



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

Department of Transportation

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DATE: April 12, 2017

TO: House Committee on Transportation Policy

FROM: Jerri Bohard, Administrator
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SUBJECT: HB 3230 – Safe Routes to Schools

INTRODUCTION

House Bill 3230 provides \$12 million in General Fund to the Safe Routes to Schools Fund to be used to assist communities in identifying barriers and hazards to children walking or biking to and from school. The bill further directs \$20 million from existing state highway funds to be used for Safe Routes to Schools infrastructure projects. Both parts of the bill prioritize the needs of schools in high poverty areas.

DISCUSSION

The Oregon Department of Transportation currently administers Safe Routes to Schools grants to communities in two ways, the first for non-infrastructure such as education and planning though grants handled by the Transportation Safety Division. Under the bill, an additional \$12 million would go directly into the Safe Routes to Schools fund established under ORS 184.740. The agency would adjust its practices to include conducting pre-application meetings with schools in high poverty areas to educate them about procedures and eligibility requirements of grant awards. They would also update their grant processes to include allowing grants to develop education and outreach materials to educate communities around safety projects that are eligible for federal funding.

The agency also issues grants for infrastructure projects through the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program. HB 3230 also requires ODOT to redirect \$20 million in existing state highway funds toward Safe Routes to Schools infrastructure projects. The bill directs ODOT to prioritize projects that are located within a one-mile radius of schools in high poverty areas. Currently, Oregon law requires that the agency spend at least one percent of state highway funds on bicycle and pedestrian facilities. We estimate that we spend about \$6 million on specific bicycle and pedestrian projects each year, but that many more dollars are spent on these facilities as part of a highway project. However, we cannot say how much of the annual expenditures are spent on projects within high poverty areas.

The Oregon Bicycle and Pedestrian plan, adopted by the Oregon Transportation Commission in May 2016, calls for investing strategically in the state and local pedestrian and bicycle system. The plan calls for preserving existing infrastructure and addressing significant safety issues first, then addressing critical connections and lastly completing and enhancing the system. While ODOT does not disagree with the need for additional walking

and biking facilities for school children, HB 3230 would prioritize those needs over other critical highway and bridge needs in the state. Redirecting \$20 million would jeopardize projects already committed and supported by the area commissions on transportation.

We have been a part of conversations occurring in the Joint Legislative Committee on Transportation Preservation and Modernization, Transit/Bike/Ped/Safety work groupit workgroup. The workgroup identified additional Safe Routes to Schools infrastructure needs as a priority moving forward in the transportation funding conversation occurring in the legislature.

SUMMARY

HB 3230 provides a General Funds for Safe Routes to Schools community efforts and redirects state highway funds for infrastructure. ODOT and the legislature have both recognized the needs for additional Safe Routes to Schools funding.