

Submitter: Adriane McKinney
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Interim Committee On Transportation
Funding
Measure, Appointment or LC 2
Topic:

My name is Adriane McKinney, and I work at the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT).

There is much to say about the devastating impacts ODOT layoffs will have on Oregon's roads, economy, and communities. But today I want to focus on the human cost: what does failure of this bill mean for the people who serve ODOT?

I am an ODOT employee, and I am on the layoff list. In the most recent wave of SEIU bumps, I was displaced. I have worked for the state for ten years, seven of them at ODOT. I am the sole provider for my family. My husband and our 12-year-old daughter are both autistic, and I work to keep them safe, fed, and housed. Eleven years ago we were unhoused with a two-year-old child. We were lucky that we had family who provided a safe place to land, but it was state employment that gave me the ability to rebuild our lives and our independence. Now we face the possibility of losing all that progress. Even a month on unemployment could mean losing our apartment and becoming unhoused again.

And I am not alone. Many of my colleagues, good and dedicated people who have served this state loyally for decades, are facing the same. No one on the layoff list deserves the fear, grief, and instability they have endured for the past six weeks.

Inside ODOT, the impact is profound. Entire work units are being gutted. Morale is the lowest I have ever seen. Work has stalled while employees do all they can to support one another. Those not directly impacted are weighed down by survivor's guilt. Those exercising bumping rights face an impossible choice: lose their own income, or displace a respected colleague. Even if these layoffs are stopped tomorrow, some damage has already been done. ODOT may never fully recover.

The process has been chaotic and demoralizing. Last fall, a detailed reduction-in-force list was prepared based on workload and essential functions. That list was abandoned at the last minute. A new list was rushed together in days, with no workforce input. The result is indiscriminate and short-sighted cuts. If allowed to go forward, the agency will be in chaos. Half the workforce will be learning new roles overnight with no transition or knowledge transfer. At least 483 employees, along with their experience and institutional knowledge, will be gone.

For decades, ODOT employees have shown up even when times were tough. We

carried the work of three people, and we did it with pride because we believed in the mission and in each other. Now, many of those being laid off are the same people who gave their lives to this work. In many classifications, “low seniority” still means decades of service. The agency is not just losing staff, it is losing knowledge, commitment, and its sense of purpose.

All of this was preventable.

As a taxpayer, I will always support fiscal responsibility. I want legislators to ask hard questions, push for accountability, and demand good solutions. But I also believe that sometimes we must be willing to invest more, through taxes if needed, to ensure our children inherit an Oregon with safe infrastructure, strong schools, thriving communities, and care for its most vulnerable.

There is plenty of blame to go around. Some will fault Democrats or Republicans, the OTC or JCT, ODOT leadership, or even Governor Kotek. But one group is never blamed: the Oregonians who work at ODOT. Yet these are the people who will pay the price.

I understand politics often involve strategy, leverage, and appeals to base voters. But respectfully, it is time to put that aside and vote to fund ODOT. Please vote YES.