



Public Works
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August 8, 2024

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

On behalf of Josephine County, I would like to welcome you to our community.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our county's priorities on sustainable transportation revenue that supports a safe, functional, and efficient, statewide multimodal transportation system now and for years to come.

Oregon counties are responsible for the largest share of Oregon's public road system, with over 32,000 miles and over 4,000 bridges. Josephine County owns and maintains over 560 road miles and over 100 bridges. This includes 2 bridges in poor or fair condition, and 29 heavy-truck-weight restricted bridges.

Counties, like our city and state partners, count on the State Highway Fund. This fund is crucial for safety improvements and maintaining critical infrastructure that all Oregonians depend on — roads, bridges, sidewalks, bike paths, traffic signals, culverts, and fish passages. Counties partner with the state to support a safe and reliable multimodal transportation system that connects Oregonians and our economy. We respectfully ask this committee to uphold the long standing, 50-30-20 State Highway Fund distribution formula that efficiently supports Oregon's cities, counties, and highways.

Over the last 30 years, our federal partners have abandoned funding Oregon's rural roads. Dwindling timber harvest receipts that historically supported county road budgets left a gap that has never fully been remedied. In the 1990's, Josephine County Public Works (JCPW) received nearly \$2,000,000 and now we would be lucky to receive \$500,000. Josephine County depends on shared revenues from the State Highway Fund to bridge this gap.

Today, inflation, shrinking fuel consumption, and limited local tax bases, have required counties to defer needed safety improvements and routine maintenance work, resulting in a lower standard of quality and safety for the existing road system. Highway construction cost inflation has more than doubled our costs, while revenue has grown by less than half since 2017.

Josephine County depends on the State Highway Fund 50-30-20 allocation shares to fund critical capital improvements, such as New Hope Road widening and Fruitdale Drive culvert/pedestrian enhancements. This is all while still maintaining our county road 'portfolio'.

House Bill 2017, Oregon's historic transportation funding package helped many counties maintain services and preserve our roads. Smaller rural counties particularly rely on the Small County Allotment Program to keep all Oregonians connected. We respectfully ask this committee to support a commensurate increase to the Small County Allotment Program in any new transportation package.

Unfortunately, the additional funding in House Bill 2017, at the time was only estimated to cover less than *half* of the projected need to improve and maintain the county road system to a safe and adequate condition.

While counties have several local revenue raising options available such as local gas taxes, vehicle registration fees, or service districts, most county tax bases are too small to meet the operational, maintenance, and enhancement needs of our road system. We respectfully ask this committee to expand local options for counties to raise revenue and lift current preemptions.

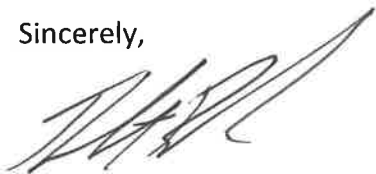
Counties are thankful for the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) and the legislature's concerted effort to work with local governments to find collaborative solutions to the state's impending budget deficit. Our partnership with ODOT and the legislature on House Bill 2101 Surface Transportation Block Grant Fund Exchange Program is an efficient model of collaboration that we look forward to continuing.

As work continues to develop the 2025 Transportation Package, we ask that you partner with counties, support the largest share of Oregon's public road system, and uphold the 50-30-20 funding formula that unites Oregon's cities, counties, and highways.

For more information on Josephine County's road, bridge, and transportation priorities, please see the attached County Road Priorities brief.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rob Brandes', written in a cursive style.

Rob Brandes
Director - Josephine County Public Works

Josephine County Road Priorities



County Information

Population: 88,814
Square Miles: 1,641
Federal / State Land
Ownership: 62 percent

Road Data

Total Road Miles: 566.83
Unpaved Road Miles: 1
Paved Roads in Good
Condition: 99 percent
Bridges: 105
Structurally Deficient
Bridges: 2

Road Funding

State Highway Fund:
\$8,652,683

Fund Exchange Program:
\$620,697

Timber Harvest Receipts:
\$206,175



oaces.oregoncounties.org
crp.oregoncounties.org

Background

Josephine County was founded in a flurry of mining claims but has been sustained by tourism and the forest products industry.

Oregon Counties are responsible for over 40 percent of Oregon's bridges and over 60 percent of Oregon's non-federal road system. With inflation, dwindling federal support, and few local revenue bases to rely on, Counties put their 30 percent of the State Highway Fund to good use.

Oregon counties are responsible for the largest share of Oregon's public road system, with over 32,000 miles and over 4,000 bridges; funding in House Bill 2017 covered less than half of the projected need to improve and maintain the county road system to a safe and adequate condition. Diverse and sustainable transportation revenue is needed to fund a seamless transportation system.

Investments

Counties support a comprehensive transportation funding package and ask to prioritize:

- (1) Operations, maintenance, and safety
- (2) Diverse, modern, and sustainable funding
- (3) 30% county share of the State Highway Fund
- (4) Increased flexibility for local revenue generation.

The priority projects below are only possible because of the 30 percent county share of the State Highway Fund. With this indispensable support, Josephine County is prioritizing:



- **Pavement Preservation:** Josephine County has effectively managed the condition of its pavement with less than six miles of county roads in fair or worse condition. To ensure their roads don't deteriorate and end up with potholes and cracking, Josephine County has prioritized the preservation of their pavement through chip seals, overlays, and pavement repairs. Pavement preservation is also extremely cost-effective, without regular preservation treatments, roads would eventually need to be reconstructed at a 6 to 14 times higher cost.
- **Road Improvements:** Josephine County is working to realign, widen, and improve a few key corridors. Further, Josephine County is working to prepare the preliminary engineering documents for future important road improvement projects.
- **Bridge Replacement and Rehabilitation:** It is crucial to prioritize investment in the replacement and rehabilitation of a county's bridges because, without action, access could be restricted. Structurally deficient bridges are likely candidates for replacement or rehabilitation, but even this significant infusion of new funding is insufficient to replace Josephine County's structurally deficient bridges.