



Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

Safe Routes to School Advisory Committee

555 13th St NE, Suite 2

Salem, OR 97301-4178

www.oregon.gov/odot/programs/pages/srts-srac.aspx

August 21st, 2024

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

Re: 2025 Transportation Funding

To members of the Joint Committee on Transportation,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on developing a 2025 transportation package to meet our statewide needs. The Oregon Safe Routes Advisory Committee is appointed by the ODOT Director to recommend projects for funding in ODOT's Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Construction and Education Grant Programs and is an advisory body to both ODOT and the Oregon Transportation Commission.

We strongly support the inclusion of an increase in Safe Routes to School construction funding, a need explicitly identified by ODOT to meet our statewide safety goals. ODOT has estimated that we would need an increase in funding from \$15 million annually to \$50 million annually to meet the statewide need for Safe Routes to School infrastructure. This estimate was based on the average of all the project requests in each grant solicitation cycle since the passage of HB 2017. ODOT is currently in the process of an open solicitation for SRTS construction projects that SRAC will review and approve. We received initial requests for project funding that ran **five times** over the amount we have available on a bi-annual basis. With this recent oversubscription, as well as the ongoing issue of cost increases for construction projects that we have had to mitigate for with our existing funds, we believe the investment in Safe Routes to School could benefit from up to \$75 million/year over the next 30 years to effectively meet the needs of every school in the state. We urge your support of an increased investment in Safe Routes to School construction projects at or above \$50 million annually.

We believe it is important to emphasize the impact of SRTS projects on the whole community. In the context of the large amounts of funding necessary for other major infrastructure projects, SRTS projects provide immediate benefit to not only the students at the school that each project serves – but the larger community surrounding each project. Schools are hubs for community cohesion and are often located in close proximity to other important neighborhood assets. Safe Routes to School and Community Paths grants funded the construction of approximately 1,700 linear feet of sidewalk and asphalt path, two crosswalks across highways, and safety signs on the



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Umatilla Indian Reservation. These two trails closed a gap where, when the project began, there was not a single safe walking path between any residence and the Nixya'awii Community School – a tribal charter school in the Pendleton School District. The ribbon cutting event for this project was attended by the Confederated Tribes of Umatilla Indian Reservation Board of Trustees, the Tribal Youth Council, Yellowhawk Tribal Health Clinic, Nixya'awii Community School School Board members, Confederated Umatilla Journal (local news), and ODOT region and district staff - showing the broad impact of one SRTS project.

Safe Routes to School projects invest in our most vulnerable roadway users – children walking and biking to and from school, who may not have any other transportation option available to them. The state's SRTS Construction program places a strong emphasis on addressing the needs of schools who serve low-income students, disabled students, and students of color, across the state. These investments are on a human scale; and are an opportunity for ODOT to build relationships with local communities to meet the needs that they have shared for years: safe and accessible routes for children to travel to school.

Lastly, we support the development of a proposal and revenue structure that enables the state to meet basic maintenance needs and effectively invest in critical safety infrastructure. Meeting these existing needs and ensuring that all Oregonians can safely access their communities should come first in any proposal. Our colleagues on the Oregon Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee have provided detailed recommendations on revenue considerations.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input and we look forward to additional conversation on investing in safer streets for Oregon students.

Sincerely,

Noel Mickelberry and Will Anderson
Chair and Incoming Chair
Oregon Safe Routes to School Advisory Committee (SRAC)

Transmitted via e-mail.

CC: SRAC Members
Julie Brown - OTC Chair
Kris Strickler – ODOT Director
Lindsay Baker – ODOT Assistant Director of Government and External Relations