

To whom it may concern,

I am writing this as a concerned citizen of the McKenzie River Valley. The Holiday Farm Fire has upended thousands of people's lives. The immediate impact of the fire was intense, traumatic and sudden. The initial intensity of this phase has passed, and the community has now entered the recovery phase. As time goes on and the media fades, community members are left to continue to grapple with the day-to-day struggle of trying to put their lives back together. There are myriad and complex physical and emotional pieces to this complex puzzle of community recovery. Additionally, the immediacy of the event no longer functions as a bulwark providing protection against the fire's impacts on mental health. One critically important piece is the ability to travel out of and back into the community to accomplish a wide range of essential post fire recovery functions. This includes commuting to and from work, school and making important appointments. It is also important for property recovery projects and simply getting away from the fire environment for a break. This brings me to my concern regarding the ongoing frequent and often extended traffic delays occurring on Highway 126 within the fire affected area. The need to address hazardous conditions that affect the roadway is understood and clearly important work that will, in the long term, benefit the community. This work is greatly appreciated. However, there are serious concerns regarding the short term impact this work is having on the ability for the community to rebound. Living in a post fire affected community is difficult for a host of reasons and one of the most significant challenges is dealing with the collapse of scheduling day to day travel needs. This affects community residents and visitors who seek to come to our community. Tourism is critically important for the economic health of the McKenzie River Valley. As summer approaches, demand for outdoor recreation will increase. Visitation supports rental cabins, restaurants, local shops and many other businesses. Long wait times and a lack of clear and consistent communication will impact our community's ability to attract and serve visitors. Additionally, it is unacceptable that school children have been forced to sit on the bus waiting in line, sometimes for hours at a time, to get to school. This is particularly salient with the potential of in person instruction being considered and is unsafe. Our community is strong and resilient, but we are also under great pressure trying to adapt to the post fire recovery environment. We expect your organization to respect our needs, which includes working with us to develop a plan that meets the interests of the community and supports the important work that must be done to return the highway to safe operating condition. The road closures on Highway 126 in the fire affected area do not appear to have been guided in any meaningful way, by a public process that addresses community concerns. Any major project that will significantly impact a community for an extended time period in such a fundamental way, should be subject to a transparent public planning process. It is the job of the project administering agency to facilitate community dialog. To this end I request that ODOT and/or any other cooperating federal or state entities and their contractors initiate a comprehensive, consistent and effective outreach effort to the McKenzie River community to address road closures, delays and other concerns.

Some suggestions for your consideration to support more efficient departure and return to the community are:

- Consistent start/stop times (9AM/ 6PM) to allow school and commuting traffic passage.
- Consistent lunch break times allowing more efficient planning for important town visits.
- Work stoppage late afternoon on Friday's, No work Saturday's, starting work Sunday at 11

Sincerely and with respect,

Leah V. Stiebing