

Talking Points

Central Oregon Legislative Hearing on Transportation

September 12, 2024

**Location: OSU Cascades Campus, Ray Hall
1500 SW Chandler Avenue
Bend, OR 97702**

Redmond Priorities:

ODOT and the State own and maintain two primary highways in Central Oregon:

Highway 97 which runs north and south and Highway 126 which runs east and west.

As the hub of the fastest growing region in the state, our area is desperately behind in transportation infrastructure. Traffic congestion is becoming the norm, and safety challenges and threats continue to grow. Many of our state highways still have long, two lane stretches with no barriers between the lanes. Accidents and fatalities delay traffic even further.

As Central Oregon becomes increasingly congested, there are two intersections on West Highway 126 which are in dire need of safety improvements.

The intersection at 126 (Highland) and SW 35th in Redmond needs a four-way traffic signal. About a quarter-mile to the west, the intersection at 126 and Helmholtz (on the edge of the city limits) is also becoming unsafe for cross-traffic movements and needs a roundabout. Our estimate is a traffic signal would cost the state \$1.5M to \$2.0M.

Redmond is willing to invest around \$500,000 to make this happen as soon as possible.

The roundabout, which is a Deschutes County and City ask would probably cost around \$5M - \$6M.

The traffic signal is absolutely critical. A new Redmond Parks and Recreation center is being built on 35th just south of 126. This facility is estimated to attract more than 2,000 daily users, with approximately half of those drivers using the intersection of 35th and Highway 126. Safety statistics from 2016 - 2024 shows there were more than 260 motor vehicle crashes. Of those, 47 resulted in injuries and an additional 2 were fatalities. Anyone who drives that intersection can see that these numbers will only get worse. The Recreation. Center is expected to open in 2026 so the clock is ticking. Redmond is ready to help.

Our hope is that the legislature funds these improvements before we are sitting here pointing to a fatality as the rationale for finally acting.

A final note: we recognize that as the gas tax fails to keep up with infrastructure needs, we need to act, a balanced approach, with small revenue raising features in multiple areas and specifically dedicated to roads, is the right approach. We urge you set aside the argument that the Legislature only address operations and maintenance and take a more equitable approach geographically in addressing vital infrastructure needs particularly in our fast growing region because without an appropriate level of investment our highways will be ever more congested and more at risk for accidents and injury.