

County Commissioners
Kevin Cameron, Chair
Danielle Bethell
Colm Willis



Chief Administrative
Officer
Jan Fritz

MARION COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

July 16, 2024

Joint Committee on Transportation
900 Court Street NE, Room 453
Salem, OR, 97301

RE: Joint Committee on Transportation 2024 Roadshow

Co-Chairs Gorsek and McLain, and Members of the Joint Committee on Transportation,

The Marion County Board of Commissioners writes to advocate for proper funding to counties to sustain and improve our transportation infrastructure for public safety and mobility for all users.

Marion County is responsible for an extensive transportation network that includes 1,120 road miles and 140 bridges, many of which are in poor or fair condition. We face significant challenges in maintaining this infrastructure due to rising costs and regulatory demands. Contractor costs have increased by 40% in less than a year, a stark contrast to the typical 3% annual rise. State and Federal legislative and executive actions, such as CFEC, DEQ stormwater regulations, ADA compliance, carious environmental and historical regulations, and bridge load ratings, further strain our budget.

The primary focus of our transportation work is the maintenance of our roads and bridges. We need approximately \$125 million to bring our 1,000 miles of paved roads to good condition. Our 140 bridges, over 80% of which are in poor or fair condition, also require substantial investment to ensure safety and functionality. Marion County currently relies heavily on the State Highway Fund, which provides 53% of our road department budget. The funding from House Bill 2017 has been helpful but insufficient to address our deteriorating infrastructure fully.

The importance of the State Highway Fund's 50/30/20 distribution cannot be overstated. Counties like ours depend on this funding for critical safety improvements and maintenance. Maintaining the 30% portion to counties is essential for us to continue serving our residents and visitors effectively. Our road system is crucial for agricultural activities, emergency responses, and connecting rural and urban areas, making adequate funding imperative for our community's well-being and economic stability.

We also face unique challenges due to our diverse road usage, which includes heavy agricultural and truck traffic, wildfire recovery efforts, and maintaining infrastructure in 20 cities and 37 unincorporated communities. The rising costs and regulatory requirements, combined with the impacts of inflation, make it increasingly difficult to keep up with necessary maintenance and improvements.

To address these issues, we propose exploring diverse, stable, and sufficient funding tools. While we have several local revenue-raising options, most county tax bases are too small to meet our road system's needs. We urge the committee to consider expanding local options for counties to raise

revenue and lifting current preemptions. Additionally, we ask the committee to maintain the 30% county share of State Highway Fund revenues and reduce barriers to local revenue sources.

Counties are the state's partner in providing a safe and reliable multimodal transportation system that serves all of Oregon. We are committed to working with the Legislative Assembly to develop a comprehensive transportation funding package that prioritizes investments in operations, maintenance, and safety. We appreciate your support and collaboration in ensuring that our transportation infrastructure meets the needs of all Oregonians.

Thank you for your attention to these critical issues.

Sincerely,



Kevin Cameron
Chair



Danielle Bethell
Commissioner