

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

Transportation funding challenges for small jurisdictions with small staff

Thank you for hosting the roundtable on Thursday, it was a pleasure to participate. Below is a summary of the comments I hoped to convey as my role as an elected official of Southern Oregon.

I serve on the city council of Talent, a city of less than 6,000 people, which is in our fourth year of recovery after the Labor Day fires destroyed a third of our town.

I am writing on behalf of myself and my constituents, regarding specific transportation challenges of a small community with limited funding and staff.

Multi-modal and pedestrian safety

People in my city love to walk. When I knock on doors and ask folks about transportation issues, they don't say we need wider streets or more lanes. What they do say:

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- Can you please do something about the cars and trucks from speeding down my residential street so I can let my kid walk to school.
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- I don't feel safe using my wheelchair to restock my Little Free Library at the curb because I'm afraid of getting hit by traffic.
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- When will we ever get a sidewalk?
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Doing research for a Safe Routes to Schools grant I found that we were fortunate to have few traffic fatalities within our city limits in the past five years —, the one we did have was an experienced cyclist commuting home from work on a major roadway.

Our residents are asking for safer streets, and we know how to do this. But with our small staff and limited funding, even applying for grants is often beyond our capacity.

Funding Solutions

Speaking as a small city in rural Oregon, our biggest challenge is that we **do not have the staff or the funding** to respond to grants and other opportunities that are offered on the state level.

Here's what could help:

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- Grants and Technical Assistance
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 - Expand and copy programs like **Safe Routes to School**
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 - Provide technical assistance to small cities that cannot afford grant writers and administrators
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 - Make some grant opportunities automatic to encourage electrification – such as adding
 - EV chargers to every public works building and police department.
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- Every potential funding mechanism needs to be explored
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- A payroll tax
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- A usage tax that helps maintain the system
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- An increased gas tax to help compensate for the damage to the environment and public health cause by greenhouse gasses
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- Make it easier for cities to enact a local fuel tax
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- Provide more funding to the Oregon Transportation Infrastructure Bank, and make that financing program more well known.
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- Encourage economic development to alleviate supply chain issues
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- Just as the state has done by encouraging local housing construction technologies,
- the state could incentivize innovative, eco-friendly transportation industry and technologies, supporting our local economies and helping to make Oregon more economically independent.
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A Different Mindset

It's time that we move away from the transportation mindset that says we must always expand, in spite of the fact that commuters have work-from-home options like never before, and our population growth is leveling out.

We need to shift to a mindset of **stabilizing** our transportation system for safety, not speed. We need to make our system human friendly for everyone, especially older adults, folks with disabilities, and our kids.

Thank you all for your good work on these issues.

Sincerely,
-eleanor

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