

2016 OREGON TOURISM STUDIO GATHERING NOTES

April 22 – 23, 2016 | Pendleton, Oregon

TRAVEL OREGON STAFF

Kristin Dahl, VP Destination Development
Scott Bricker, Destination Development Manager
Alexa Carey, Destination Development Specialist
Andrew Grossmann, Destination Development Coordinator
Harry Dalgaard, Regional Cooperative Tourism Program Manager
Jeff Hampton, VP Operations
Katy Clair, Account Executive, Global Marketing
Petra Hackworth, Director, Global Sales (Europe)
Scott West, Chief Strategy Officer
Nastassja Pace, Executive Assistant, Strategy & Public Affairs

ATTENDEES

Alice Trindle, Eastern Oregon Visitors Association
Allison Graves, Cycle Oregon
Anita Metlen, Joseph Branch Railriders & OR Coast Railriders
Ashley Adelman, McKenzie River Action Team - RARE AmeriCorps
Bonnie Dreier, Dallas Area Visitors Center
Bonnie Lippitt, US Forest Service/Bureau of Land Management
Carol Tannenbaum, McKenzie River Lavender
Casey Roeder, Columbia River Gorge Visitors Assc.
Chelsea Metcalfe, Dallas Area Visitors Center
Chris LaVoie, McKenzie Chamber of Commerce

ATTENDEES CONT.

Cristie Amaral, Maupin Area Chamber of Commerce
Dan Moore, Pandion Consulting
David Beurle, FutureiQ Partners
Elaina Turpin, Keizer Chamber of Commerce
Frank Burris, Oregon State University Extension Service
Greg Hansen, GQG Consulting
Greg Hennes, Jennings Hotel
Ivy Hover, Left Coast Cellars
James Coey, City of Oakridge
Janet Dodson, EOVA
Jon-Paul Bowles
Judy Walden, Walden Mills Group
Kathi Jaworski, Write to Know
Kelly Schreiber, Stayton Sublimity Chamber
Kerry Kemp, City of Waldport
Kristen Dollarhide, Union County Chamber of Commerce
Kristi Reed, The Grand Hotel in Salem
Lori Kimbel, Elgin Chamber of Commerce
Lori Beth Kulp, Lori's Tours
Lynda Kamerrer, Oakridge Lodge & Uptown Bistro
Lynn Snodgrass, Gresham Area Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Center
Melissa Steinman, Waldport High School
Natalie Inouye, Travel Lane County
Randy Dreiling, Oregon Adventures
Robert Canaga, Travel Lane Co.
Samara Phelps, Clackamas County Tourism
Shawn Irvine, City of Independence
Thelma Haggemiller, Slow Poke Tours
Tyson Razor, Redfish Rocks Community Team (POORT)

DESTINATION SHARING: RURAL TOURISM STUDIO GRADUATE COMMUNITIES

1. JOHN DAY RIVER TERRITORY

Presenters: Ann Mitchell, Rural Development Initiatives; Rachel Weinstein, Gilliam County Economic Development

4 counties – Sherman, Wheeler, Grant and Gilliam it's a sub-region of EOVA
RTS in 2010

- New framework for working together to leverage resources if they worked together, such as apply for grants together. Developed policies and procedures
- Created own brand as a sub-region; purchased cooperative advertising, separate webpage on EOVA
- Key markets: Motorcycling, bicycle, and agritourism

- Developed itineraries for auto, motorcycling, bicycling and interest areas
- Developed motorcycle video
- Agritourism
 - Agritourism studio – 2 workshops
 - USDA Rural Development Grant
 - Taste of Oregon’s Old West event, 9/12/15 – 300 people with food and non-food vendors, held at Cotton Wood Canyon State Park
 - Tapped Travel Oregon resources
- Bike Tourism Studio
 - Developed Painted Hills Scenic Bikeway
 - Working on informational kiosks
- Challenges
 - Volunteers, getting resources to be sustainable both financially and person-power

2. NORTHEAST OREGON

Presenters: Anita Metlen, Joseph Branch Railriders

Success factors: Based on collaboration, (3 County Collaboration): Wallowa, Union and Baker County

Achievements:

- Bike Friendly Businesses – Wallowa County got right on board – 12 new BFB.
- Regional mapping- focus on gravel and trail maps: Masters student is working on it; secured \$10k to develop map
- Anthony Lake is working on trails to diversity their ski season; they also have a festival
- Mt. Emily Recreation Area – putting in a bunch of trails that include both advance trails and beginner trails. Are having an event in June (17th and 18th)
- Umatilla Scenic Trail proposal
- Joseph Brand Recreation Trail project – Elgin to Joseph – working to get a trail installed parallel to the rail. Joseph and Enterprise has been approved for a trail
- Grand Ronde River Greenway (stalled)
- Joseph and Wallowa State Park – hiker / biker sites
- Contact list – people that attended their meeting and others that could network and promote projects.
- Enhance signage

Challenges

- Capacity of locals

Q&A

- Q) How do you keep the motivation?
 - A) Constant meetings. Leverage people’s passions, share information across the groups / people and create synergy through networking. Travel Oregon and EOVA provides great support to implement their ideas

- Q) How do you stay connected?
 - o A) Monthly teleconference meeting; had money to hire a contractor to support social media; use phone and email.
- Q) How do you get the farmers to think tourism?
 - o A) The studio supported creating an understanding among farmers and locals on why people are interested and what they need to do to become tourism facing. Try a community event / round table, to share the info. In the community and leverage TO support. Get a studio. The agritourism appeals to the younger generation farmer and can help support a vision of keeping the family on the land
- Q) When you were coming up with your branding, what were the logistics?
 - o A) Coming up with the name was not hard because they always recognize the river as the connector. Got a grant to hire a college student to support the creative. Had strong support from Travel Oregon staff and designers on creative. It took 18 months to get through the whole thing
- Q) The lodge was just sold, what do you think about that? How are you marketing your region?
 - o A) Local people have purchased the lodge. Work with Eastern Oregon Visitors Association on the marketing side.

