants to have different views about what should be included and not included (*Beierle and Konisky 2000; Selin et al. 2000*). For example, a number of watershed councils have emphasized the need to focus on the core goals of the group, and not to engage in “mission creep” that would lessen the impact on those core goals.

### ***Shared Power of the Collaborative***

One of the central principles of collaborative decision making is that participants share power in decision making. This means that the authority of the group needs to be clear, and in particular, the extent of authority granted to the collaborative. This authority is often informal, meaning that participants agree to use the consensus of the group to make decisions rather than making them independently. For example, the literature cites several examples where agencies agreed to review priorities or permits collectively before they made their individual decisions (*Beierle and Konisky 2000; Margerum 1999*).

### ***Nested Collaboration Structures***

There has been increasing attention in the literature to the need to coordinate across larger regions, including regions that may contain several different collaborative groups. One approach has been to create structures that allow collaborative groups to come together and resolve decision making at a higher level. For example, there are several river basin collaboratives that are composed of agencies and watershed councils. The councils are themselves collaborative groups, but they focus on more on-the-ground issues. By participating in a river basin scale effort they have greater access to agency decision makers, share information across jurisdictions, and can help identify strategic directions across the entire basin (*Heikkila and Gerlak 2005; Innes, Connick, and Booher 2007; Margerum and Whitall 2004*).

### ***Supportive Funding Arrangements***

Funding collaborative efforts is often difficult, because it is not central to any one organization—the issues they address often cut across different organizations and

jurisdictions. There are a number of examples of experiments with alternative funding arrangements to overcome these issues. In many cases, government agencies fund the collaborative efforts directly, usually providing base operational funding and competitive grant funding. It is also common to provide incentives for cost-sharing on competitive grants. This provides an incentive for organizations to work together, and an incentive to develop partnerships around projects. In other cases, several agencies allocate resources directly to the collaborative, which are then reallocated by the group. This ensures that the group has funding from which to undertake efforts, and helps ensure commitment among those contributing resources. To address larger scale, cross-regional problems, there are several examples of where special allocations are used to address these kinds of issues and encourage collaboration across different groups (similar to the *ConnectOregon* process used by ACTs). However, this kind of strategic investment must have clear goals and criteria to ensure they are addressing the highest needs (*Leach and Pelkey 2001; Rog et al. 2004*).

### ***Strategic Decisions versus Coordination***

As collaboration matures, one of the issues groups confront is their role as strategic decision makers versus ongoing coordination roles that may be needed to support implementation efforts. The coordination issues for staff of participating organizations to share data and details can be quite different from the strategic decisions facing collaboration participants. For example, in the area of social services there are many examples of staff working to develop data sharing and client referral systems among the myriad of public and private organizations. These kind of detailed coordination procedures are quite different from discussions among the directors of these organizations regarding who they are serving, what programs they are developing, and where there may be gaps or overlaps in the missions of the various organizations (*Colby and Murrell 1998; Darlington, Feeney, and Rixon 2005*). However, both strategic decision making and coordination of participating organizations are important to sustaining the ongoing efforts of a collaborative.

### ***Cross Group Learning***

Another common lesson from many collaborative efforts is that there are opportunities for considerable learning across groups. Each group develops unique practices, approaches, and methods and the extent to which they can share these, rather than “reinventing the wheel,” has allowed innovative practices to spread quickly. This cross-group learning is often carried out through state or regional meetings, conferences and forums, and training programs (*Julian 1994; Lasker, Weiss, and Miller 2001; Mattessich et al. 2004*). In Oregon, concerns about the need for better cross group learning among watershed councils was one motivation for the creation of the Oregon Network of Watershed Councils.





## 5.0 OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

In summary, the findings of this research study indicate that ODOT's Area Commissions on Transportation (ACTs) are functioning reasonably well and are fulfilling most of the roles identified for them in the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) Policy on ACTs. Many participants are very positive about what ACTs have accomplished, including the sharing of knowledge about regional transportation issues, reaching agreement on project priorities for the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), and finding ways to leverage funding across jurisdictions.

Based on the online survey, interviews, and case and comparative studies, the research team has developed options for ODOT and the OTC to consider that could enhance the effectiveness of ACTs and MPOs in addressing travel shed, and other regional, cross-jurisdictional, transportation issues. The options presented in this chapter are preliminary and reflect considerations put forward by the research team and other stakeholders and do not necessarily represent consensus or even majority recommendations. The options presented merit further consideration.

