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Oregon Evaluates Area Commission on Transportation Process

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The Oregon Department of Transportation recently conducted an evaluation of the effectiveness of its Area Commissions on Transportation (ACTs), which are voluntary associations of governmental and non-governmental transportation stakeholders that serve as advisory bodies to the Oregon Transportation Commission. ACTs were established in the mid-1990s to improve coordination of state highway project prioritization across jurisdictions as well as to broaden the regional transportation perspective and enhance communication between the public and private sectors. The evaluation was to determine how ACTs are functioning, assess the relationships of the ACTs to the state's federally designated MPOs, and improve collaboration and coordination among the ACTs.

The final evaluation report, called *Oregon's ACTS: Cross-Jurisdictional Collaboration and Improved Transportation Planning*, found that travel crossing boundaries of ACTs and MPOs affected the need to coordinate among entities, as did addressing major transportation corridors. Results also showed that over 80 percent of ACTs felt that the regional approach used by ACTs was effective or very effective at prioritizing project recommendations for the statewide transportation improvement program (STIP).

Some of the people interviewed in the assessment had been involved in transportation prioritization prior to the formation of ACTs and were able to provide a comparison. They indicated that forming ACTs was a significant improvement in communication, information exchange and learning about transportation funding. Particular ACT strengths include getting local buy-in for project priorities and funding allocations for STIP and other state programs and for cutting projects to meet the state budget.

The evaluation also analyzed communication and coordination among ACTs and between ACTs and MPOs, as well as providing steps that would enhance the ACT process through communication, addressing travel sheds, stakeholder involvement, policy and planning, the STIP prioritization process and reviewing the current structure.


View the full report at <http://www.ruraltransportation.org/uploads/oractrpt.pdf>, and its appendices at <http://www.ruraltransportation.org/uploads/oractapdx.pdf>. Additional information on Oregon's ACT process is available at http://www.ruraltransportation.org/pages/page.asp?page_id=61112.

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