3. RIVER CANYON COUNTRY

Presenter: Susie Miles, Imperial River Co.

- 2013 Rural Tourism Studio, but only 2 people remain in the community that went through the program; 2014 – emails, let’s get together. 2015 – people got together and wrote grant that was awarded by Travel Oregon, but nothing really happened again until rekindling more recently. Main players: Prineville, Madras, Maupin.

Focus Areas: Cycling, Hiking... cycling stuck.

Goals:

- Ochoco Gravel Roubaix – 80 riders in first race in 2015. The event raised money for the high school to pay for an Athletic Trainer.
- Cycling Kiosk – planning kiosks for 3 communities
- Sherars Falls Oregon Scenic Bikeway (OSB) proposal, Crooked River OSB proposal, Madras OSB adopted.
- RARE proposal – application was turned in, pending.

Success Factors:

- Deadlines
- Each community working on similar things
- Challenges
- Turn over of people

4. POLK COUNTY

Presenters: Shawn Irvine, City of Independence; Jean Love, Monmouth – Independence Chamber

- **Elements of the Polk Co. RTS**

- Polk Co Tourism Group
- RTS
- Outreach
- Member representation
- Steering committee

RTS Action Teams

- Bicycle Tourism
 - Four new Ambassador routes on Ride with GPS
 - Bike Friendly Business Brochure – aimed at riders of big rides that came through the area
 - BFB increased numbers
 - Cherry Pie Road Race – moved the starting line to Independence. Had 600 riders in March
 - Aiming to add new bike tours
 - Possible new National Psoriasis Foundation Ride starting in Independence
- Agritourism
 - Western Oregon University – loose itineraries aimed at parents, including wineries
- Cultural Heritage
- Marketing

Next Steps

- Polk Co Brochures
- Agritourism map
- Bike Tourism Videos

Factors for Success

- New connections
- Core group of energized people
- Early achievement – get lower hanging fruit

Challenges

- Consistent involvement
- Linking the assets
- Speed of project completion
- Lack of lodging

Q&A:

- Q) How many cyclists are out there? A) There are already cycling events in Oregon and our communities. It's more of an individual passion which lends itself in people getting engaged and passionate about this. Cyclists are looking to go the new places. Infrastructure is already there.
- Q) Will there be too many events at the same time of the year?
- Q) Are there ready-made agritourism products?
- Q) How do you keep the momentum going? Bring new people into the fold? A) ID a point person / leader so the rest can be cheerleaders. It's easy to fold people into the mix if they are working on the same niches.

5. MCKENZIE RIVER VALLEY

Presenters: Ashley Adelman, McKenzie River Chamber, Stephen Dobrinich, Lane County Economic Development

- **Year round tourism action plan**
 - Review existing docs and interviews: Outdoor recreation growth
 - Four Goals
 - Structure and organization
 - Marketing and branding
 - Marketing and design (team)
 - Other Marketing (team)
 - Infrastructure
 - Design and wayfinding (team)
 - Trails and outdoor recreation (Team)
 - Off-season events
 - Signature events (teams)
- **Signature Events Team**
 - Wooden Boat Show
 - Lavender Festival
 - McKenzie Frenzy – Ribbon Cutting of O’Leary Trail Loop (Epic Trail); Recreation showcase
- **Marketing**
 - Revitalize website and face book page
 - Attend adventure trade shows
 - Increased collaboration and Coordination
- **Infrastructure**
 - Bike shop – Blazin Saddles / Horse Creek Lodge
- **Emerging Efforts**
 - Application on E. Lane BTS
 - Valley-wide volunteer database
 - Wayfinding Team working on mapping and signage
 - Local Visitors Guide

- **Factors of Success**
 - Highly motivated groups
 - Improve communications among residents
 - Full-time RARE participant
 - Increased Collaboration with Lane County Community and Econ Dev, Travel Land County, Travel Oregon
 - Working with neighboring communities to coordinate marketing efforts
- **Challenges**
 - Limited capacity and resources
 - Infrastructure – signage, wayfinding, bicycle safety
 - No city
 - Affordable housing

6. OAKRIDGE

Presenters: Randy Dreiling – Oregon Adventures, Lynda K. – Oakridge Lodge, Jim Coey – Mayor, Oakridge

- Produced a Mt. Biking promotional video
- Visitors Guide
- Video cameras to show the weather
- Phase 3 of a wayfinding project – a funding phases.
- Applied for a E. Lane Bicycle Tourism Studio – bringing all jurisdictions in from the beginning
- We Speak – revised structure where they bring the program to big events. They will have social, not academic training. Adding “Group Me” app to connect visitors to experts in the field.
- Successes
 - Working other communities, McKenzie
- Challenges
 - Turn over in people

Q&A for McKenzie River Valley and Oakridge

- Q) Unincorporated towns with self-appointed leadership seem to have been similar challenges. Who decided to come forward?
 - A) It took James Coey’s leadership in Oakridge to bring forth the application. Jim got together during a Major’s round table meeting and began identifying a stakeholder map in partnership with Lane County and Sen. Wyden.
 - A) It took a coalition of folks in the region to agree on the idea of coming together forward with a shared vision. Find your strengths and identify weaknesses to understand what gaps need to be filled in.
 - A)The agreement has led to more questions. What other cities to involve and where does the line end? How do we connect locations that are no existing infrastructure to connect?

