

Submitter: Denis Reich
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Interim Committee On Transportation
Funding
Measure, Appointment or LC 2
Topic:

Dear members of Portland Legislature,

I am a user of Oregon transportation infrastructure, including state highways and interstates. I also work for ODOT in Region 1 and have done since March 2019 as the Environmental Manager. In that role I had to give one of brightest and best staffers a layoff letter in July. Without her the entire Portland area will be at the mercy of backfilling her expertise from other parts of the agency or consultants (that charge 2 to 3 times the rate).

Well in advance of my tenure at ODOT I could see the decline of the roads and pathways that connect us as a community. I wanted to make a difference when I joined ODOT. Maybe I have but what has been impossible to ignore is the fundamental lack of resources available to match the maintenance problem that ODOT faces each year. Does ODOT need more accountability to manage its funds better? Probably. But what is being lost in the conversation about the funding and function of ODOT is that even if every cent spent in the seven years I've been at ODOT went 10-times further it still wouldn't scratch the surface of what looms over the state. As key elements like culverts and bridges age out a slow-moving tsunami of decay is gradually reducing our ability to commute, move freight, and vacation. Without a dramatic increase in funding, anyone who travels in Oregon - by whatever means - will eventually lack sufficient means to do so with any reliability.

While the Governor's proposal for a stop-gap bill to prevent layoffs and keep the agency solvent through the end of the biennium is not even close to what's needed it at least sends a clear message to ODOT's hard working and committed staff -and- the travelling public. That transportation matters and needs to be taken seriously. I want to pay more if it means I can drive roads that receive better maintenance and more frequent upgrades. I think the majority of tax-payers in Oregon would feel the same when presented with the facts.

Pass the bill. Keep Oregon Moving.

Thanks for accepting my testimony,
~Denis