



Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

Oregon Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee

555 13th St NE, Suite 2

Salem, OR 97301-4178

OBPAC@odot.oregon.gov

www.oregon.gov/ODOT/Get-Involved/Pages/OBPAC

4 September 2024

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

Re: 2025 Transportation Needs Package

Dear Members of the Joint Committee on Transportation (JCT),

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the 2025 Oregon transportation package. The Oregon Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee is appointed by the Governor to advise the Department of Transportation on bicycle and pedestrian issues and to act as a liaison between the Department and the public.

It is imperative that ODOT's funding sources be adjusted, as ODOT is forced to reduce services due to budgetary constraints and has consistently experienced an expansion of scope. This shortfall has been manifested by incomplete walking and biking systems as well as numerous delayed and canceled projects, the inability of the agency to effectively remove encampments from infrastructure, snow/ice removal services being reduced, and an overall lack of important multimodal transportation system maintenance.

Within the scope of the future budget, maintaining and expanding safe active transportation systems must be part of the solution. Important programs such as Safe Routes to School which the state would benefit from expanding are currently underfunded and oversubscribed. Safe Routes to School alone needs at least \$35 million annually to meet current needs.

ODOT has already postponed new active transportation projects due to lack of future maintenance funding. Focusing capital funding on active transportation programs is the only path that will lead the state to a sustainable future that allows all to commute Oregon without a car comfortably, allowing for better public health, a more efficient economy, and increased societal equality. To ensure a prosperous future for Oregon, ODOT requires a larger budget that is focused on active transportation so it can maintain current infrastructure and create new projects that increase the sustainability of the state and reduce its reliance on fossil fuels that hurt the state's environment.



Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

Oregon Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee

555 13th St NE, Suite 2

Salem, OR 97301-4178

OBPAC@odot.oregon.gov

www.oregon.gov/ODOT/Get-Involved/Pages/OBPAC

Please consider our recommendations to the 2025 State Transportation Package: an increased gas tax, a per mile traveled tax on EVs, tolling on specific roadways, and a focus on active transportation spending. Additionally, we recommend that all taxes, fees, and tolls be tied to inflation to ensure ODOT does not have a shrinking real-valued budget year over year as it has in the past.

We feel that, for the long term economic benefit of Oregon and the continued function of ODOT, the state gas tax should be raised to a point that discourages fossil fuel usage and allows ODOT to maintain all existing infrastructure and quickly construct capital projects such as bikeways that will allow the state to shift away from its predominantly car based infrastructure. It is imperative that ODOT can shift away from the state's current car based transportation system as fast as possible to reduce the negative externalities of fuel consumption, better public health, expand the economy, and reduce the long term expenses of transportation that Oregon faces.

The gas tax has been the main source of income for ODOT and it should remain that way for the short term; it is a simple means by which most citizens can be taxed proportionally to the amount they drive on Oregon's roads. However, the gas tax alone does not properly fund the true cost of using Oregon's roadways nor fully address the environmental damage caused by fossil fuel use. The 2009 research report "How Much Should Highway Fuels Be Taxed?" by Ian W.H. Perry¹ found that a corrective gas tax between \$1.86 and \$2.85 per gallon (in 2024 dollars) is optimal for the economy. Currently the statewide gas tax is only \$0.40 per gallon. An increased gas tax would result in fewer vehicular miles traveled and, thereby reduce the societal costs of congestion, crashes, pollution, and global warming.

However, an increase in the statewide gas tax would not account for damage caused by non-gasoline vehicles. A per-mile-traveled tax on EVs could easily be implemented by expanding Oregon's existing OReGO system. This would allow ODOT to accurately receive revenue for road damage caused by EVs and somewhat discourage driving.

Sincerely,

André Lightsey-Walker and David Thomson, Co-Chairs
Oregon Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee

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

¹ [How Much Should Highway Fuels Be Taxed?](#) (Ian W.H. Perry, Resources for the Future, 2009)