- Group Sharing: At times the RTS can build a foundation that aligns with timing. One of the immediate outcomes from the McKenzie RTS was the identification that it was the 100th Anniversary of the arrival of the local leader to the region. This event combined with engaged and active stakeholders allowed for an event to be easily launched in recognition of this.
- Q) How do you look at transportation issues?
 - A) We are only at the beginning of this question. Even the planners that we have been working with do not quite have an idea for how to move forward.
 - A) We are hoping that the results of the BTS application will help provide us with a path forward. It is possible for someone to jump on the bus and then move around to get to the pub and spend only 5 dollars.
 - A) The bigger question is how to promote these options in a way that they are understood and available for the general public over the locals.
- Q) You are both doing incredible work. Who is your target market? You sound like very niche markets but many travelers to Oregon do not meet the type of activities that you have mentioned. As you expand these markets and drive visitation are you developing human infrastructure (i.e. bathrooms for ~10 people coming off a bus)?
 - A) Our region has gone through a heavy economic decline so much of our infrastructure has been degraded but we are working on fixing this. We have bathrooms and are building showers.
 - A) We are also not limited to the niches that were discussed. We have other options and are beginning to expand on them into more than just the summer season.
 - A) Bathroom develop requires collaboration with folks at state parks who are ultimately responsible for managing their land. Nevada has a system where the public pays local businesses to accept transient bathroom needs

7. SOUTH LINCOLN COUNTY

Presenters: Kerry Kemp, Melissa Steinman

Achievements:

- HikeBikePaddle.org interactive map online and in print to promote our tremendous outdoor assets
- Gravel Coast Epic ride
 - Now annual ride
 - Final event of the Oregon triple crown series
 - In just 3 years, grown from 75 to 200 participants
- Designed and ecotourism course in the local high school which also allowed us to get a \$386K grant for
 - Coastal Business and Marketing Management class as well
 - Creating career and economic pathways
 - Tiny House Project for disaster relief
- Waves of life mosaic planters
 - Project from Ford Family

- Goal to connect three communities
- Spruce the up
- Waldport Open Space project
 - FEMA funding
 - Got community and visitor input for design
 - Amphitheatre and event center has been identified as a priority – working with State and FEMA to make sure is feasible (must do feasibility study)
 - Objectives/Themes: creative model for revenue generation, community supported, etc.
- Collaborative marketing campaign: three villages, one stoplight, many trials
- Community entrepreneur project with kayak shack and training of local students to be trained paddle professionals and to be able to cross train in other outdoor recreation areas

8. WILD RIVERS COAST

Presenters: Tyson Rasor, Frank Burris

Achievements:

- Working towards building our economy around tourism as timber is quickly declining and tax dollars that support schools, public services, etc is dried up
- Four Action Teams resulted from RTS:
 - Marketing and Education
 - Eat Fresh and Local (agritourism)
 - Outdoor Rec
 - Off-Season Events and Activities
- Success from marketing team
 - 40 successes if list them all!
 - Wild Rivers Coast Scenic Bikeway
 - Web presence
 - Future Plans:
 - Coordinate with tourism entities better
- Success from Eat local team
 - 3 farm networking events – have to turn people away there’s been so much interest
 - Created an active farm trail / itinerary
 - Working with farmers to connect to local restaurants/sellers/events
 - Working with school
 - Future Plans:
 - Farm stays
 - Growing the farm trail
 - Supporting events to get more local foods such as the Agness Tomato Festival, Oktoberfest in Brookings, Booze Run, etc.
- Success from Off-Season Events and Activities team
 - Kick off ceremony event for the WRC Bikeway!
 - Beach Bikes and Brews Festival in fall

- Success from Outdoor Rec team
 - Wild Rivers Coast Scenic Bikeway
 - Installation of SCUBA fill station in Port Orford
 - Mapping projects (trails for birding, hiking, etc.)
 - Ocean Access improvements for recreation divers
 - Creating a regional trails plan

Q&A from South Lincoln County and Wild Rivers Coast

- Q) How do you see tourism affecting jobs?
 - A) Adding small businesses
 - Supporting jobs in off season times
 - Revitalizing jobs – teaching entrepreneurial mindset in school to help build workforce; adds value to whatever career or job students end up going into
 - Create places, creating destinations – supporting secondary jobs with tourism
 - We went from having many open store fronts being open to now just one
 - Property business is now offering tour packages and they are all booked up when before they weren't in advance
- Q) Do you see other industries or communities benefiting from tourism?
 - A) Bringing communities together to work towards something
 - All the ports have gotten together to fix their port infrastructure now
- Q) How do you capitalize on the events/festivals?
 - A) We did a survey and learned that if people come to WRC that they want to come back, so by having events and attracting new visitors we get returning visitors from that
- Q) What did adding ART to your STEM project do?
 - A) Science, Tech, Engineering, Mechanics, and now Art into schools
 - Classrooms can now not just design and build something but can then market it and broadcast it via websites, podcasts, printed t-shirts from the screen printer, etc.
- Q) How has Bandon Golf Course affected your region?
 - A) Because of the success, a 2nd golf course was opened which all proceeds go to the Wild Rivers Coast Alliance to support local community projects for economic development and conservation/restoration

9. COLUMBIA RIVER GORGE

Presenter: Casey Roeder, Columbia River Gorge Visitors Association

- Bi-state collaborative process (first one!!!) that blended lots of counties and communities
- 220 participants
- Steering committee made up of 30 entities: federal agencies, tourism orgs, businesses, NGOs, etc.
- One regional organization taking on coordinating of all the entities to continue to move this forward – calling this an Alliance

10. NORTH SANTIAM RIVER REGION

Presenter: Kelly Schreiber, Stayton Sublimity Chamber of Commerce
Elaina Turpin, Community Volunteer

- First accelerator Oregon Tourism Studio pilot and was a success with over 80 folks taking part!
- Mid elevation farm to forest transition
- First next steps: formalizing committee, determining structure, scheduling meetings, communications strategy

Q&A for Columbia River Gorge and North Santiam River Region

- Q) What have you (Gorge & North Santiam) learned from today?
 - A) How do we keep our folks engaged so they don't get burned out.
 - A) Make sure that we keep everyone in the loop, get new people engaged so it's really a regional program
 - A) Communication is key and not letting too much time pass in between meetings
 - A) Need to find more money!
- Q) How did the webinars really work in the accelerator program?
 - A) The first meeting was to get everyone on the same page
 - A) The webinars were held public viewings of them so everyone could engage and actually come together
 - A) When you only have 2 workshops, there wasn't necessarily enough time to build up the trust and the camaraderie as with a full RTS process. It will happen, just may take more time
- What's Travel Oregon's plan w/ working with in communities that neighboring other states like California, Idaho, Washington? Is this something that Travel Oregon is going to continue to do?
 - Of course we understand from the destination level and we will continue to advocate for bi state collaboration, however we have Oregon TRT that we have to spend in Oregon

