

Dear Chair and Members of the Joint Transportation Committee,

My name is Ana Tijerina Esquino. I work as a civil engineer in the region and had the privilege of chairing the 2024 Report Card for Oregon's infrastructure for the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE). I am also an Oregon resident living in Milwaukie who is passionate about improving our infrastructure to better serve all of our communities across the state. I am writing to express my support for a balanced approach to Oregon's transportation infrastructure, focusing on maintaining and improving our existing systems, while also making strategic investments in necessary expansions and replacements. The 2024 Oregon Infrastructure Report Card highlights the urgency of securing long-term, dedicated funding to address our aging bridges, roads, and public transit systems.

Oregon's aging bridges are in critical need of rehabilitation or replacement. Prioritizing our aging bridges will reduce the substantial cost of maintaining an aging inventory - as our bridges continue to age, the cost to maintain them in an operable condition will rise. We need to fully fund retrofits or replacements for bridges along key "lifeline" routes to meet ODOT's goal of post-earthquake resiliency. With a growing number of bridges in poor condition, securing a long-term, inflation-adjusted funding source to replace around 30 bridges annually is essential to preserving the integrity of our transportation network. Our 2024 report found that at our 2023 bridge replacement rate, an Oregon bridge would need to remain in service for over 900 years, far exceeding the typical service life of 75 to 100 years.

When it comes to our roads, addressing congestion in metropolitan areas and declining road conditions throughout the state requires a multi-faceted approach that includes expanding public transportation and implementing new technologies that improve safety and sustainability. It's also vital to increase funding for roadway maintenance and preservation at both the state and local levels, ensuring seasonal operations and maintenance are optimized. Poor road conditions come at a big cost to drivers. ASCE reports have found each person in Oregon pays, on average, about 266 dollars a year in extra repair and operating costs because of things like potholes damaging their cars. That cost adds up to about 780 million dollars a year statewide. This underfunding of transportation infrastructure has also created safety hazards for our communities. Reported crash history on Oregon's public roads from 2017-2021 show a 36% increase in fatal crashes during this period. This increase has resulted in 599 deaths in 2021 compared to 439 deaths in 2017. As a state, we should be working toward zero roadway fatalities so that we can all feel safe and confident on our transportation system.

I support the use of tolls or other pay-per-use taxes as a congestion management tool, but I believe toll revenues should be allocated primarily toward critical infrastructure upgrades, public transit and active transportation infrastructure. This ensures that we're investing in long-term solutions to reduce congestion and emissions, rather than adding highway lanes, which only worsens congestion over time.

In line with the 2024 Oregon Infrastructure Report Card, I urge the Committee to:

1. Increase Dedicated Funding Across Categories: Secure long-term, dedicated funding sources for both maintenance and necessary expansions. It's critical that we focus on resilient, inflation-adjusted funding mechanisms rather than short-term financial fixes.

2. **Prioritize the Replacement of Aging Bridges:** Allocate resources to replace aging bridges and reduce the significant cost of maintaining an outdated bridge inventory. Focus on fully funding the retrofit or replacement of bridges along key lifeline routes, particularly in preparation for the Cascadia Subduction Zone Earthquake.
 3. **Implement Comprehensive Resiliency Measures:** Enhance the resilience of our transportation infrastructure through a comprehensive, all-hazard risk assessment process. This approach should evaluate vulnerabilities, interdependencies, and risks, while encouraging mitigation strategies that enhance recovery and return-to-service capabilities in the face of natural and man-made disasters.
 4. **Utilize Asset Management Systems to Optimize Spending:** Develop and implement asset management systems that incorporate life-cycle cost considerations, prioritize critical system components, and guide long-term capital budgeting for both roads and bridges. This will ensure we allocate resources strategically and efficiently.
 5. **Invest in Workforce Development and Public Participation:** Address the skilled workforce shortage and engage the public in education efforts. This includes phasing out the sale of studded tires, promoting alternative safety measures for winter driving, and educating the public on new intersection and roadway safety technologies.
- By focusing on these areas, we can ensure that Oregon's transportation system is not only maintained but is also prepared for future demands and challenges. Thank you for your time and consideration in working toward a sustainable, resilient transportation network for Oregon. I do hope you will read our full report which includes an analysis of our roads, bridges, transit, aviation, and water transportation systems with recommendations to raise the grades for the state and for each infrastructure system. Please know our report card committee and the members of the Oregon section of the American Society of Civil Engineers would love the opportunity to further inform your work in any way that is helpful. We know our infrastructure systems well and want to work alongside legislators to ensure we are building the A+ infrastructure that our state deserves.

Thank you,

Ana

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Ana Tijerina Esquino, EIT
2024 Oregon Report Card Chair
Portland YMF Past President