

I am writing to you about the failure of the legislature to fund ODOT, and transportation statewide. This matter is quite personal, as I am an ODOT employee. The lack of funding, and the resulting crisis within ODOT has brought the agency to a standstill for most intents and purposes. In particular, the uncertainty, the resulting layoffs, and the emotions that come with all of it has had a profound effect on me and my colleagues.

It has come to my attention that some legislators don't believe that the layoffs at ODOT - that are a direct result of the legislative failure to pass a funding bill - are "real", I want to make it perfectly clear to you that the layoffs are quite real, and they will have real effects for our State, Oregonians, and businesses, alike.

Within the Region 1 Roadway Unit, of which I am a member, there have been a total of 4 layoffs: my immediate supervisor (the Roadway Manager), my lead worker, and two members of our permitting team. These layoffs are effective at the end of this month, meaning that starting September 15, 2025, we will go from 18 people to 14, with our permitting team hit the hardest.

In addition to my own unit taking a 22% reduction in staff, there are more individuals in the larger Region 1 Tech Center being laid off, as well as the brunt of the layoffs being felt in our maintenance staff who keep our roads clean and operational. These rank and file workers mow the shoulders and medians, repair damaged barrier, guard rails, fences, cable barriers, signs, traffic signals, lighting, impact attenuators (crash cushions), etc., as well as sweeping the shoulders and bike lanes, and cleaning out storm drains to keep our highways from flooding.

With so many of these workers being laid off, ODOT will not be able to keep our roads safe and working to the degree the Public expects. Roads will likely flood when the rains return, won't be plowed as quickly or as often, closures in the Gorge due to fires and ice/snow events won't be staffed properly, and as a result, Oregonians won't be able to travel and move goods around the State. Business interests, specifically trucking, will be impacted, but more concerningly, so will all Oregonians who rely on ODOT-maintained roads to commute to work, medical appointments, childcare, etc.

Additionally, combined with recent layoffs at Intel and PGE, ODOT layoffs will result in more unemployment claims, and an increased work load on the Employment Department. Furthermore, the lack of funding for local agencies have resulted in city, county, and transit worker layoffs, further increasing the number of unemployment claims, and limiting the options for laid off highway workers looking for work.

The layoffs at ODOT will be felt in private industry as well. ODOT construction staff is being cut, meaning no one will be available to provide the legally required inspection and oversight of private contractors working on our highways. Fewer ODOT design staff will be available to oversee consultant design work, to provide the required quality control of said work, and to

ensure Oregonian taxpayers get what they are paying for at the quality levels they demand. This will all hamstring ODOT's ability to let contracts, and will reduce the number of projects available for private companies to work on.

I have heard many people, both within ODOT, and amongst family and friends, asking why ODOT can't just shuffle money around. Although you are most likely aware, I want to restate that legal requirements prevent ODOT from doing so. Often referred to as "colors of money", ODOT can't spend Federal dollars on maintenance and operations, or even State dollars that are legally obligated for other things, such as the Interstate Bridge, Rose Quarter, or Abernathy projects. ODOT's hands are tied, and we can't "trim the fat" our way out of this. Increased fuel efficiency means less gas purchased, and less revenue for the highway fund, as well as inflation reducing the purchasing power of the dollars we do have. ODOT has a gaping hole in the ship of state that we can't patch over. The ship needs to be repaired, and that's where you, as legislators with the power of the purse, come in.

I am a citizen and taxpayer the same as any other Oregonian. I don't like paying more in taxes, just like my fellow Oregonians. However, taxes are the bill we pay for the services the government renders, and the bill is due. We must pay or lose service, just like we would for internet, power, water, sewer, garbage collection, or even groceries.

Again, I am reiterating that these layoffs are very much real, very much happening, and will have very real consequences for the people of Oregon. I urge you to take concrete steps towards enacting funding as quickly as possible. Do the hard work of governance required to ensure that Oregon can continue to depend on its roads, bridges, and the people who design and maintain them.

Sincerely,

Sean R. Triana, P.E.