



Lake County Board of Commissioners

513 Center Street
Lakeview, Oregon 97630
(541) 947-6003
Fax: (541) 947-5775

Barry Shullanberger, Commissioner
James Williams, Chair
Mark Albertson, Vice-Chair

August 12, 2024

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

On behalf of Lake County, we would like to welcome you to our region.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our county's priorities on sustainable transportation revenue that supports a safe, functional, and efficient, statewide multimodal transportation system now and for years to come.

Oregon counties are responsible for the largest share of Oregon's public road system, with over 32,000 miles and over 4,000 bridges. Lake County owns and maintains 730 road miles and 38 county bridges. This includes 181 miles in poor or fair condition, and 14 bridges in poor or fair condition.

Counties, like our city and state partners, count on the State Highway Funds. This fund is crucial for safety improvements and maintaining critical infrastructure that all Oregonians depend on — roads, bridges, sidewalks, bike paths, traffic signals, culverts, and fish passages. Counties partner with the state to support a safe and reliable multimodal transportation system that connects Oregonians and our economy. We respectfully ask this committee to uphold the, long standing, 50-30-20 State Highway Fund distribution formula that efficiently supports Oregon's cities, counties, and highways.

Today, inflation, shrinking fuel consumption, and limited local tax bases, have required counties to defer needed safety improvements and routine maintenance work, resulting in a lower standard of quality and safety for the existing road system. Highway construction cost inflation has more than doubled our costs, while revenue has grown by less than half since 2017.

Lake County depends on the State Highway Fund 50-30-20 allocation shares to fund critical capital improvements, such as Christmas Valley Highway, Bear Flat Lane, Arrow Gap Road and maintain 365 miles of road in need of preservation, maintenance, and safety improvements.

House Bill 2017, Oregon's historic transportation funding package helped many counties maintain services and preserve our roads. Smaller rural counties particularly rely on the Small County Allotment Program to keep all Oregonians connected. We respectfully ask this committee to support a commensurate increase to the Small County Allotment Program in any new transportation package.

Unfortunately, the additional funding in House Bill 2017, at the time was only estimated to cover less than *half* of the projected need to improve and maintain the county road system to a safe and adequate condition.

Lake County has many unmet needs such as Christmas Valley Highway which was listed earlier in this letter and is 53.3 miles in length. Arrow Gap which is 7 miles and as extension of Christmas Valley Highway. Bear Flat Lane, 15 miles which connects Lake and Klamath County. Just a small example of roadway altogether, 20 percent of the asphalt assets, and equaling 75 miles of asphalt in which Lake County's budget will fall short on allowing proper maintenance and much needed resurfacing. These specific county roads used to carry local agriculture, farm to market hay and were mostly minor collectors. In the last 8-10 years average daily traffic counts to include heavy truck traffic have plagued them and we are unable to reprofile and/or overlay these routes in any significant thickness of pavement necessary to carry the load. Lake County since 2016 has not been able to budget for any significant pavement overlays due to budget shortfall from lack of Timber Receipts and although HB 2017 has helped to keep our Preventative Maintenance going the lack of funding has certainly had and will exponentially have a negative effect on our asphalt infrastructure.

Lake County has been able to crack seal 60-100 miles and manage 35-70 miles per year of seal coats to seal the asphalt assets we currently maintain. Lake County is in a preservation and maintenance first planning situation when it comes to our asphalt assets. Here we have listed just a few of our concerns, because these specific roads are carrying an immense amount of heavy haul weight in which the original Emulsified Asphalt Concrete (EAC) was not intended. These routes are routinely utilized by the through traffic trucking industry to avoid the scales on both 97 and on State Route 20.

While counties have several local revenue raising options available such as local gas taxes, vehicle registration fees, or service districts, most county tax bases are too small to meet the operational, maintenance, and enhancement needs of our road system. We respectfully ask this committee to expand local options for counties to raise revenue and lift current preemptions.

Lake County is thankful for the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) and the legislature's concerted effort to work with local governments to find collaborative solutions to the state's impending budget deficit. Our partnership with ODOT and the legislature on House Bill 2101 Surface Transportation Block Grant Fund Exchange Program is an efficient model of collaboration that we look forward to continuing.

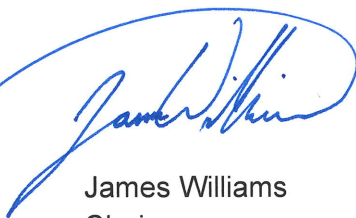
As work continues to develop the 2025 Transportation Package, we ask that you partner with counties, support the largest share of Oregon's public road system, and uphold the 50-30-20 funding formula that unites Oregon's cities, counties, and highways.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Barry Shullanberger
Commissioner



James Williams
Chairman



Mark Albertson
Vice Chair