FUNDING RESOURCES PANEL

Presentations and additional handouts provided by presenters available in Dropbox folder

1. Susan Law, Federal Highway Administration

- Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP). She is out of Western Federal Lands out of USDOT. [Flh.fhwa.dot.gov/programs/flap](http://flh.fhwa.dot.gov/programs/flap)
- Webinar available at <http://flh.fhwa.dot.gov/programs/flap/or/>
- Majority of grant projects are road projects, they do develop bike-ped paths as well
- FLAP was a new program in MAP 21. The new federal transportation program – Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act – extended FLAP. FLAP focuses on:
 - Access to federal lands
 - Supplementing state and local resources
 - Emphasize high-use recreational sites and federal econ generators
- \$250 million / yr / nationwide – Oregon receives that largest amt., \$36 million / yr
- FLAP can be spent within federal lands or accessing lands / transportation facility:
 - Highway, road, bridge, trail or transit systems
 - Located on or adjacent to federal or tribal lands
- Mostly transportation projects, but could also be:
 - trails, provisions for ped / cyclists, signs, trailheads, restrooms, transit, planning and project studies
- How to apply?
 - Open in early April and due July 1, 2016
- Evaluation criteria
 - Recreation and econ development
 - Safety
 - Mobility
 - Preservation
 - Sustainability and environmental quality
 - Also endorsed by pertinent federal agency
 - Bring match of 10.27%
 - Realistic scope
- How are decisions made – 3 agencies
 - Programming Decisions Committee (PDC): FHWA; ODOT; Association of Oregon Counties
 - Technical Assistance Group (TAG)
- Examples of funded projects:
 - Row River Trail
 - HCRH – Summit Creek Viaduct
 - Sharing Roads on Federal Lands – provide local agencies with information on how to deal with adding bikes to narrow rural roads
 - Mt. Hood Express
- Q&A
 - Q) How do groups come together? A) a staff person works with county and federal land management agency; County Commissioner would be added into the proposal.

2. Yvette Rhodes, The Ford Family Foundation

- Based in Roseburg, Oregon
- Mission: Successful citizens, vital rural communities
- Kenneth and Halie Ford, Roseburg Forest Products
- Serves Oregon and Siskiyou County, CA – with a focus on rural communities
- Children, education, community, economy
- About \$20 million awarded each year
 - Check out their website regarding the most current information
- Current Area Grants:
 - Rural Capital Projects
 - Technical Assistance – support non-profits or community to develop leadership, engage in planning, or advance collaboration. Up to \$5,000, typically support consultants. 20% cash match. Not staff!
 - Good Neighbor Grants – short-term requests for simple projects, up to \$10,000, highly competitive. E.g., a playground, truck, new roof
- Criteria
 - Ideal projects:
 - Are beyond conceptual stage /clear plan;
 - Involves board and community participation;
 - Fundraising significantly underway – ideally have 50% of funds raised before applying to them; TFFF does not fund more than 1/3 of total budget?

3. Carol Chaney, Meyer Memorial Trust

Technical problems occurred, no presentation was delivered. See dropbox folder for handout

4. Alison Graves, Cycle Oregon

- 1 page application for proposals up to \$5,000
- Funding Categories - \$500 (smallest), \$10,000 (average), \$35,000 (largest)
 - Environmental conservation and historical preservation
 - Bicycle safety and tourism
 - Community projects
- TO apply – typically in the fall, visit www.cycleoregon.com
- Cycle Oregon grants are open for 6 weeks; award approximately \$50,000 - \$120,000 / year. Communities don't have to be a Cycle Oregon community.

5. Shannon Brubaker – Oregon Dept Agriculture

- Oregon Special Crop Block Grant Program
- Farm Bill program.
 - \$1.5 - \$1.9M / year
 - \$25,000 - \$175,000
 - 2.5 year projects
 - Two-phase projects
 - Funding priorities

- RFP January
- Priorities
 - Market Development and Access
 - Food safety
 - Oregon solutions network regional solutions centers
 - ODA grants have to be focus on agriculture, tourism is secondary; therefore funds won't pay for the tourism side of a request.

6. Kendra Perry, Travel Oregon Matching Grant Programs

- Areas funded:
 - Bicycle tourism: trails, mobile visitor centers (ex. Travel Lane County -Mike the Bike)
- Grants
 - Travel Oregon Matching Grant
 - \$500,000 (biennium)
 - Nature-based Outdoor Rec
 - Cycling
 - Culinary and agritourism
 - Wine Country Plates Grant
 - \$60,000
 - RTS Matching Grant (for Rural Tourism Studio communities only)
 - \$20,000 (in two \$10,000 installments) depending on the region
- Deadline May 2 for General Fund Matching Grants idea submitted to RDMO; May 23 grant idea into Travel Oregon
- Additional info available here: <http://industry.traveloregon.com/industry-resources/matching-grants-program/oregon-tourism-commission-matching-grants-program/>
- Applications must be either government or 501c(3)
- Travel Oregon grants currently cannot be used for local staff, but Travel Oregon is working on policy change to allow for this, stay tuned!

INGREDIENTS FOR SUCCESS

Presenters: Kathy Jaworski, Write to Know (RTS Program Evaluator) and Jon Paul Bowles (RTS Community Coach)

What Made Your Project Successful?

