



JACKSON COUNTY

Oregon

Board of Commissioners

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10 South Oakdale, Room 214
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August 6, 2024

Senator Chris Gorsek, Co-Chair
Joint Committee on Transportation
900 Court Street NE, S-403
Salem OR 97301
Sen.ChrisGorsek@oregonlegislature.gov

Representative Susan McLain, Co-Chair
Joint Committee on Transportation
900 Court Street NE, H-493
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Joint Committee on Transportation
900 Court Street NE, Room 453
Salem OR 97301
JCT.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov

RE: Comments Regarding Transportation Safety and Sustainability

Dear Co-Chair Gorsek, Co-Chair McLain, and Members of the Joint Committee on Transportation:

We, the Jackson County Board of Commissioners, thank you for visiting southern Oregon as part of your statewide transportation package tour. We hope you found the time spent here to be valuable, while learning of our local transportation infrastructure issues and concerns. The challenges you have heard to date are statewide concerns, affecting transportation managers at all levels of government. The current funding crisis, alongside historic inflation, is resulting in difficult decisions for infrastructure managers as there simply is not enough funding to meet system demands. This funding shortfall is resulting in deferred maintenance that will burden future generations and create safety issues along our roadways, as well as increase congestion in our communities.

Our Board has long prioritized the maintenance of nearly 1,000 miles of roads in the County road system, especially the 758 miles of paved surfaces. As you have heard from many individuals throughout your tours, **deferring pavement maintenance results in the need for major rehabilitation, or reconstruction that is exponentially higher in cost than simply maintaining our current paved surfaces.** We firmly believe prioritizing cost-effective maintenance of our existing system is not only fiscally responsible, but ethically important to keep from taxing future generations for our shortfalls.

Jackson County, like many other counties, has a diverse road system consisting of roadways in rural communities, as well as in the heart of urban regions. We have miles of County roads that are within city limit boundaries that receive heavy traffic loads on a daily basis. These roads serve existing communities, as well as planned future communities. **As the urban areas within city limits continue to develop, funding is non-existent for the improvements and ongoing maintenance needed on our County roads to serve such growth.** This is particularly of concern with Governor Tina Kotek's housing strategy to promote further development to support the growing need for housing. Much-needed improvements to serve growing communities are unfunded, including bicycle and pedestrian facilities, school routes, and other safety features.

Lack of adequate funding also takes a toll on our ability to improve facilities for ever-growing emergency response needs. For example, the Foothill Road Corridor in the City of Medford has been identified as an alternate route for north and south traffic in the event of a major seismic event. It is very possible that Interstate 5 (I-5), a viaduct in Medford, may not survive such an event. If true, this would cripple emergency response services bringing much-needed supplies throughout Oregon from California via I-5. Areas such as Salem and

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eastern Oregon will feel these significant impacts, in addition to the Rogue Valley. Medford and Jackson County have invested more than \$60,000,000 in improvements to this corridor in recent years, with the final phase put on hold due to skyrocketing construction estimates. A project that was estimated to cost \$5,000,000 years ago is now estimated at \$12,000,000. We simply do not have the funding to proceed, and the shovel-ready project is on hold until sustainable transportation funding is secured.

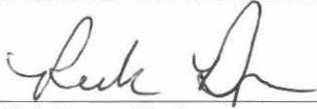
We bring these local issues to your attention as revenue projections have placed our County in a position to focus funding on maintaining what we have and, therefore, shelving important projects that not only serve our community but benefit the entire State. **In the meantime, intersections grow more crowded leading to more pollution, cities continue to develop while the County is void of funding to improve or maintain County roads that serve them, and our pavement will continue to degrade, placing an unfair burden on future generations.**

We acknowledge the issues listed above are not specific to Jackson County; this is an issue of statewide concern. We trust that the Joint Committee on Transportation will continue to work with stakeholders to fully understand the impacts of funding proposals and, in doing so, will acknowledge we are stronger together and the transportation system is more efficient when managed as a whole. Decreasing funding to one partner will weaken the combined system. Oregonians expect their transportation system to be managed efficiently as a system and do not track whose road they travel on when going to work, school, or the grocery store. Additionally, Oregonians simply expect roads to be well-maintained and to get them where they need to go. **As such, maintaining the 50/30/20 percent State Highway Fund split amongst the Oregon Department of Transportation, counties, and cities is imperative** to allow all jurisdictions the opportunity to meet what is asked of them in this shared responsibility.

We greatly appreciate your willingness to visit our County and hear from our residents. We hope you understand our concerns and trust you are working towards a solution for all, to the best of your ability.

Sincerely,

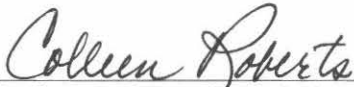
JACKSON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS



Rick Dyer, Chair



Dave Dotterer, Commissioner



Colleen Roberts, Commissioner

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By: Email Only