Several options relate to more than one issue or topic. Some of the options would require structural and/or policy changes and all options will require further development, analysis, and review by key stakeholders. In addition, implementation of many of the options would involve the commitment of additional funding and staff resources.

**Important: This is a research report and not a policy analysis document. The options in this section represent potentially viable options identified by the research team that will require further analysis and development.**

### 5.1 COORDINATION & COMMUNICATION

One of the primary responsibilities assigned to ACTs by the Oregon Transportation Commission is to communicate and coordinate regional priorities with other organizations, including other ACTs, MPOs, Economic Revitalization Teams, Regional Partnerships and ODOT Advisory committees.

This research study found that ACTs have made a positive difference in how jurisdictions communicate and coordinate within individual ACTs, especially on STIP project prioritization. However, the research findings also show that there is room for improvement in ACT to ACT, ACT to OTC, as well as ACT to MPO communication and coordination.

### **5.1.1 Improve Coordination & Communication across ACTs**

Create additional opportunities for ACTs to share information and discuss transportation issues that cross ACT boundaries, such as:

- Annual statewide meeting of ACT chairs (and possibly other ACT members), convened by the ODOT Director or OTC.
- All-region or multi-region meetings of ACTs that could address project prioritization (STIP, *ConnectOregon*, etc.) and/or other issues.
- Forums for ACTs to work together within and across ODOT Regions on travel sheds, transportation corridors or larger regional transportation issues.

### **5.1.2 Improve ACT-MPO Coordination**

Coordination of ACTs and MPOs could be improved through a variety of approaches. The following options could be pursued separately or in combination:

- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of MPOs and ACTs.
- Offer technical assistance for individual ACTs and MPOs to help them develop guidelines for ACT and MPO interaction on decision-making.
- Develop a state strategy and criteria for formation of new MPOs that considers state and local interests as well as fiscal constraints.
- Improve communication among MPOs and ACTs through shared staffing (e.g., through Councils of Governments).
- Experiment with meetings of all ACTs and MPOs within a particular region of the state (e.g., Willamette Valley or along a highway corridor).
- Establish guidelines for MPO representation on ACTs.

### **5.1.3 Maintain and Improve ACT-OTC Communications**

To ensure adequate flow of information between ACTs and the OTC, the following options were identified:

- Continue recent practice of OTC meetings with ACTs ‘in the field’ to ensure opportunities for direct communication between ACTs and Commission members.
- Increase feedback from the OTC to ACTs about statewide decisions and ACT recommendations; this could be accomplished by a letter from the OTC Chair or ODOT Director to the ACT chairs, or at an annual meeting of the ACTs.

## **5.2 TRAVEL SHED & BOUNDARY ISSUES**

In urban areas, travel sheds are often larger than city and MPO boundaries. In some cases, travel patterns for home to work commuting, and business and shopping purposes, extend beyond the

boundaries of ACTs. Transportation planning, project development, and the delivery of transit services require coordination among multiple local government jurisdictions and service providers within a travel shed.

In rural areas, increasing traffic to and from tourist destinations creates challenges that require the state, local jurisdictions, and private-sector interests to work together. In addition, freight corridors (highway and rail) cross through many jurisdictions, ACTs and ODOT regions.

These travel shed and transportation corridor issues are not currently an explicit primary role of ACTs. However, they relate to several primary and optional responsibilities of many ACTs, including coordination of regional priorities and state and regional policy advice. Furthermore, in both interviews and the survey, respondents commented on the opportunities that ACTs offered to better integrate project funding with regional travel and corridor decision making.

There are a variety of options for improving how state, regional and local governments deal with the challenges of travel sheds and corridors. Some of the options presented in this subsection could require policy or structural changes.

### **5.2.1 Evaluate alternative mechanisms for addressing metropolitan area travel shed issues including the roles and responsibilities of MPOs and ACTs.**

Evaluating opportunities for increasing the effectiveness of MPOs and ACTs in urban travel sheds could potentially include: expanding MPO boundaries, developing additional mechanisms for involving stakeholder groups, and/or increasing shared membership and staffing of MPOs and ACTs.

Additional analysis and discussion of the formation of multiple MPOs in a region is also needed. This has created problems in some parts of the country, such as Florida. There are several areas in Oregon where this could occur, such as the Cascade West ACT area, where Albany is approaching the population threshold for MPO formation.

The Oregon MPO Consortium (OMPOC) and ODOT could collaborate on this analysis.