1. Presence – best ability is availability. It's OK to go with who shows up.
2. Perspective – understanding why they are part of a team and what they are going to get out of themselves, what the team members' hopes are?
3. Persistence – staying at

Good project Selection – characteristics

1. Clear community benefit beyond tourism – community fundraisers, fundraisers for schools, locals use trails.
2. Demonstrating a personal interest – e.g., you can make money from cycling, do you want in?
3. Narrow project list to correlate to the community's capacity
4. Tap into what is going on around the state, expertise that is available around the state (e.g., map makers, event promoters)

Issues

- How to keep people engaged over the long-term – be OK with seasonality and attrition; be OK with a smaller team if needed.
 - o Seasonality – e.g., summer is hard
 - o Work – a small percentage of people do the majority of the work
- Reinvigorate
 - o Pay attention to communication protocols, talk about what is working / progress is being made to the whole team.
 - o Set up a project that can be done in a short period of time
- Leadership succession – this is part of volunteer life and it's important to re-evaluate periodically

How do you deal with one agency that holds up a whole process? Is this a larger Travel Oregon issue?

Don't feel that you have to be slowed down by over-sharing your RTS strategy with the larger community. Just get working and share as you can.

A Google study was mentioned about successes in the work places:

- Connecting personally and fun engagement
- Safe open space

Really good ideas come from holding space for conversation among people in your communities

Alice Trindle from Eastern Oregon discussed important points for their success:

- It is important to recognize what we all have accomplished

- Realize that bringing businesses to the table and getting staffers time is hard, and it is important to recognize this
- In the beginning, look at what success would look like because you can look back and say good job

Building Capacity / Build a backbone organization – evolve it into a more formal organization or process

BUSINESS RECOGNITION PROGRAMS

Presenters:

- Andrew Grossman, Travel Oregon, Destination Development Coordinator
- Susie Miles, Imperial Rafting Company (Bike Friendly Business)
- Tyson Rasor, Redfish Rocks Community Team (Travel Oregon Fund Project Beneficiary)

Bike Friendly Biz Program

- Launched in end of 2013, 544 businesses have been recognized by the program
- The program helps educate businesses about the amenities needed by cyclists and their spending habits
- It's a free program, but the businesses have to buy the signs to post outside their business
- City of Sandy – using it as a community program and as a way to attract bike tourists; they have develop a new map that lists the bike friendly businesses.
- Bike Friendly Biz workshops are being held to educate local businesses.

Travel Oregon Forever Fund

- Raised over \$100,000 for 20+ projects around the state

OREGON GUEST SERVICE TRAINING PROGRAM

Presenter: Wendy Popkin, Oregon Restaurant and Lodging Association

- The greatest challenge is how much do we need to invent ourselves vs. learning from others
- Guest service fits into RTS initiatives: at the core, hospitality is about defining on the customer's satisfaction, industry relies on customers being happy and enjoying luxury services
- Customers visit services to have experience and get out of routine
- Product development and marketing of needs are key to success but you need the employees to carry through with promise
- TO recognizes importance of guest service training and We Speak
- Guest service training is a way to launch and sustain customer service skills and business sustainability
- Training program is in pilot – 375 industry members are certified.
- Feedback: curriculum was a little awkward, real life stories were performed by actors, 2 concepts were difficulty

- Recovery – how do you make things right?
- Personalization
- Knowledge – know what your guests are interested in
- Commitment – doing more than you were committed to do
- Inclusion – honoring accessibility and diversity
- Personality – how to be yourself and create a positive experience
- Principles really highlighted perspective from hospitality – how do you apply concepts to more than lodging?
- Institute has recreated the program with this feedback in mind
- RDMOs are invited to go through training (four spots) – some think tank discussion, topics include information distribution, recognition for people that truly excel, and collecting the most relevant information
- Sometimes it seems like we can't keep good employees, sometimes it's because we don't give them the tools to advance
- Need to connect hospitality industry to economic development in the broader lens
- If you have ideas of people to involve in addition to what's been shared, please contact Kristin Dahl at Kristin@traveloregon.com

STATEWIDE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT ISSUES: THINK TANK SESSION

Participants were asked to breakout into groups to discuss statewide solutions to address universal tourism development issues. Topic groups included the following, notes from each group listed below:

- *Creating capacity for tourism development*
- *Developing Car-Free Transport Options*
- *Frontline Staff Education*
- *Wayfinding and signage*
- *Business development and support*
- *Matching tour operators with destinations*
- *2017 Eclipse management*

1. TOPIC: DEVELOPING CAPACITY FOR DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

*This conversation focused on the capacity and willingness of local businesses to engage in destination development. We started broader but two team members have had issues with local business engagement so we went there.

Participants:

- Jon-Paul Bowles, RTS Community Coach
- Bonnie Lippett, USFS
- Suzie Miles, Imperial Rafting Company
- Judy Walden, Walden Mills Group
- Rachael Weinstein, Gillam County Economic Development
- Jean Love, Monmouth-Independence Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Center

Issues

- Locals don't know how to engage visitors and talk up reasons for a return visit. Front line staff don't think in terms of a visitor coming to their destination, just fulfilling an immediate customer service need.
- Small towns don't have enough people or expertise. Takes critical mass. At the same time, there's more capacity that can be harnessed.
- There's a need to create common goals to get people on the same page
- Similar types of businesses compete within a destination. How can they collaborate to help each other better? For example, 1 of 4 rafting companies in Maupin uses Groupon and undercuts the others. Those value visitors don't shop locally either.
- Lack of low season visitors means businesses are closed, so there's a vicious cycle even if some visitors do come.
- Low participation of businesses in tourism efforts

Opportunity

- Local business owners come to see the opportunity to engage visitors, stay open when they'd normally close, even if just one weekend a month
- Businesses have more regular visitor friendly hours
- Businesses engage in destination development projects

Strategies

- Start with 1 weekend a month visitor weekends that include extended business hours. Ease them into realizing that there's more of a visitor market than they may realize
- Use non tourism language. Talk about activities, 3 & 3 stay model
- Get more localized data to articulate pitches to biz owners
- Make sure business owners know the benefits they get from tourism. Many say their businesses aren't tourism related but they are.

