

**DATE: March 6, 2019**

**TO: Co-Chair Beyer, Co-Chair McKeown, Members of the Joint Transportation Committee**

**FROM: Chris Doty, Deschutes County Road Department Director, Oregon Association County Engineers and Surveyors (OACES)**

**RE: Senate Bill 558 – 4 Amendment**

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Co-Chair Beyer, Co-Chair McKeown, Members of the Joint Transportation Committee,

The Oregon Association of County Engineers and Surveyors (OACES) represents county public works agencies and road departments across the state and provides a forum to share best practices and overcome challenges. County roads are a critical component of Oregon's integrated road system and are responsible for the largest share of Oregon's road system, with 26,670 miles under county jurisdiction (39%). The county road system also includes 3,421 bridges and approximately 26,000 culverts.

It is our priority to manage and maintain the county road system for the safety of all its users. We know that traffic crashes on rural roads can be more severe given the higher speeds and longer response times. Senate Bill 558 with -4 amendment will provide both county road officials and law enforcement agents an additional tool to react to changing road characteristics and maintain safe operating speeds.

The amendment is a product of the Speed Zone Workgroup that was convened to discuss collaborative solutions to challenges in the speed setting process. The workgroup included representatives from the Oregon Department of Transportation, counties and cities. The proposed statutory change was approved by OACES members representing small, medium and large counties. OACES believes that Senate Bill 558 with -4 amendment is a prudent step towards standardized speed zones across Oregon.

Senate Bill 558 with -4 amendment will expand statutory speed limits to county roads while maintaining the basic rule. Expanded statutory speed limits would provide additional clarity for drivers and law enforcement officers when monitoring rural county roads and allow road officials to post speed limit signs on identified road classifications in Oregon statute. Even with support from the Oregon Department of Transportation, many counties still struggle to fulfill the administrative requirements to post each sign. The classifications identified in ORS 811.111(1)(d) are relevant to the county road system and would provide needed clarity across all jurisdictions in Oregon. The amendment to Senate Bill 558 will allow county staff to prioritize the roads not already identified in statute and address law enforcement and community concerns.

In 2016, 41.7% of Oregon's fatal accidents were attributed to speeding. Overall, 121 fatal accidents occurred on county roads. The 2019 Oregon Traffic Safety Performance Plan set a goal to reduce fatalities by 20.3% by the end of 2020. To achieve this goal, county road officials need additional tools to help manage the rural road system and adjust to high-risk areas.

We strongly urge you to vote yes on Senate Bill 558 as amended as it will provide needed clarification for all road users and optimize counties ability to maintain a safe system.

Sincerely,



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