

Honorable Sen. Chris Gorsek and Rep. Susan McLain and members of the Joint Committee on Transportation

NOW is the time to finally ensure that Oregon's transportation investments will benefit ALL its citizens. The goal of transportation must

- improve safety for people of all abilities, rather than only auto drivers,
- expand access for everyone, rather than only auto drivers,
- reduce travel time for everyone, just not auto drivers and
- ensure that the transportation sector reduces greenhouse gas emissions, rather than continuing to raise them.

Transportation or, more precisely, MOBILITY, is an inherent right of all Oregonians; able bodied, disabled, young and old, employed, unemployed, retired, drivers and non-drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists and walkers. Yet, the legislature and ODOT have historically directed the vast majority of state and federal transportation funds to be spent on minimizing motor vehicle delay and on pavement management. That has meant that, because of a lack of funding or priority, bicycle and pedestrian networks remain incomplete and dangerous—and mobility is unavailable to many of our citizens.

Almost a decade ago, it was acknowledged that the State's

“future population may interact with the transportation system differently than is the case today. More young people are choosing to live in compact and mixed-use developments today than at anytime in modern era, expressing preference for access to walking, biking and transit options. Technological shifts may result in increased reliance on car-sharing, automated vehicles...which may impact the way investments in transportation infrastructure are made.” Source: [Funding Transportation - Background Brief](#), September 2016, Oregon Legislative and Policy Research, Patrick Brennan).

Mr. Brennan's observations are today's reality - Oregonians' transportation needs have changed and further investments in an autocentric transportation system is mis-guided.

CREATE COMPLETE STREETS

The 2025 legislative transportation package must make a clear break from the past. That can be done by the legislature, by requiring that all pavement management projects on State highways and on local arterial and collector roads within urban growth boundaries include:

- upgraded bicycle facilities (protected bike lanes) to make them safe for people of all ages and abilities, and
- construct sidewalks where gaps exist, and
- add access ramps where absent.

That is, all road, street and highway agencies in the state must create, as a part of pavement management, complete streets. This approach will ensure that steady and consistent progress is made on addressing the long-ignored improvements to the walking and bicycling networks - which the Oregon Transportation Plan has promised.

The above approach is essential if the 2025 legislation is to be successful. Only by meeting all Oregonians' mobility needs will it be possible to create a new, equitable, and inflation indexed revenue source - one which the majority of Oregonians will support. It won't pass if only Oregonians who drive benefit.

FUNDING

I believe that a weight-based vehicle tax and eliminating the state gas tax would be a fair way to finance the state's transportation system. That way, the heavier vehicles (semis, trucks, pickups, EV's) would pay for the damage that they cause and the cost burden on owners of light vehicles, that cause no or little pavement damage, would be reduced. I acknowledge that a weight-mile tax would not solve traffic congestion in Portland. For that, the legislature will need direct ODOT to implement congestion pricing in the Portland Metro area but that is probably better left for the next session.

Gary Shaff