Who

- Chambers, especially small volunteer. They need to know how important tourism is and how to harness it
- ORLA
- Small business alliances

2. TOPIC: BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Participants:

- Alexa Carey, Travel Oregon
- Frank Burris, Oregon State University Extension Service
- Stephen Dobrinich, Lane County - McKenzie Go Team
- Lori Beth Kulp, Lor's Tours

- Cristie Amaral, Maupin Area Chamber of Commerce
- Chris LaVoie, McKenzie Chamber of Commerce
- Shawn Irvine, City of Independence

Understanding the Issue

- Discuss what you experience is in your community with regards to this topic.
- What is the need?
 - Encourage local people to start businesses – grow existing rather than moving out to the area, tourism businesses and product,
 - There's a lot more to Oregon with amazing places – if you enjoy being outdoors and connecting to your community, there is a whole state outside of the 40 square miles
 - One point person for business development knowledge
- What is the opportunity?
 - There's a need to connect to graduates from rural communities – how do we inspire them to come home, how do you link person to the resources
 - Lots of move back but very severely underemployed
 - Retirees with knowledge are moving in – could be an attractive asset to entrepreneurs (have amazing experience)
 - SBDC resources, Startup Weekends in rural
- What challenges exist?
 - Brain drain of young people leaving
 - Complex of starting a business
 - Regions can be unfriendly to businesses
 - Funding for businesses – all funding coming from outside, if they can access it
 - Resource: City of Maupin – business facilitators w/Columbia Gorge Comm College (\$5K) – Wasco Co. area
 - Time invested and lead time
 - SBDC – connecting to people
 - Starting a business can be overwhelming, connecting people to resources
 - Idea might work – test the idea, if they have to go through extreme process, people need to know that
 - Perceptions of growth
 - WE NEED MARKET DATA – niches and holes in communities, what are the gaps? Can we collect compelling market data and then highlight that info in a tourism studio – water rec? agritourism?
- What roadblocks you're facing or perceived roadblocks?
 - Funding
 - Accessing knowledge

Understanding the Opportunity

- What's the opportunity – what's possible?
 - Limitless.

- Speaking from Lane Co – there are some resources like RAIN, Fertilib Thinkubator – accessing rural areas, SBDCs need to access more people and go out to the community
- Incubator can be successful but the cost is \$80k per year
- Using storefronts – cohabiting with incubator in the office
- Sharing resources and anchor tenant –
- What should this area of work look like in the future?
 - Collaboration
 - Sharing of resources – what do the SBDCs do?
 - Quirky startup events?
 - Identifying the holes? Gaps? The nexus between communities that have ideas and who is looking for ideas? Pointed to people with existing ideas – what about those with business skills who have ways to create new concepts?
 - Sometimes it's just about making a job
 - Oregon-centric compilation of resources
 - Rural counties – lacking access (maybe even drive to connect)
- If issues were resolved what would this look like here?
 - Thriving local economies, fulfilled community

Strategy Ideas

- The Gorge Business News – expanding business news for rural regions? Elgin chamber creates?
- In these studios, have a business development? Have the SBDCs provide that info? If you or someone you know is starting, here are the resources? Market data included?
- We need funding!
- Business facilitator – help funding, marketing, running operations – the SBDC started in Maupin and then that person helped make those connections and get businesses
- Micro-lending and small financing options- it's not easy to do because of tax dollars
- People will need to make sure that these are vetted businesses – there's 5k (KivaZip)
- Travel Oregon - Creative funding opportunities – IDAs?
- TO has great relationships with private entities like Columbia sportswear, can we leverage TO funds to combine with private investment? Could generate more growth and benefit?
- Small business competition?
- Tourism Shark Tank?
 - Industry growth – can we pull together people from the same industry to learn?
 - Final pitches at gov con?
- TO can be putting more into RDMOs – can we link that to rural businesses, can we bring the creative design down to local regions? Require some from rural communities? Every rural community puts forward best design and creative?
 - Up & Coming
 - Graphic design competitions for students in region? Best one we will use?
 - FBLA – huge on Eastern Oregon Tourism Commission

- SLC – great example of tourism business education, can we do more for youth business knowledge? How to youth be independently motivated? Investment for community? Innovative learning model
- It's all about the people!
- STEM -> STEAM (adding art to train students in design, t-shirts, video production, podcasting)

Who Could/ Should Be Involved?

- If we were to assemble a statewide action team on this topic, who should we involve?
 - OSU Extension Agents
 - SBDC Directors/ Advisors – Forest Peck
 - Colleen SBDC –
 - Nancy Straw - TFFF
 - Greg Smith – EOU/SBDC
- What organizations should be at the table?
 - Some ideas above
- What expertise around the state should be tapped to help move this forward?

3. TOPIC: FRONT LINE STAFF EDUCATION AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

Participants:

- Andrew Grossmann, Travel Oregon
- Wendy Popkin, ORLA
- Chelsea Metcalfe, Dallas Area Visitors Center
- Anita Metlen, Joseph Branch Railriders & OR Coast Railriders
- Lynda Kamerrer, Oakridge Lodge & Uptown Bistro
- Natalie Inouye, Travel Lane County
- Samara Phelps, Clackamas County Tourism

Challenges:

- There is a lack of soft skills
- Turn over creates risk in time investment
- Increases to minimum wage make this topic more complicated and businesses want increased value and return from frontline staff they have to pay more
- Frontline tourism jobs have a lot of turnover due to seasonality and the need for them to take unemployment during low season – this usually leads to low retention at businesses year over year
- Many frontline staff (especially in rural areas) are young and have not left the destination – they do not understand their destination's context and how to respond to what makes is special since it's all they know
- In addition to there being needs for younger, entry level, staff, we often find needs for soft skills in generation old businesses with older folks that have never gone through training and inherited businesses

- Many rural folks are homeschooled so it is hard to integrate statewide training opportunities to them.

Opportunities:

- As long as the staff member stays in Oregon investment in their training still benefits the state
- Successful investments in frontline staff that secures their long term employment have high return
- Front Line training can be a major asset in communicating destination level issues (i.e. congestion and alternatives). How can you capture an inventory of folks that can begin to see beyond themselves are drive destination priorities forward.
- It seems like a good idea to combine Soft Skill Customer Service training and a WeSpeak curriculum. At the least it would help to make customer service trainings more fun and at best it provides a well-rounded training opportunity that also touches on things like understanding of destination assets.

