

Submitter:	Catherine Biscoe
On Behalf Of:	Personal testimony but an ODOT employee
Committee:	Joint Interim Committee On Transportation Funding
Measure, Appointment or Topic:	LC 2

This submitted testimony is the complete version from in-person testimony presented at the August 25, 2025, hearing at the capitol.

Co-Chairs Senator Rob Wagner, and Representative Julie Fahey  
Co-Vice-Chairs Senator Daniel Bonham and Rep. Christine Drazan and members of the committee

My name is Catherine Biscoe a resident of Philomath, Oregon in Benton County  
My testimony is in support of LC2 with assurances of increased oversight and accountability of ODOT, solutions with low or no tax increases, and maintaining legislative authority of any future gas tax increases.

I am a more than 20-year small business owner, a small business development professional and have spent more than 12 years in local government, community development and advocacy.

I have served formerly in local government as a

- Philomath City Councilor
- League of Oregon Cities (LOC) Board of Director representing Oregon's 241 incorporated cities.
- President and founding member of the LOC Women's Caucus representing and developing women leaders across Oregon

I am currently serving on the Benton County Planning Commission

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 since 2021, working with the state funded Emerging Small Business (ESB) and federal Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) programs, ODOT's 2022 Disparity Study, development of the DBE Advisory Committee, and in contracts, compliance, intergovernmental and interagency agreements, and audits.

I am one of the 483 ODOT employees on the announced layoff list.

Today I am here to talk about the ODOT layoffs that will impact the agencies small business contracting capacity, future prime contractors, and Oregon's small business communities, in particular in rural regions.

My position currently at ODOT is the Emerging Small Business Program Manager  
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 80 dedicated ODOT professionals across all 5 ODOT regions and 14 districts, many now at risk of layoff, disrupting statewide projects that maintain Oregon's transportation system

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 Brookings, Coos Bay, Roseburg, The Dalles, Troutdale, Canyonville, Gov. Camp, Jordon Valley, and extremely rural and remote areas – Siskiyou Summit clear zone, Rock production near John Day, OR...and even the most remote Basque Maintenance Station 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 these projects are not possible and will compromise the safety and well-being of transportation users statewide.

But the impacts of these 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, Alsea, La Grande, Blodgett, Prineville, Boring, Junction City and Azalea...and they support small town economies where these businesses, employees and business owners live.

Please see part 2 for the conclusion of the testimony...