### **5.2.2 Evaluate the experience of regional transportation planning organizations in other states, such as the RTPOs in Washington State, and analyze the possible applicability to the work of ACTs and MPOs in Oregon.**

In rural areas, the responsibilities of ACTs could be expanded to include some transportation planning functions, similar to the roles of RTPOs in Washington State.

In urban areas of Washington, 10 of the RTPOs are integrated with an MPO and the same policy board serves both organizations. If applied to urban areas in Oregon, this structure could create a more integrated transportation planning approach by extending coordination beyond MPO boundaries.

### **5.2.3 Review the ODOT corridor planning and transportation facility planning process and consider updating and creating plans with the participation of ACTs along those corridors**

ODOT's "Policy on Formation and Operation of the Area Commissions on Transportation" identifies *providing advice on ODOT Corridor Plans* as an optional activity of the ACTs. In the past, corridor plans have been used in conjunction with other planning efforts to develop the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and to develop specific transportation improvement projects. In the 1990s, corridor planning became a significant initiative of ODOT. There has been shift in focus to transportation facility planning. It may be productive to select a few high priority corridors or facilities where cross-jurisdictional cooperation is especially needed, and involve the ACTs along that corridor or facility.

### **5.2.4 Develop an investment initiative that would provide special funding for travel sheds or transportation corridors as an incentive for coordination across jurisdictions**

An investment program focused on certain travel sheds and transportation corridors could respond to some of the more difficult cross-regional transportation issues in Oregon (see also option in section 5.5.1). In Washington, RTPOs have access to a "discretionary grant program for special regional planning projects, including grants to allow counties which have significant transportation interests in common with an adjoining region to also participate in that region's planning efforts."<sup>1</sup> The grant provides a limited amount of state level funding that supplements funding that RTPOs already receive and stimulates collaborative planning projects that cross regional boundaries.

## **5.3 REPRESENTATION & STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT**

As listed in the OTC policy, a primary responsibility for ACTs is to "provide a forum to advance the public's awareness and understanding among transportation stakeholders of transportation issues" and "increase stakeholder support for and commitment to projects". To accomplish this, ACTs involve a variety of jurisdictions and interests as full members, ex-officio members, or on advisory committees. The OTC policy specifically calls for City, County and MPO elected officials to be represented, along with tribal governments, port and transit officials. The remainder of the representation is to come from interested stakeholders, who can include a broad range of interests, including, but not limited to: freight, bike, pedestrian, environmental, businesses, local citizens, education, and non-profits.

There is variability in the way that individual ACTs structure membership; maintaining this flexibility may be prudent so that ACTs can respond to the particular circumstances of a region. However, some questions and concerns were raised about ACT membership during the course of

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<sup>1</sup> RCW 47.80.050 "Allocation of regional transportation planning funds" [www.msdc.org](http://www.msdc.org)

this research study, such as whether ACTs should be required to have private sector or other non-elected representatives as voting members, and whether all relevant interests are at the table.

### **5.3.1 Reexamine ACT membership and clarify the required and optional standards for membership.**

This research study provides information about how different ACTs have dealt with representation and stakeholder involvement in varying ways. This information can be the basis for discussion and further exploration by ODOT staff, ACTs, and areas without ACTs, of the issues and opportunities related to representation and participation.

Questions that should be considered in the reexamination of ACT membership include:

- Are there ways to improve/increase private sector representation and participation?
- Should other stakeholder groups be included that are not currently represented?
- Is there a way to increase tribal participation?
- Are ACTs taking advantage of opportunities to involve all levels of government—including federal and state agencies?
- Can private sector, not for profit and citizen representation be accomplished as well through advisory committees?
- If ACTs are given more responsibility in the transportation planning process (see Section 5.4), what additional responsibilities should they have and how would that affect membership?

### **5.3.2 Create venues for ACTs to meet periodically with various ODOT advisory committees , such as the Freight Advisory Committee and Public Transit Advisory Committee.**

These venues would help ensure that ACT members are well informed about both freight and transit issues. It would also provide additional input to those advisory committees from ACTs throughout the state.

### **5.3.3 Improve coordination between ACTs and federal land management agencies.**

In both rural and urban areas, explore opportunities for ACTs to work with federal land management agencies to improve the connectivity of city, county, state and federal road systems. Determine when the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the US Forest Service (USFS) should be included as ex-officio ACT members.

