

2242 NW 7th St  
Bend, OR 97703  
12 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),

As you work to develop a Transportation Package during the next Legislative session, please consider how to better align ODOT's funding and program with the needs of all Oregonians. Funding for ODOT needs to be sustainable. But the funding level needs to be set AFTER deciding what we want our transportation system to do.

For too long, our transportation system has encouraged everyone to drive and to drive for all trips, long or short. And while our transportation system must support our economy, it has done so at the expense of people who don't or can't drive and their safety, at the expense of our future climate, and with a growing debt burden on the state.

Your priorities for ODOT should be:

1. Maintain our existing system, both the infrastructure and its driving condition through the year.
2. Dramatically expand non-driving programs:
  - a. Safe Routes to School
  - b. Great Streets
  - c. Oregon Community Paths
  - d. Local and Statewide transit and paratransit funding
3. Replace bridges to upgrade safety. The only expansion of bridges or bridge approaches should be to provide space for public transit.
4. No new roads or expansion of existing roads or freeways.

In order to fund this program we should

- replace the gas tax with a road user fee based on miles driven at a rate that increases with the weight of the vehicle and is indexed to inflation.
- toll road and bridge users on congested bridges and sections of the freeway system.

The big freeway projects should be halted and the Interstate Bridge project should be scaled back to replace the current structure with no additional capacity except for public transportation. We should not add any new debt obligation for any road expansion project.

I am particularly interested in expanding the Great Streets program, provided it is constrained to meet the needs of people living near these streets and not, as has historically been the case, focused on getting cars and freight through our towns and cities. State highways cut through every town and city in Oregon. They are barriers to people outside of cars who want to cross them or move along them.

- I often see people trying to cross on foot between crosswalks because it is too far to walk to a crosswalk.
- I see people on bikes doing crazy and dangerous things to cross them because they are not designed to make biking safe and convenient..
- People tell me they jog across side streets because cars don't look for or stop for people at these dangerous intersections.
- On some streets, utility poles are located in the sidewalk, sometimes in the ADA ramps. This makes it nearly impossible for people using mobility devices to travel along these streets.

These highways through town are, after all, highways. They are designed to let traffic flow fast through our towns. And people use them exactly as they are designed—to drive fast through towns. They are not designed for the safety and convenience of people who travel outside of cars or for people who live or work near these highways. The Great Streets program should be scaled up so ODOT can make these streets safer and more useful to the people who move across and along them outside a car. This must involve adding many new, safe places to cross, to slow traffic, and to make sidewalks and bike lanes safe, connected, and accessible. This is an enormous task and the skill and resources of ODOT should be focused on it.

If most people drive today, that doesn't mean they all want to drive. It means that our streets and public transportation don't give them other choices. If you see few people biking and walking, that doesn't mean more people don't want to walk and bike. It means that our streets aren't safe, comfortable, and accessible for people outside of cars.

We must make it possible and convenient for people to travel outside of cars, on bikes, scooters, buses, or on foot to lower our climate impact. We must maintain our streets and roads in all seasons. We don't need wider roads or more lanes—that encourages more people to drive and to drive more and is at cross purposes to efforts towards a sustainable climate.

Please tell ODOT to take care of our existing roads and make them safe for all of us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David C. Green".

David C. Green