Strategies

- Create a frontline employee share across the state so that these employees can have new experiences while also remaining within the state's tourism industry. Good employees come back better
- Make training affordable – even pay employees to take trainings
- Resources allocation to training must generate the same if not more value in return
- Soft skill training can be added to high school education in rural communities
- Could we offer an experiential “Hospitality Camp” that would mimic things like band camp? Let them stay at a nice accommodation for a weekend during the low season.
- Trainings need to be recognized as legitimate and generate value. One thought was to have soft skill training certificates are a mandatory for certain jobs/recognize these certificates as more important than things like GED
- Implement a “train the trainer” approach with business owners so that a) they better understand how to work with their own staff and b) can train new employees themselves as a means to combat high turnover
- Wallowa County hosted a customer service training program that also included an asset map for the county. Their staff is limited

4. TOPIC: WAYFINDING AND SIGNAGE

Participants:

- Kristin Dahl, Travel Oregon
- Kerry Kemp, City of Waldport
- Elaina Turpin, Keizer Chamber of Commerce
- Tyson Razor, Redfish Rocks Community Team (POORT)
- Alison Graves, Cycle Oregon
- Carol Tannenbaum, McKenzie River Lavender
- Thelma Haggemiller, Slow Poke Tours

Understanding The Issue

- ODOT not letting businesses put up signs in view of the highways; when they do put up signs, even if they're on private property ODOT takes them (specifically on Hwy 22)
- In Waldport and other places along the coast businesses have been able to put signs out on Hwy 101, but ODOT seems to look the other way (like A-frame temporary signs in town)
 - They will let you put temp signs out for 60 days, but then ODOT expects them to come down
- Business blade signs that come over an ODOT road way not favored –
- The expense is a big issue—the cost to develop an entire system of signage is really difficult. Even once a plan is developed its difficult to acquire the funding.
- When we put in Trolley Trail – they developed a trail signage plan, but never had the money to follow it through. Plan is there. Park District that owns the trail has never followed through. Trail crosses 99-E, where it crosses it's very difficult to tell where the trail goes.
- Existing landscape is already cluttered with signs – creates sign blindness when you're coming through a place when they're so much clutter
 - How do we reduce clutter
 - Often city or county probably have sign ordinance –
 - But Lane County outside of incorporated areas its ODOT that has the sign ordinances
- No consistency in the ordinance and they don't work together or there are none
 - This leads to “sign blindness”
- Design issues as well – so many competing designs
 - ODOT signs are completely different design standards
- Can we look at guidelines or any subsets of that --- develop something that would work across the state
- Signs by their nature can become dated or obsolete – and they can be difficult to change and keep up with the pace of change
- Creating thematic signage

Understanding The Opportunity

- Organize and declutter wayfinding in *public areas* – clear, simple well organized signage
 - Driving
 - Street Level
 - Let businesses have their own identity- identify themselves once the public signs lead them to their place
- Great examples:
 - Lincoln City neighborhoods
 - Newport
 - Covered Bridge Loop in Lane County
 - Hood River County Fruit Loop
 - Oregon Agri-Business Council's crop signs
 - Washington County --
- Once sign ordinances are coordinated; they need to be enforced
- Ensure that everyone is using a consistent set of icons
- IN 10 years this may be a non-issue because everyone will be using their navigation devices/iPhones

Strategy Ideas

- Create a statewide working group
 - Make it an Oregon Solutions project
 - Bring some serious political clout to it
- Develop guidelines & best practices that provide consistency across the state
 - Launched a consistent wayfinding signage program
 - Consider integration of digital signage
- Ensure agencies are using consistent guidelines and icons that are already out there
- Explore developing consistent set of icons (thematic presentations) that fit our tourist needs
 - To help with thematic touring –
 - Cycling Loops
 - Paddling Loops
 - Walking loops
- Kiosks – throughout Oregon that could direct people on these thematic experiences
- Create some kind of sharing to help public agencies managing signage to learn of “best practices” where things are done well and help spread best practices from district to district, organization to organization
- Not everyone has phones, but at strategic locations there are kiosks or key information sites.
- Integrating strategies for connecting smartphones with wayfinding platforms
- Funding options for construction and maintenance; flexible solutions to maintain relevancy during changing destination opportunities

Who Could/ Should Be Involved

- ODOT – Regional, Districts
- Business Oregon
- Regional Solutions Teams
- Travel Information Council
- Agri-Business Council
- ORD
- City, County Parks
- Assoc. of Oregon Counties
- League of Oregon Cities
- Council of Governments
- Economic Development Districts
- Ports (Coastal thing)
- USFS
- BLM
- Northwest Sign Council

5. TOPIC: TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS AND CAR FREE TRAVEL

Participants:

- Scott Bricker, Travel Oregon
- Ashley – McKenzie River Tourism Committee
- Melissa Steinman, Waldport High School
- James Coey, City of Oakridge
- Greg Hansen, GQG Consulting
- Heidi Beierle

Understanding The Issue

Need:

- Seamless information
- Routes and service

Issues:

- Safety, security, routing, frequency
- Ownership of public lands, roadways, etc.
- Lack of education and collaboration
- Bike and walking gaps in the system – lack of bike lanes
- There is no integration between transit agencies, even harder if you have a bike

Waldport and Yachats are increasing camping with State Parks – connecting camping / lodging and restaurants and bar

- Weekend bus service is not good; they need walking, cycling and transit service that connects rural communities. How do you create this?

Oregon lacks a cohesive experience when it comes to transportation options – both private and public – to help shepherd people around the state in a linked way. There are disparate efforts that are not linked

- Perspective of traveler has not been integrated; transit agencies are not considering travelers and not sharing information across agencies; issues with county lines

Amtrak goes from Eugene to Bend and does not stop. There is a local bus, but there is no local bus service for travelers.

