

Testimony Before Joint Committee on Transportation  
September 25, 2024

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

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you today. As a member of Salem's City Council, I hear from residents and our business community almost every day with complaints and concerns about conditions of our streets.

My ward, Ward 6, which is in Northeast Salem, is representative of the challenges you've heard about today. For my constituents, funding challenges show up as bumpy roads and vehicle damage, extra time to get to medical appointments, shopping, school or work, and more and more accidents. Sometimes, terrible accidents.

In my Ward, the streets look like City of Salem streets to residents, businesses and visitors but, they are often owned and operated – or shared – by ODOT or Marion County. We have good solid partnerships and work well together, but these projects can get complicated. It can be challenging to get our timing and common priorities moving in the same direction. All of our needs exceed available funding. It is essential that all of these systems are well supported and functioning.

While the City could move more quickly responding to constituent concerns, we're struggling to keep up with regular and ongoing maintenance. We can't get to larger scale or full depth repairs of asphalt or concrete streets, because we can't afford it, later - if we do get to it, it all costs more. Repairing damaged streets is more costly than regular maintenance. As you've heard today, the State Highway fund has failed to keep pace with increasing costs. Steel, concrete, asphalt, and labor have contributed to an annual increase of almost 24% in costs in 2023 according to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

We will continue to lose ground with road and right of way maintenance without additional funding to meet the growing need in our communities.

What are we asking for? Two things.

First, we need an increase to State Highway Fund revenues for cities. Second, we need your support to continue distribution of State Highway Funds to include cities and counties.

In addition... I would like you to know that I do not take the opportunity to speak before you lightly. I am here today as a resident, a sitting Council member and Mayor Elect of this great city. The issues you consider have great impact on both residents and visitors. We need your support and advocacy on these as well as other important issues.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to working with you in the coming year.