

August 22, 2025

Co-Chairs Wagner and Fahey, Vice-Chairs Bonham and Drazen, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of LC 2. My name is Jennifer Erickson and I've worked for ODOT since 2021 in Program Coordination and Data Analysis. My work directly supports civil rights and small business programs required by federal and state laws and rules. I'm not on the layoff list, but I am eligible to be bumped. I help members of the public with some concerns directly and route other customers to the right partners within ODOT to help them resolve concerns. Every day I help ensure the public gets help with DMV issues, roadway concerns, and accessing ODOT's services. I also write and edit reports, manage internal and external webpage content, and perform data analysis, QA, and reporting tasks. I also have experience working in ODOT's public transit and passenger rail, road usage charge, weight-mile tax, and payroll units, so I've seen what we do from many angles over the years.

I know that people like me who do operations work aren't always extremely visible, and it's easy to take us for granted. Yet our skilled operations work is critical to ODOT's success. Our DMV, Commerce and Compliance, Project and Maintenance, and Incident Response and Ask ODOT team mates do incredible work that the public sees every day. Yet, no office with people working in the field can survive without solid, skilled, reliable back-office teams. Operations workers, like me, bring years of experience, institutional memory, and skills, many of which a person can only gain through time in our roles. Then we teach those who join us how to grow their skills and knowledge quickly so the high-quality work can always continue. Our effectiveness and efficiency saves Oregon taxpayers time and money, and our strong outcomes make things safer and easier for our employees and the traveling public. We're dedicated, passionate, and eager to serve our Oregon public, and we team up every day to do the best job we can.

ODOT's funding crisis isn't new, and it's not like ODOT hasn't been communicating about it consistently for many years. ODOT released the first "Rough Roads Ahead" report in 2014 and the "Rough Roads Ahead 2" report in 2017, both of which forecasted where we are today and described the lack of fluidity in transportation funding. In 2015, ODOT launched a pay-per-mile road user fee program, and its statewide communications further illustrated how funding streams were staying static while operations and maintenance costs were rapidly increasing.

Starting in 2019, the pandemic further pressured market forces and drove costs up, with construction resource costs inflating a full 50 percent between 2020 and 2023 (National Highway Construction Cost Index/FHWA). And it's simple math, too -- when your income stays the same and your rent goes up, it gets a whole lot harder to pay the rent. Fully one year ago, long before the latest legislative session started, ODOT released a 5 minute video describing the crisis in plain language. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=knxHP\\_QX3PM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=knxHP_QX3PM) -- again describing the way most funds are pre-programmed and how the bit that funds maintenance and operations is getting more and more depleted.

Personally, I am tired of watching each set of decision makers repeatedly kick the can down the road to some theoretical future set of decision makers as our transportation system becomes less and less safe and accessible for the traveling public. I don't want to pay more in taxes and fees any more than anyone else! But as Oregon pays far less for its transportation system services and infrastructure than any other western state, everyone suffers, including city and county transportation systems. Please, please, as decision makers, I ask you to put your great intelligence, energy, and true care for Oregon toward approving a truly sustaining solution in THIS session. It's time to stop the cycle that drains ODOT of the funds it can use to make transportation in Oregon work for everyone statewide and start a new cycle that prioritizes critical transportation needs.

Please fund ODOT, now. Help us help you! We, the experienced and skilled people of ODOT, want to give you -- and everyone in Oregon -- the best we have to give. But we can only do that if we are still here. Thanks for listening.

Jennifer Erickson