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On Behalf of myself
Committee: Joint Interim Committee on Transportation Funding
Measure: LC 2
August 25, 2025

I have serious concerns regarding LC 2, Governor Kotek's proposal to increase taxes to fund the Oregon Dept. of Transportation.

1. ODOT has a spending problem and needs stronger oversight with sideboards to ensure that its spending is consistent with legislative and taxpayer expectations.
2. Accountability measures that are in place today are toothless. The methodology and data need to be scrutinized and the accountability measures enforced.
3. Revenue measures proposed in LC-2 are meant to ensure more stability, but they will have a major impact on low-income and fixed income seniors like me. This is why ODOT spending needs to meet public expectations on what the revenue measures will accomplish.

Here are my recommendations on ways that the Oregon Legislature could improve its oversight of ODOT and support the services that Oregonians expect from their transportation system.

1. Spending
Prioritize ODOT spending on operations and maintenance. Please ensure that existing and new revenue will prevent layoffs, service reductions, and maintenance station closures. Please also ensure that funds flow to counties and cities to adequately and safely maintain the entire transportation system throughout Oregon. Operations and maintenance, including cleaning up homeless encampments, trash and graffiti on ODOT properties, are important services and I have seen firsthand how people's lives can be threatened without performing these services.

ODOT needs to pause the Rose Quarter and Interstate Bridge Replacement Projects until it can assure the Oregon Legislature that adequate funding is in place. Please revisit the 2013 legislation that included sideboards regarding the Columbia River Crossing project.

2. Accountability
The Oregon Legislature enacted accountability measures such as those in LC-2 in 2013 and 2017 that ODOT has managed to subvert and evade or get repealed. These accountability measures need to be scrutinized and enforced. ODOT's performance measures today state what they consider "FACT" yet there is no transparency in the data and methodology. Here are a few examples of how ODOT misrepresents the data:
 - ODOT's "on budget" performance measure dated April 2024 states that the budget baseline is the "*net construction authorization set at contract award*", not what was authorized by the Oregon Legislature nor budgeted. On August 22, 2025 ODOT published a Notice to Contractors in the Business Tribune that said

“The project cost range value is preliminary, may not reflect the current scope of the project and is not a reflection of the engineer’s estimate.” This tells me that whatever is bid and signed into contract becomes the baseline in ODOT’s performance measures, which may have no relation to the amount of funding available.

- The same April 2024 performance measure report states the on-budget measure excludes *“construction engineering errors”*. On 3/19/2025 ODOT’s OR 217 Hall Blvd overpass project website update stated *“Our teams found a construction issue with the overpass late last year, which required a pause in construction while we worked with the contractor on a way to resolve the issue. While the fix is relatively simple, to impliment (sic) it means lifting and resetting the beams. This requires planning and staging - as well as procuring equipment and materials - and took longer than anticipated.* Based on ODOT’s methodology, that cost overrun won’t make it into the performance report either.
- I raised a question about ODOT’s performance measures in 2017 and 2018 asking why ODOT’s on-budget performance measures did not include the US 20 Pioneer Mountain and US 97 Wickiup Junction projects, which had huge cost overruns. ODOT had to completely re-do the US 20 Pioneer Mountain project because of geotechnical issues! Assistant Director Travis Brower replied to me at the time that ODOT was changing the methodology. Today, the April 2024 on-budget report states the percent of projects completed on-budget, and the performance measure report does not include any amount of cost overruns. The public may never know unless one is as good at digging into the data as Joe Cortright.
- Numerous studies including a McKinsey Management Review Report (2016), Atkins-Realis/Horrocks report (2025) and a well-researched Salem Statesman Journal article (2025) show that ODOT is not being honest with our elected leaders and the public about ODOT management and performance. In an email dated 10/18/2017 Assistant Director Brower stated to me personally that ODOT would be implementing the exact things that are in LC-2 (Continuous Improvement Advisory Committee, “mega project task force”, increased reporting to the Legislature, etc.). NOTHING HAS CHANGED SINCE 2017. These accountability measures are worthless within ODOT’s culture today.

The Governor, Oregon Transportation Commission and Oregon Legislature need to enforce more meaningful accountability measures in order to rebuild credibility.

3. Revenue Measures

The Oregon Legislature raised revenue in HB 2017 yet ODOT chose to prioritize mega-highway projects over system operations, maintenance and preservation. Today, the Oregon Legislature should consider ways to prioritize spending existing and new revenue on operations and maintenance.

The proposed new revenue measures should help stabilize ODOT funding for operating and maintaining our transportation system, and services such as cleaning up homeless encampments, trash and graffiti on ODOT property. I understand that OReGO has had a number of issues and I appreciate the inclusion of an alternative flat fee for participation in road usage for electric and hybrid electric vehicles.

In conclusion, ODOT needs to prioritize operations and maintenance over highway mega-projects that do not have confirmed funding before construction begins.

- Oregonians need ODOT operations and maintenance staff for paving and plowing and also for cleaning up homeless encampments, trash and graffiti that has proliferated on ODOT properties.
- Oregonians need more sidewalks, safe crossings and bike lanes such as were incorporated into ODOT's recent OR99W Paving Project that made it safer to walk, bike and take transit.
- Oregonians need more support for transit statewide.
- Oregonians need our state, counties and cities to work together address climate change from transportation emissions and make our streets safer and easier for people to reduce reliance on motor vehicles.

Please modify LC-2 to support better outcomes and accountability for operating, maintaining and improving our transportation system statewide.