



JACKSON COUNTY

Roads

ROADS & PARKS

JOHN VIAL
DIRECTOR

200 Antelope Road
White City, Oregon 97503
Phone: (541) 774-6238
Fax: (541) 774-6295
vialjn@jacksoncounty.org

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TO: SubCommittee on Transportation and Economic Development
Joint Committee on Ways and Means

FROM: John Vial, Director
Jackson County Roads and Parks

SUBJECT: Oregon Department of Transportation Budget Hearing

Senator Johnson, Representative Jenson and members of the committee, Jackson County, and the Association of Oregon Counties, appreciates the strong partnership we have enjoyed with the Oregon Department of Transportation. Unlike some state DOT's, ODOT is recognized as a leader in its partnership efforts with local governments to ensure we have an interconnected and viable transportation system in Oregon. In Jackson County, and I'm sure everywhere else in Oregon, travelers simply do not care if they are driving on a state highway, a county road or a city street or if they are riding a bus or cycling. They simply want to get to their destination – safely and efficiently. ODOT clearly recognizes this principal, and as a result, they have been a clear partner with local government in assisting us to provide our vital role in the statewide transportation system.

I'll provide a couple of examples on how this partnership has benefited the citizens of Jackson County.

In the mid-1990's ODOT and Jackson County entered into a formal partnering agreement where we agreed to proactively seek opportunities to partner on the use of crews, equipment and materials so we could both be as efficient and responsive as possible. This partnership continues now and let me provide a specific example on how both agencies have benefited. In a couple of the county's high mountain passes the snow accumulation often reaches a point where my snow plows cannot throw the snow over the snow berm and a large rotary snow blower is necessary to keep the roads open. Snow blowers are very expensive pieces of equipment and Jackson County doesn't own one, ODOT however, does. When the snow accumulations reach a point where we need snow blowing completed, we call the local ODOT office and bring a blower over and assist us. This partnership saves the county over \$250,000 in the initial cost to purchase a snow blower and thousands of dollars in annual maintenance.

Conversely, Jackson County has a very good chip seal program, a chip seal is a thin pavement treatment where rock and oil is added to a road to preserve the pavement life. Several years ago ODOT as part of our partnership requested that Jackson County chip seal several miles of state highways. For nearly 15 years now Jackson County has been completing most all of the chip sealing on State highways in our area. This has saved the State over \$400,000 in equipment costs. I could provide many other examples of similar partnering activities with ODOT.

One of the most important roles ODOT serves to local government is the sharing of state and federal funding with counties for transportation-related programs and projects such as safety and bridges. As you know, bridges are terribly expensive and without the federal funds that ODOT administers, and the technical assistance they provide, most local governments would simply not be able to replace or maintain many of Oregon's bridges. Over the last several years, Jackson County has been the beneficiary of this financial and technical support on several bridges and we are very grateful for the State's assistance.

Lastly, Jackson County sits on the Rogue Valley Area Commission on Transportation (RVACT) where we work closely with agency staff to identify projects for the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). As I noted previously, ODOT approaches the STIP as a plan to improve the transportation system in Oregon, not just State Highways. This is evidenced by RVACT's and ODOT's strong support a couple of months ago for a Jackson County road project which falls inside the city limits of Medford. This important safety and capacity project was not on a State highway, yet received strong support from agency staff.

These examples provide a small snapshot of the support and partnering efforts that local government sees from the Oregon Department of Transportation. Jackson County encourages this committee's support of the Oregon Department of Transportation. As you support ODOT, you are supporting Oregon's cities and counties.