



July 17, 2024

Rep. Susan McClain, Co-Chair
Sen. Chris Gorsek, Co-Chair
Joint Committee on Transportation
Oregon State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301

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

Thank you for your efforts to hear from Oregonians across the state regarding a potential transportation package during the 2025 legislative session. Taking the time to travel to multiple regions in which you tour the area to see firsthand the local needs and priorities, engage with local stakeholders and public leaders in a roundtable discussion, and hear from community members in a public hearing is very appreciated and we trust that it will help deeply inform your next steps.

Below are some of the key points that the City of Springfield would like to make sure the Committee is aware of, some of which echoes what was shared during the roundtable discussion:

- **Transportation Infrastructure Funding Challenges**
 - Springfield's City Council has struggled since the early 2000s to adequately fund and invest in the operations, maintenance, and preservation of the City's transportation system facilities.
 - Economic crises and voter-approved property tax limitations have compounded the issue, limiting resources for preventive maintenance and rehabilitation of street surfaces, traffic signals, sidewalks, and other critical infrastructure.
 - Springfield currently relies primarily on State Highway Fund Apportionment, local fuel taxes, and federal funds to sustain transportation services. However, challenges such as voter-approved property tax limitations and inflationary pressures necessitate a robust and diversified funding strategy for long-term financial stability.
- **Revenue Sources & Future Funding Strategies**
 - Springfield believes that any future strategy employed by the State must meet several key criteria. First, it should include indexing to inflation to ensure that revenue streams keep pace with rising costs. Second, it should maintain the 50/30/20 split between jurisdictions to ensure equitable distribution of funds for transportation projects across the region. Third, the strategy must adapt to include all transportation system users, including electric vehicles, by exploring mechanisms such as road user fees and electric vehicle registration fees.
 - Looking ahead to future funding packages, particularly those planned for 2025, it is critical to prioritize maintaining current funding distribution allocations. This commitment is essential for sustaining infrastructure development amid economic pressures.

- By adopting a proactive approach to revenue diversification and strategic funding allocation, Springfield can effectively safeguard its infrastructure investments and meet the evolving transportation needs of its community.
- **Lessons from the 2017 Transportation Package**
 - The 42nd Street reconstruction project, originally awarded \$12 million under HB 2017 (2017), faced delays, and Springfield did not receive the allocated funding until 2023 due to complications with HB 2017 and jurisdictional transfer issues. Now, exacerbated by inflation, current estimates indicate that \$17-20 million is necessary to complete the project as originally planned.
 - Furthermore, the 42nd Street Levy is currently under analysis and is likely to require reconstruction, which would necessitate changes to the current 42nd Street design. Springfield is demonstrating fiscal responsibility by awaiting the results of the levy analysis before proceeding with the reconstruction of 42nd Street. This approach aims to avoid the need for potential reconstruction efforts twice over, thereby optimizing financial resources and project efficiency.
 - The 2025 funding package should therefore prioritize additional funding allocation to ensure the successful and timely completion of this essential infrastructure upgrade, reflecting prudent fiscal planning and responding effectively to economic challenges and project complexities.
- **City of Springfield Local Funding Priorities**
 - *Capital Construction Needs*
 - Restoring Springfield's transportation system to a functional maintenance curve requires a minimum of \$50 million. This funding is critical to address deferred maintenance and prevent further deterioration of vital infrastructure components such as street surfaces, traffic signals, and sidewalks.
 - Securing this investment, alongside necessary Operations and Maintenance funding, will safeguard against the reallocation of operational budgets, ensuring Springfield can meet local match requirements without compromising essential services. This strategic funding allocation is imperative for maintaining infrastructure reliability and meeting the evolving transportation needs of our community.
 - *Operational & Maintenance Objectives*
 - The Department of Public Works (DPW) Operations Division currently allocates approximately \$5.6M annually towards street maintenance and operations.
 - An additional \$2.2 – 2.7 million is estimated to be needed annually to achieve more sustainable operational objectives. This funding would specifically address ongoing preventive maintenance needs, ensuring that roads are maintained at a level that prevents deterioration to the point of requiring costly reconstruction.
 - This proactive approach aims to extend the lifespan of infrastructure, reduce long-term maintenance costs, and enhance overall transportation system reliability for Springfield residents.
 - *Safety Investments*
 - Increasing investments in safety, such as ADA compliant pedestrian crossings, enhanced bike infrastructure, vehicle safety enhancements,

- and signal modernization, are crucial to reducing traffic fatalities and serious injuries.
- To further bolster these efforts, Springfield would like to see an expansion for Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program, enabling safer pedestrian and cyclist routes for all ages and abilities.
 - Additionally, expedient crash data analysis needs to be prioritized to swiftly address identified safety issues, ensuring proactive responses to emerging concerns. Furthermore, increased traffic enforcement funding will target problematic vehicular behaviors, promoting adherence to traffic laws and enhancing overall road safety.
 - Sustainable and significant investments in state and local transportation facilities are essential to ensure the safety, resilience, and reliability of Springfield's and Oregon's transportation system.
- *Natural Disaster Impacts*
 - In the aftermath of the 2024 Ice Storm, Springfield incurred an estimated \$4-5 million in damages and expenses. While federal reimbursement covers only 75% of natural disaster costs, the remaining 25% poses a significant challenge. This shortfall leaves Springfield's Operation and Maintenance budget with a critical gap in 2024 budget and future years to come, particularly in addressing urgent repairs to roadways damaged by the ice storm.
 - To mitigate these impacts and ensure prompt response to future crises, it is crucial for Oregon to establish a dedicated natural disaster relief fund. Such a fund would provide the state with the flexibility and resources needed to quickly address the remaining costs after federal assistance, safeguarding communities like Springfield from enduring prolonged financial strain and infrastructure vulnerability.

Thank you for your leadership and your engagement with our community on this critical and challenging topic.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sean VanGordon", with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Sean VanGordon
Mayor, City of Springfield