

## Joint Committee on Transportation

June 18, 2024 Tillamook

### ODOT History and Concerns

#### **History:**

NOV 2015 – started attending NWACT bi monthly meetings. At first meeting, as a first-time visitor, I shared my several concerns with OR 6.

One of my concerns, (**all are still valid today**), was that there was no cell service at the top of the hill. I was told there was no internet at the top of the hill. A lie. An internet cable had been laid during the Clinton administration from Tillamook to Banks and was being used (in service). A new cable is now being laid from Tillamook to Banks funded by Amazon (my understanding). Supposedly, it will be connected to as yet unbuilt cell towers. Another problem was no rumble strips in the center of OR 6. I was told by ODOT at that meeting and at NWACT meetings in 2017, 2018, 2019, 2021 that rumble strips would happen next year. No rumble strips have been installed as of 6/18/24.

Per ODOT, the problems with OR 6 started in 1996 (if not sooner).

During the meetings in 2016 and 2017, I continued to share my concerns re OR 6. Others agreed with my concerns but nothing happened. I shared my concerns at **the fall 2016 Legislative tour similar to this one**. That tour eventually produced the bill HB 2017 for the 2017 Legislature which was passed and became law. That bill was to give ODOT \$5B more over the next few years. I **strongly encourage the committee to review the key issues brought up** in that tour. The #1 issue **statewide** from what NWACT was told was Portland metro traffic congestion. It is **now 8 years later**. How are we doing on that? What has happened on the other issues raised on the 2016 tour?

During 2018, I put a small group together and generated substantial support for improving OR 6 and we presented a paper to NWACT in Nov 2018 which had support from the Oregon Trucking association, Tillamook Creamery association, nine Legislators, two counties, multiple cities, four travel departments, the

hospital in Tillamook, multiple lumber companies and many others. The NWACT **unanimously** approved the request. ODOT agreed to do a study in 1/19.

ODOT's reporting of their study: 3/19 – 90% done; 5/19 – 99% done; 7/19 – done just looking for \$\$\$ to do the identified projects; 9/19 – we aren't going to do anything.

They did another study of what to do re the bad section of OR 6 on the Washington County side of the hill. Spent \$200K? They did nothing after the study.

2021 – per ODOT records, **EIGHT people DIED on OR 6**. In almost ALL of the fatal accidents, someone crossed the centerline and hit another vehicle going the other way. Public attention was focused on the road and in 2022, Sen Suzanne Weber introduced a bill requiring ODOT to do another study. The bill easily passed the Legislature. I shared my 2018 study with the group doing the study. An external firm did the study with internal assistance. Spent \$1M? Several of my recommendations from 2018 and even earlier were again recommended. ODOT's response was "we don't have any money" and has done nothing. Promises = YES but results and real action = NO.

2022 – IIJA passed Congress and Oregon received \$1.2B from the federal government. Did any of that go to OR 6, or OR 130 or OR 18? Not to my knowledge. BTW, where did the \$\$\$\$ go?

As of the June 14<sup>th</sup> 2024, ODOT has still not done any substantial work on OR 6. None of the identified problems from 2018 or even further back have been fixed.

### **Specific Recommended changes for OR 6:**

1. Add rumble strips both center and edge to OR 6 from MP 2 to MP 42.
2. Fix the bad road from MP 33 to MP 36.
3. Add three eastbound passing lanes at MP 16, 22, and 35.5. **(NO eastbound passing lanes exist on OR 6 from MP 3 to MP 26 - 23 miles on an uphill highway for heavy vehicles and heavy traffic.**
4. Add a westbound lane at the River Loop 2 intersection.

5. Add a Tripcheck camera at or very near the summit of the OR 6 which would provide visual and temperature information. This could be moving the camera from Lee's Camp or adding an additional one.
6. Redo the OR 6 - OR 8 intersection.
7. Add additional paved pullouts in both directions.
8. Add cell service including towers from MP 7 to MP 39.

This is just one isolated case of how ODOT operates.