Oakridge has 5 buses that run to Eugene every weekday, but there is no weekend service. Trying to get a train station, but the UP is not being cooperative. They tried to secure funding for a weekend bus, but they were not funded.

- Need more bike racks on buses
- \$335,000 / year = 3 round trips per Sat and Sun

How can entrepreneurs connect with transit agencies? Are there innovative ways to fund transit?

Barriers to collaboration: turf, tradition and trust

Identify what we want to accomplish and how might we do it.

Few connections between Mt Hood and Portland

Understanding The Opportunity

Ideas to explore in providing more seamless transportation around the state

- Increasing collaboration and education among agencies, private companies, etc.

- Bring in Uber, Lyft, other types of ridesharing
- Vetted drivers / vetted hitch hiker models
- Provide Information to the customer – provide a web tool, other way to get information out there?

Trip Check – does provide transit modes, even though it’s laborious. But you cannot find out how to pair transit and biking. Also does not include private transit options

Possible Travel Oregon Roles:

- Convener / charrette, or other way of convener?? OAPA conference
 - Transit conferences
 - USDA rural development – Vicki Walker
 - TRB working groups and rural transit
- Greater advocacy – Travel Oregon should be part of that.

Funding sources – supporting private business support / subsidy to important traveler and tourist routes

- Provide an operational subsidy to new transit routes
- ID key destinations around the state, who their customers are, how we could develop this / support them
- FLAP

Strategy Ideas

You could travel anywhere anytime, knowing what it will cost, or even with a single fare.

- Develop combined trip “Google “Trip tracker ability

Need to create a statewide strategy

- Have groups come together: legislatures, travel groups, tour operators, cities
 - o Possible conference, charrette, strategy meetings
- Understand the lay of the land – what transit is being provided, what transportation is available around the state, but public and private. Clarify how you can currently get information and provide recommendations on systems and communications moving forward
 - o Work with a contractor to develop this report / analysis
- Potential solutions included
 - o Work with an aggregate company to create a platform that tracks and provides the traveler with a clear / full picture of where how you can travel / transit around the state – tie into all of the public transit agencies and also offer info. about private shuttles and services.
 - Use this information, tied with geography, to develop a sense of where important gaps exist and develop strategies that could include new transit service or entrepreneurial efforts with possible subsidies
 - Develop RFPs to fill critical gaps
 - Open up Uber / Lyft statewide
 - o Ensure that this information is available on-line and easily found

State of Oregon rewarded people to be more sustainable – tax credits, discounts – tie them together, and get benefit from the state; create a penalty if you drive too much

Who Could/ Should Be Involved?

- Transit agencies, private transit providers, technology partners, transportation consultants, transportation options experts, mobility advocates, tourism partners, destination reps of congested areas, of areas that need transit, etc.

6. TOPIC: MATCHING TOUR OPERATORS WITH DESTINATIONS

Participants:

- Petra Hackworth, Travel Oregon
- Dan Moore, Pandion Consulting
- Stacy, Johan Vineyards
- Janet Dobson, EOVA
- Lori Beth, Lor's Tours
- Melody Johnson, Falcon's Crest Inc.
- Randy Dreiling, Oregon Adventures

Understanding The Issue

- Winery in Polk, focus on Oregon wine is Yamhill County. How do we get more people in other wine areas not just the famous areas? Make the resources fair. Same with Milton and New Rocks district...these areas want to be included in the big Oregon wine story. There is a lot more than the Dundee hills, their feedback. There is great opportunity to match wine with cheese and other partners etc.
- Some still doesn't really understand how to connect with the tour operators. How do we get on the radar?
- What is your story? Are you telling the most interesting part of your story to get potentially picked up by PR/trade?
- Be proactive with your membership; don't wait for DMO/Chamber to come to you.
- Barrier to entry....Lor's Tours, targets cruise ships, 24 ships come in...problem...competing tour company is also the director of marketing for the Port of Astoria, so it is almost impossible for her to get business. He has the "exclusive" She feels like it is an uphill battle.
- Forest Service issues, public lands. Poaching
- Can't connect to bigger audience because regulations are one size fits all and outdated

Understanding The Opportunity

- Travel Oregon data base/directory is up to date – tour companies need legit partners
- OTTA / DMO/RDMO- itineraries are created, get involved and talk to member and get on their radar

Strategy Ideas

- Partner with DMOs, other attractions, restaurants in your area. Don't go it alone.
- Attend Gov. Conf. DMO networking events. Front of mind!

- Solution: wineries need to connect with wine/farm dinners and bring the wine in that way, motor coach does not fit at winery. Recommendation is partnership wine, food, chocolate, etc. Share brochures, etc. Think outside just your winery. Create package.
- Understand that you may have to work with a middle man (ie receptive tour operator) to get established and see bookings
- Start with your neighbor; get to know them and make sure they know what you are doing, host Travel Salem board to your winery for example for a tasting. Could cost very little and go a very long way.

Who Could/ Should Be Involved?

- OTTA
- Travel Oregon
- RDMO
- Should we expand the tour/outfitter educational programs to wineries/attractions/group sized restaurants/hotels of all size

7. TOPIC: 2017 ECLIPSE MANAGEMENT

- On Monday, August 21, 2017 a lunar eclipse will occur in Oregon.
- The Path of Totality (the area where you can view the eclipse) impacts the following studio regions:
 - North Santiam
 - Polk County
 - South Lincoln County
 - McKenzie River Valley
 - John Day River Territory
 - River Canyon Country
 - Oakridge Area
- Travel Oregon is working with the Governor's Office and Oregon Solutions to coordinate a state wide working group of key agencies:
 - State Parks
 - ODOT
 - BLM & Forest Service
 - More, TBD
- There is also a need to pull together consistent talking points that DMOs and RDMOs can use to prepare local governments and agencies that will include predicted attendance numbers
- There is a lot here and this is a work in progress to get the state prepared. More will be coming out in the next few weeks.