

Development Permits • Environmental Health & Safety • Kayak Public Transit • Zoning

August 29, 2024

Joint Committee on Transportation
900 Court Street NE, Room 453,
Salem, OR, 97301

Dear Senator Gorsek and Representative McLain,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the 2025 Transportation Package currently in development. The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) is a sovereign tribal nation with jurisdiction over 91 miles of roads on the Umatilla Indian Reservation (UIR), and we work closely with our neighboring road jurisdictions, Oregon Department of Transportation and Umatilla County, that operate roads which traverse our land.

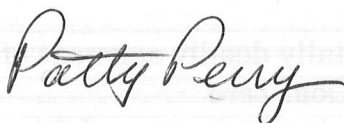
The CTUIR sits on the Northeast Area Commission on Transportation, the Safe Routes Advisory Committee, and the Walla Walla Valley Metro Planning Organization Policy Board which extends into northern Umatilla County. We also operate the regional transit network across the CTUIR's ancestral homelands. We hope you will take our goals under advisement, as we seek to continue to serve tribal members and their neighbors across our ceded territory.

- 1. Traffic Safety:** We would like to see a higher priority placed on the safety of the road network, including the safety of vulnerable road users – people without vehicles, such as youth, disabled elders, and transit users. Vehicle throughput (a.k.a. “efficiency”) is too often prioritized over the lives of travelers on the roads. This is a flaw in conventional traffic engineering that needs to be rectified.
- 2. Deadman’s Pass:** Our community, which is crossed by an especially deadly segment of Interstate-84 named “Deadman’s Pass”, is currently updating a Goal Zero transportation safety plan. We would like to see continued safety investments on I-84, as we will be unable to reach zero traffic deaths and serious injuries without it.
- 3. Focus on Vulnerable Road Users:** Our 20-year Transportation Plan for the UIR does not have a single new lane mile of road for vehicles. Instead, it focuses on improving our community’s safety on our existing road infrastructure and expanding access to safe walking, bicycling, transit, and horse-riding routes.
- 4. Increased Emphasis on Rural Transit:** The CTUIR relies on Oregon transit funds alongside federal and tribal funds to provide service to 18 communities in 4 counties, from Boardman, Oregon to La Grande, Oregon east-to-west and Pilot Rock, Oregon to Walla Walla, Washington north-to-south. We hope to see increased investment in rural transit across the state, as this service is critical to meet the needs of low-income, disabled, young, and elderly rural residents with few transportation options. We are regularly asked to serve rural communities that are outside our capacity.

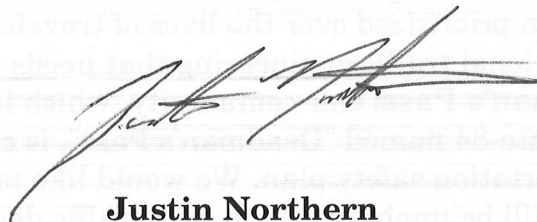
5. **Transit Administration Simplification:** State transit funds are crucial to our operations, but also impose an intense administrative burden on a small rural operator due to a different match rate applied to each transit route, and archaic and complicated reporting software. We request that transit funds be administered with a single match rate per operator, potentially as an average match rate of all funds allocated to the operator. This would reduce the administrative burden on rural operators and simplify the budgeting of local match.
6. **Long-Distance Rail:** A recent Federal Transit Administration study on the restoration of long-distance Amtrak service placed the restoration of the Eastern Oregon rail route at low ranking in terms of the cost-benefit analysis they completed, compared to other long-distance passenger rail routes that were shut down in the 1990s. Nevertheless, CTUIR would like to support any effort ODOT puts forward in considering the restoration of that rail service, known as the Pioneer line along I-84, as we believe it would be a valuable service to Eastern Oregon communities to increase transportation safety and equity for people without access to personal vehicles, and environmental sustainability in taking vehicles off the road for long trips.
7. **Maintenance First:** We would like to see Oregon maintain what it has, rather than tearing up the land with new and expanded roads. Old Highway 30 where it traverses the UIR is in a terrible state of repair, and many rural roads that provide agriculture access on the Reservation are gravel, have low visibility when crops are high, and have uncontrolled intersections that have resulted in traffic deaths and serious injuries.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to continuing engagement with our neighboring jurisdictions in the State of Oregon and hope to see a transportation package that better serves the most vulnerable members of our respective communities.

Sincerely,



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