

August 22, 2025

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of LC 2. My name is Nicole Charlson and I've worked for ODOT for 18 years as Traffic Safety (Research Analyst 4). Traffic safety work is critically important because it directly impacts the health, safety, and well-being of individuals and communities. My position shapes safer systems, influences policy, and protects lives across the region.

ODOT staff are not just plowing roads and filling potholes - there are so many services we provide to Oregonians. During a fatal traffic crash, ODOT staff provide traffic control to keep emergency responders safe and help keep roads open. Last year, Oregon had 534 people killed on our roads. ODOT Incident Response and Maintenance workers respond to these crash scenes regularly. Sometimes, they are the first to arrive on-scene and provide critical lifesaving assistance until EMS arrives - our maintenance stations are often nearby. ODOT staff clear the roadway as soon as possible to prevent secondary crashes into the crash scene and set up detour routes.

Crews have been cut to such a small size that we risk employee's lives without adequate staff to ensure a safe construction zone. For my job, I manage federal traffic safety grants for projects to help save lives in Oregon. Without enough staff to deliver safety projects, we may not be able to spend the federal grants - many of which benefit local communities. I am proud of our safety projects that we've put forward. They are shown to reduce crashes and prevent tragedies on our roadways. The people in our safety team put so many long hours, heart and soul to find ways to reduce tragic crashes. And our maintenance staff help keep roads open so goods and services can be delivered, and so ambulances can transport people quickly to hospitals where they can receive care. I fear for what will happen when the snow season arrives without plow drivers and de-icer to keep roads open.

Please stand with ODOT workers and vote in support of LC 2. Our safety is at stake.

Thank you,

Nicole Charlson