## **5.4 POLICY & PLANNING**

Currently, ACTs primarily engage in project prioritization for the STIP. ACTs are also asked periodically to review and comment on ODOT policy documents, such as the Oregon Transportation Plan (OTP) update, various modal plans, and other policies. In addition, the OTC Policy on ACTs (2003) identifies, as an optional activity, providing advice on ODOT Corridor Plans or Transportation System Plans (TSPs) that contain projects of regional significance. For the most part, ACTs are not currently doing this.

This research study confirms that a number of transportation problems are multi-jurisdictional in nature, clearly going beyond local TSP boundaries, and requiring broader system/multi-modal solutions. The research team found that although ACTs are working effectively on STIP project prioritization, broader transportation planning is not occurring on a regional basis.

The following options are suggested as ways of enhancing the role of ACTs in transportation planning. Some of these options would require the commitment of more time on the part of ACT members and local jurisdictions, as well as additional staff support. It should be noted that some of the individuals interviewed for this research study questioned whether ACTs currently have the capacity to take on additional responsibilities.

### **5.4.1 Involve ACTs earlier in reviewing ODOT policy documents and provide more lead time for comments.**

In some instances, ACT members were concerned that there was not adequate time to review ODOT policy documents. Providing this additional lead time could require earlier distribution of materials to ACT members, and/or having ACTs meet more frequently or in special meetings.

### **5.4.2 Consider providing opportunities for ACTs to review county, city and MPO transportation system plans that contain transportation projects of regional significance.**

This review is already identified by the OTC as an optional activity for ACTs. It could help inform ACTs about the need for particular projects and provide additional context for project prioritization. The review could include a consideration of how TSPs might affect regionally significant projects and vice versa. The processes for accomplishing this would require ACTs to work within the local government adoption process.

### **5.4.3 Consider ways for ACTs to participate in regional transportation planning.**

Because MPOs do not have planning authority outside of their boundaries, participation by ACTs in regional transportation planning could help to address transportation issues that exist outside of MPO boundaries in the 'greater regions' that surround urban centers. In order to effectively address the development patterns and land use-transportation interactions that affect travel behavior, regional collaboration is needed across jurisdictional boundaries in travel sheds.

Increased involvement by ACTs in regional transportation planning could also improve the STIP project prioritization process in both urban and rural areas by exposing ACT members to the longer-term transportation planning discussions. Local governments within each ACT could share, review and discuss their local comprehensive plans (including Transportation System Plans) to increase understanding of land use and transportation interactions within the ACT area and with neighboring ACTs.

The scope of ACT involvement in regional transportation planning would need to be carefully considered so that it was consistent with the authority of existing governmental entities such as counties or MPOs.

## **5.5 STIP PRIORITIZATION PROCESS**

### **5.5.1 Provide incentives for cross-ACT coordination through special funding for transportation projects.**

An ODOT program could be developed to target special projects that are cross-regional in nature. Such a program could be designed to create incentives for ACT to ACT coordination and ACT to MPO coordination, similar to the *ConnectOregon* process.

### **5.5.2 Clarify prioritization criteria at the state and ODOT region level and provide guidance on the use of additional criteria by individual ACTs.**

Currently, every ODOT Region publishes a Modernization Project Criteria Summary Report that describes the additional criteria they use in prioritization of STIP projects. ODOT also provides a STIP Users Guide that describes how additional criteria may be used in the prioritization process. Despite the publication of these documents, the research revealed some confusion about how ACT prioritizations were aggregated at the ODOT region and state levels, including the effect that different local criteria had on prioritization. Clearer criteria and training about the use of the criteria could reduce confusion about area and state project prioritization. The OTC could also consider other types of procedures to improve the process. For example, in Iowa, the Regional Planning Agencies (RPAs) are given a second opportunity to review their STIP project recommendations after their initial recommendations are vetted at the state level. This allows the state and RPA to engage in two-way communication regarding STIP recommendations.



## **5.6 REVIEWING & REFINING THE OPTIONS**

This report contains an array of options that were identified by the research team from the interviews, surveys, and case study research. The options generally fall into two categories: (1) those that maintain the ACT structure as it currently exists and make improvements to processes, practices and communication; and (2) the options that could involve some kind of restructuring of ACT powers, jurisdiction or boundaries. All of the options will require additional consultation and refinement, but those in the second category would need additional review and development. Some of these options also have implications for other organizations (such as MPOs) and other agencies (such as the Department of Land Conservation and Development). The further development of some of these options may involve consideration of policy changes or adoption of administrative rules.

