

**To: Members of the Joint Committee on Transportation Funding
Oregon State Legislature
Salem, Oregon**

Subject: No New Taxes for a Mismanaged ODOT

Dear Committee Members,

I spent over a decade working inside ODOT Region 1 in Portland—from 2008 to 2019—and I saw firsthand how public funds were squandered under the guise of operational necessity. Before you ask Oregonians to shoulder yet another round of taxes to bail out this agency, you need to understand what’s really happening behind closed doors.

Example 1: Two of my coworkers couldn’t get along. Instead of managers stepping in to resolve the issue, they hired an outside HR consultant to run five “team bonding” sessions—at \$5,000 per session. That’s \$25,000 spent to avoid basic supervisory responsibility.

Example 2: My manager ordered specialized rain gear for nine field employees—at \$2,000 per set. Meanwhile, the rest state maintenance crews had to buy their own gear or settle for a discount. This wasn’t about safety—it was about favoritism and unchecked spending.

These are not isolated incidents. They reflect a culture of waste, inconsistency, and poor leadership that has plagued ODOT for years. And now, instead of reforming internal practices, you propose to double the payroll tax, hike registration fees, current gas tax and penalize electric vehicle owners—all to feed the same broken system.

ODOT’s history of financial mismanagement is well documented. The Interstate Bridge Replacement project has ballooned from an estimated \$4.8 billion to \$7.5 billion, with some projections suggesting it could exceed \$10 billion—despite years of planning and no clear funding strategy ([The Oregonian, March 2024](#)). The Abernethy Bridge project, originally budgeted at \$248 million, has surged to over \$815 million due to repeated cost overruns and poor planning ([Willamette Week, November 2023](#)). These aren’t just unfortunate miscalculations—they’re the predictable result of systemic dysfunction.

Meanwhile, many local governments across Oregon—including the county I currently work for—have faced similar budget pressures. But instead of raising taxes or passing costs onto residents, they made tough decisions: eliminating positions, scaling back services, and delaying projects. That’s what responsible governance looks like. ODOT should be held to the same standard.

Oregonians deserve better. We deserve transparency, accountability, and fiscal discipline. Until ODOT proves it can manage its existing resources responsibly, **NO NEW TAXES** should be considered. Audit the agency. Cut the excess. Fix the culture. Then—and only then—should you come to taxpayers with your handout. And if you truly believe these tax increases are justified, have the courage to put them on the ballot and let the people of Oregon decide. If you won’t trust the public with that choice, then you have no business asking them to pay for your failure. ACCOUNTABILITY starts with you!

Respectfully,

Robert Hintz

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Forest Grove, Oregon