Similarly, re state highway **OR 130** which is the **ONLY state highway with fully one lane bridges (4) in the state** excepting one single lane bridge near The Dalles. The four fully one lane OR 130 bridges were built in the 1950s when vehicles were narrower. Since then, mostly in the 1970s seven other bridges have been completed. They were all made wider because vehicles were wider and OR 130 was being fully utilized for commercial (**read that semis, logging trucks, hay haulers**), tourist, commuter and residential traffic. The original four built were, at some point, changed to being fully one lane bridges rather than widened. **That was a mistake that has never been rectified in the last fifty years.** All four should be widened to the current standard or wider for two lane bridges. #3 - at the six-mile marker needs to be completely redesigned to make the road more visible in both directions. It is currently a double-blind curve (each direction). Traffic volume is often 1K vehicles per day.

**OR 18** has a rough patch at MP 14. It has been there since at least 1994. It was again repaved over recently but not fixed. The road is still rough.

I'm sure many other stories can (and perhaps should) be told.

**Praise:**

The maintenance crews are good hard-working people who perform their duties and tasks as requested.

## **Recommendations/Concerns/Suggestions/Questions:**

1. Accountability – ODOT needs to be directly accountable to a statewide elected official likely the Governor. The buffer (OTC) between ODOT and the Governor (the elected official responsible for ODOT) needs to be removed. The OTC should perhaps stay on as an advisory body.
2. ODOT's STIP (Statewide Transportation Improvement Program) needs to be in alignment with the budget for ODOT and the rest of the state – one list for every two years.
3. How does ODOT compare to the 49 DOTs around the country?
  - a. How is their success measured?
  - b. How do the 50 states compare to each other?
  - c. How is each state DOT funded?
  - d. Is there an independent group that evaluates the fifty DOTs? is ODOT doing versus the other 49 DOTs across the country? If an independent evaluation exists for ODOT, get it.
4. ODOT staffing and roles should be compared to 2012. Since 2012, per ODOT, miles driven statewide is up 13%. Has the maintenance staffed increased by 13%? Also, how many changes (new lights, roads, lanes, exits, signs, etc.) are there since 2012? How many people work in HQ versus across the state? Compare all these items with 2012. The latest traffic data ODOT has online is 2022. 2023 is not yet available. Why?
5. Direction and vision – any DOT needs to have direction and vision for the future. ODOT clearly didn't vision or direction or moxie re future funding including the gas tax during the last several years to raise the issue of funding and ability to deliver. I bought a Prius in 2006. Teslas came out in 2012. The trend was very easy to see

then and much more so now. But what are the future trends and what is ODOT doing about them?

6. The funding mechanisms for maintenance and projects need to be at the discretion of the director not state mandate (ORS or OAR). IOW, move the funds around as needed to cover needs. Hold the director responsible for the results achieved. Maintenance should, IMHO, be the highest priority.
7. All ODOT Internal processes need to be reviewed (and changed as appropriate) by an **external** set of experts to increase productivity and efficiency.
8. The management team needs a full review (and appropriate changes) by an **outside** management consulting team.
9. The attitude from the top needs to be – “we are servants of the people” meaning all Oregonians.
10. Striping – lane and edge striping should become an annual event for safety purposes. Most new vehicles starting in 2017 have keep lane software in them to help the driver stay on the road. This also helps night driving.
11. A top priority going forward needs to be fixing known, especially long term, problems. I have listed two roads in dire need of help and one which has a long-term need of help.
12. Suggestion: ODOT managers should live in the districts they manage.
13. Public involvement – **much better announcement and communication to the public of the remaining ten meetings. The public is NOT city or county or state officials or non-profits. It’s the voters of Oregon.**
14. What is the OTC participation up to this point? Do they intend to participate in the final product of these meetings? Will they use the final product? What is the OTC’s added value?

15. Each member of JCT committee is **strongly encouraged to drive both OR 6 and OR 130 before** making any decisions re how to move ODOT forward.