### **5.6.1 For options that build upon the current ACT structure, ODOT could develop and prioritize a set of tasks to improve processes and procedures.**

- The research report findings and options could be the subject of a meeting or meetings convened by ODOT with ACT representatives from around the state.
- ODOT Area and Region Managers could meet to review report findings and discuss and refine options.
- A document on ‘Best Practices’ for working with ACTs could be developed as a follow up to this report and be distributed to ODOT Area and Region Managers and to other staff that support the work of the ACTs. This could also be an interactive, web-based application that allows ongoing contributions of ideas.
- ODOT’s Transportation Development Division will be developing a public involvement handbook during the next year. A section about how to better utilize ACTs in the public involvement process could be included in the handbook.
- The findings and options of this research study could be discussed with the ODOT STIP Stakeholder Committee (next meeting in early 2009). The committee consists of representatives from cities, counties, MPOs, and other stakeholders (such as the AAA, Oregon Trucking Association, ACTs, FHWA, the Economic Revitalization Team, the Oregon Freight Advisory Committee and Public Transit Advisory Committee). The committee could provide input and recommendations on the various options, including options that involve policy considerations.

### **5.6.2 For options that could involve policy changes or restructuring in ACTs and related organizations, the OTC and ODOT should consider developing those options through additional studies, internal review, and through collaborative processes and partnerships with several external**

- Consider initiating a joint discussion between the Oregon Metropolitan Planning Organization Consortium (OMPOC) and the Oregon Transportation Commission to explore the relationships between ACTs and MPOs and how they can work together more effectively to address travel shed issues in the larger urban regions of the state.

- Conduct additional research on other state practices relating to regional transportation planning and decision making. This research would build on the comparative case studies of Washington, California and Iowa summarized in Chapter 4. (See also Chapter 6—Topics for Future Research.)
- Consider initiating a joint discussion between the Oregon Transportation Commission and the Land Conservation and Development Commission about the role of ACTs in regional transportation planning.



## 6.0 TOPICS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The focus of this research project was to examine the roles of Area Commissions on Transportation and assess their experiences in addressing cross-jurisdictional and cross-sector issues. In the course of the interviews, surveys and meetings conducted for this project, the research team identified several topics that warrant additional research; these are highlighted below.

**Comparative State Practices:** To understand more about the options for transportation planning and decision making at a regional scale, the research team investigated the approaches in the states of Washington, California and Iowa. These case reviews provided valuable insights into other approaches, but the research did not involve an assessment of how well this approach was working. Additional research could identify the full range of approaches used across the United States and conduct an assessment of these structures for addressing cross-jurisdictional issues. This could be carried out in conjunction with the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) and the Departments of Transportation from other states. This would best be conducted using methods similar to this ODOT ACT study, and could include an abbreviated version of the online survey, phone interviews, and case studies.

**Strategic Investment and Land Use Integration:** The need for a more strategic approach to transportation investment and better integration of land use and transportation planning was identified by several sources during the course the study. Similar issues have arisen in the Oregon Big Look Task Force and in transportation and land use studies in other states. One question arising from this study is how Oregon can use special funding programs to encourage more strategic investment and better integration of land use and transportation planning. This could be explored through an analysis of strategic investment initiatives and integration tools. Some potential examples of these include: regional impact review processes, mechanisms for improved forecasting and modeling of future land use and transportation changes, and incentive-based approaches to integrate land use and transportation (including the Oregon Transportation Growth Management Program).

**Statewide Data Systems:** Although participants in ACTs indicated that they had access to good quality data, there were still concerns about how prioritization by ACTs fed up to the ODOT region and state level. The state of Iowa has developed a web-based software system that allows regional authorities and the Iowa DOT to keep informed about their transportation improvement programming process. Assessing the effectiveness of Iowa's system and similar systems in other states could help Oregon develop a data system that would improve information exchange, communication, and decision making among state and regional participants. This kind of investigation would best be handled by Oregon DOT staff familiar with the current data and technology systems.

**Stakeholder and Public Participation Mechanisms:** One of the issues noted in the study was the difficulty of involving the private sector and the public in transportation planning and project

prioritization. Governor Kulongoski's Transportation Vision Committee recommended that a joint legislative/stakeholder task force review national "best practices" standards, local planning and project development guidelines for improving the public involvement process in Oregon.

Future research could examine the range of approaches used to obtain stakeholder involvement, and best practices around stakeholder and public consultation, including the use of visualization and web-based techniques.

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