

August 25, 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 John Turner, and I'm urging your support for the essential work ODOT does for the state.

While I know some may portray this as a controversial stance, I'd like to relate what is behind some of the controversy. One of the things I hear is "We gave ODOT billions in HB2017 and other funding, they lost \$1 billion of it, and now they want more?"

To be clear, ODOT did not "lose" \$1 billion. There was indeed a forecasting error where projected reimbursements for the next 5 to 10 years were entered as if they would be received in a single biennium. While a significant error, no money was "lost." The issue is a further sign of aged data systems (with some code going back to 1965). What has been lost is professionals who knew how these systems interacted and could have helped prevent these errors. This loss has only accelerated as people leave or retire under the impending threat of layoffs. There are positions which only have one person left who know how to do the job, and for the mainframe, there are no people internal to ODOT who know how to support it. There is one contractor in Tennessee who ODOT can call, who knows both mainframe and ODOT. These are not positions that can be re-hired off the street; these positions require the knowledge of both the old systems, and how they are used at ODOT. Without these legacy systems ODOT cannot seek reimbursement of federal dollars, and we are looking at a complete failure of the agency and support of the highway system. Unlike the \$1 billion forecasting error, this could be a real loss of funding.

Now as to the billions which have been "given" to ODOT over the years; much of this money (that which is not passed on to locals and not to ODOT) is allocated to construction of specific projects. The money paid to contractors is always the biggest expense in a construction project. Sometimes the legislature has stipulation the remaining funding CANNOT be used for ODOT operations or maintenance. Furthermore, even this money is often not enough for the specified construction project, and ODOT is instructed to bond for the remainder of the project. While in the past that may have been tenable, with declining revenue and increasing inflation, it has not been viable for quite a while. This money is not funding ODOT, it is creating debt which must be paid and takes away from ODOT's ability to function. This is not more money for ODOT, it's more work for ODOT and less money. This is like your boss giving you money to pay the per diem for your work crew's lunch, but then you find the company owes the lunch truck money, and there is no money for your lunch. Then your boss tells you it's your own fault because you should have managed your money better.

ODOT has been making the legislature aware of these issues for a decade or more. And we get it; everyone, regardless of political party, wants to tell their voters about a lean government on one hand, and successful projects which help their area on the other hand. Nobody wants to

hear about taxes. Maybe 10 years ago the new projects could have been scaled back a little bit in support of the overall organization. That's neither here nor there anymore; the current situation is ODOT needs a viable plan, and the need is immediate. While it's an easy sell to blame government ineptitude (and admittedly any organization, public or private, can use improvement) it is a harder truth that we all must pay for what we get, and the infrastructure we depend on doesn't come free.

Please vote in support of this proposal and invest in ODOT to keep Oregon safe and moving forward.

Thank you,

John Turner