

Submitter: Catherine Biscoe

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Interim Committee On Transportation
Funding

Measure, Appointment or
Topic: LC 2

My name is Catherine Biscoe a resident of Philomath, Oregon

Support of LC2 with assurances of increased oversight and accountability - and solutions with low or no tax increases.

I am a 20+ year small business owner, a small bus. development professional

I have served formerly in local government as a

- Philomath City Councilor
- League of Oregon Cities Board of Director representing Oregon's 241 incorporated cities.

In these roles it is well known that it is critical for local, regional and statewide transportation to be adequately funded...

I have been employed at ODOT, working with small business programs, including the ESB and ODOT's 2022 Disparity Study, in contracts, compliance, intergov and interagency agreements and audits.

I am one of the 483 ODOT employees on the announced layoff list, but want to talk about ODOT layoffs that will impact the agencies small business contracting capacity, and Oregon's small business communities, in particular in rural regions.

My position currently at the OECR is the Emerging Small Business PM

You won't have read about this ESB Program in ODOT's Executive Order 22-15 reporting, or seen us before the Oregon Transportation Commission, or even in ODOT's data tracking systems, but for the last three biennium this state funded program with just \$10m per biennium budget, has delivered hundreds of projects for Oregonians, contracting managed by more than dedicated ODOT professionals across all 5 ODOT regions and 14 districts, many now at risk of layoff.

Each biennium, ESB project teams' mentor and support ESBs in the completion of public improvement, maintenance and safety projects across the state...many in rural communities such as Reedsport, Seaside, Coos Bay, Roseburg, Ashland, The Dalles, Troutdale, Canyonville, Gov. Camp, Juntura, Baker City, and extremely rural and remote areas – Siskiyou Summit clear zone, Rock production pits in Central OR...and even the most remote Basque MS in SE Oregon.

While not as flashy or headline grabbing as the IBR and RQ projects, many of these ESB projects are critical to the functionality of the Oregon transportation system – guard rails to protect drivers, crack seal to preserve highways, hazardous tree removal, culvert replacements to keep roadways free of flooding, security fencing to protect ODOT investments, tsunami evacuation signs, litter clean up and removal. Without these dedicated ODOT staff in all 5 ODOT regions and 14 districts these projects are not possible...many of these projects in remote or rural communities.

But the impacts of ODOT's state funded ESB projects and their dedicated teams go much further than just the contracts...they provide businesses with revenues opportunity to grow and expand...they create living wage jobs in rural communities where many ESB firms are based...communities like Wolf Creek, Coquille, Central Point, Banks, Azalea, Government Camp, Alsea, La Grande, Blodgett, Prineville, Boring, Junction City and Seaside...and they support small town economies where these businesses, employees and business owners live.

In the 23-25 Biennium, over 50 ESB certified firms were awarded contracts through the ESB Program, the majority from small towns such as these...many for the first time in public contracts, in total representing hundreds of small business employees.

With layoffs to essential regions and district staff ODOT and Oregon will lose decades of institutional knowledge, Oregon's small business construction communities will lose contract opportunities and mentorship relationships with ODOT, and families, business and local economies and communities will be adversely affected on a statewide scale...disproportionately our rural and remote communities.

Further economic impacts will come to the business community with gas tax increases, payroll tax increases, and DMV fees that will impact far greater than the \$100 per year talking points being circulated with tax increase proposals.

Catherine Biscoe, Philomath ,OR