



# Oregon

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**DATE:** March 30, 2015

**TO:** House Committee on Transportation and Economic Development

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**SUBJECT:** ODOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Program

## INTRODUCTION

Bicycling and walking has been increasing within Oregon and nationwide in recent years. In Oregon, from 2000 to 2010, walking to work increased by 25 percent and those who ride bicycles to work more than doubled from one to three percent of the overall share of all commuters. Oregon is a national leader with 2.3 percent of commuters traveling by bicycle and is in the top ten in the nation at 3.9 percent walking to work.

## OREGON BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN PROGRAM

The Oregon Bicycle and Pedestrian Program provides support and direction to ODOT, local governments, governmental and non-governmental organizations, and private citizens, in planning, designing and constructing pedestrian and bicycle facilities. Staff provides expertise in several areas including developing policies, providing technical assistance and disseminating information. The program has been within the agency since the passage of the Oregon Bike Bill in 1971 and is now part of the recently formed Active Transportation Section.

## REQUIREMENTS AND FUNDING

In 1971, Don Stathos, an avid bicyclist and state representative from Jacksonville introduced legislation that became the groundbreaking Oregon Bicycle Bill – the first of its kind in the nation at the time. ORS 366.514 requires pedestrian and bicycle facilities be included in state, city and county road, street or highway construction or reconstruction projects. The law also requires that in any given year, the amounts expended to provide walkways and bikeways must be a minimum of 1% of the state highway funds received by ODOT, cities and counties. These facilities must be located within the right-of-way of public roads, streets or highways open to motor vehicle traffic. The state highway funds cannot be spent on trails in parks or other areas outside of a road, street or highway right-of-way.

Bicycle and pedestrian facility improvements are included in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and are funded through a combination of state, federal and local funds. Improvements may be stand alone bicycle and pedestrian projects or included within other larger transportation projects. In addition bicycle and pedestrian improvements are funded by various regional and local funding sources and from private development. In 2012, ODOT spent approximately \$6.6 million in state highway funds, achieving the 1% minimum as required by law, as we have done since the law went into effect. Oregon (ODOT, metropolitan planning organizations and local governments) expended an estimated \$20.6 million or 4.5% from its 2012 federal highway funds. Many other projects, such as safety or intersection improvements, also have significant benefits to bicyclists and pedestrians.

## ADVISORY COMMITTEES

### *Oregon Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee*

In 1973, two years after the passage of the Oregon Bike Bill, the Oregon Bicycle Advisory Committee (OBAC) was formed by ORS 366.112. In 1995, the Oregon Transportation Commission officially recognized OBAC's role in pedestrian issues; the committee became the Oregon Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (OBPAC). This eight-member committee, appointed by the governor, acts as a liaison between the public and ODOT. They advise ODOT in the regulation of bicycle and pedestrian traffic and the establishment of bikeways and walkways. Recent issues where they have provided input include:

- Shoulder rumble strip policy, that strives to find the balance between driver and bicyclist safety
- Updating maintenance practices to better consider bicyclists and pedestrian users
- *ConnectOregon* modal review and participation on the Final Review Committee
- Selection criteria for projects that improve the transportation system and cross-modal considerations

### *Area Commissions on Transportation*

Bicycle and pedestrian representatives serve on Area Commissions on Transportation (ACT) throughout the state. ACTs play a key advisory role in the development of the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program. The ACTs take input from all transportation stakeholders—including bicycle and pedestrian advocates—to prioritize recommendations for projects to fund, which are then forwarded to the Oregon Transportation Commission for consideration. The ACTs serve a similar function in the evaluation of potential *ConnectOregon* projects.

## SYSTEM NEEDS

Currently there are system needs and gaps in the state and local infrastructure for walking and bicycling. These gaps discourage people from choosing to walk or ride a bicycle, impact the safety of users, and make it difficult to make connections to use public transit.

### *Accessibility*

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires ODOT to address physical barriers that limit accessibility to buildings, streets, roads and walkways. ODOT provides sidewalks along state highways that are usually separated from street traffic with a curb, drainage swale or other barrier. These barriers are obstacles for people with disabilities seeking to use the sidewalk and to cross streets. Curb ramps are critical to providing for safe accessibility and



*Example of accessibility challenge*

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must meet ADA design standards. While ODOT continues to remove barriers and upgrade ramps, there is still a significant amount of work to do to meet current ADA standards.

### ***Gaps in the system***

In cities and small towns, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure on ODOT facilities consists of sidewalks, crossings, median refuge islands, signals, marked bike lanes, overcrossings, and multi-use paths. In rural areas, the state highway shoulders often serve as bikeways and walkways. ODOT's focus has been to provide pedestrian and bicycle facilities primarily on urban state highways, where population density and development creates a higher need for biking and walking access, while maintaining and improving shoulders along rural state highways. Gaps in this system still exist in a majority of the highway system within these cities and small towns.



*Missing sidewalk creates a barrier for pedestrians and is not accessible for all users.*

### ***Maintaining the system***

In addition to filling gaps in the system, the condition in which bicycle and pedestrian facilities are maintained and managed also plays a role in connectivity, mobility and access. ODOT has recently updated its maintenance policies to better address the safety and needs of active transportation users. To increase safety and user comfort, ODOT has developed new directives to guide maintenance crews when performing pavement overlays, chip seals, and blade patching activities. In terms of sweeping, new guidance points to when it is most important to sweep bike lanes or shoulders, such as after storms to address known drainage issues, when a crash has left debris in the bike lane, and in anticipation of special events.

## **BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN PLAN**

ODOT is currently working to update the Oregon Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, which was originally developed in 1995. This plan, like other ODOT topic and mode plans, refines the broad goals and policies of the Oregon Transportation Plan (OTP), applying considerations particular to biking and walking. The plan will provide a vision for the future walking and biking on the entire statewide transportation system, including locally owned facilities, while defining the role of the State and ODOT. The plan will inform decision-making and guide investment strategies made through transportation system plans, facility plans, the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), and other programs, but will not identify particular projects.



*An example of a pedestrian crossing safety improvement near a school.*

### **OTHER AREAS TO CONSIDER**

Non-roadway bicycle and pedestrian facilities and improvements are not an eligible use of State Highway Funds. These facilities are outside the right-of-way of public roads, streets or highways. Examples include regional trails and community paths through parks or shared spaces. ODOT funds for these types of improvements are limited to a few federal funding programs and recently they were included in *ConnectOregon V*, the lottery-backed revenue bonded program, approved in 2013.

ODOT also coordinates with the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department on the Oregon Scenic Bikeway Program. Oregon is the first state in the nation with designated Scenic Bikeways designed to provide a high quality system of cycling routes that inspire people to experience Oregon's natural beauty and cultural heritage by bicycle and offers economic and social benefits to the state's communities, residents and visitors. Currently there are 12 designated routes on state, local, and federal transportation facilities totaling nearly 800 miles.

### **SUMMARY**

Biking and walking facilities are an important low cost travel option for users of the transportation system. They help spread demand across the entire transportation system and provide safe and efficient options for people to move throughout the state. Transportation options, such as biking and walking, can lead to benefits such as more efficient use of the existing infrastructure, more choices for those unable or who choose not to drive, and more support for community health goals – such as increased physical activity.