

I gave in person testimony on 8/25/2025 but was unable to capture needed context and nuance while respecting the time limits to ensure all had an opportunity to speak. So, I'm elaborating here on who AEE PAC is, the work our membership contributes to transportation in the state and how we've been and expect to be impacted. I'll also share my thoughts on a path forward.

AEE PAC coordinates with our membership on ensuring their voices are heard. 77 AEE members were named on the ODOT layoff list and another 161 positions that were vacant are to be cancelled due to the failure of HB2025, barring success in this special session. Let's talk about what we'll lose without funding.

Our membership:

Monitors, collects and tracks data to enable informed decision making to target projects at the bridges in the worst state of decay, pavements and culverts approaching failure, and safety improvements where people are getting hurt - among many other things.

We also develop standards, policies and product listings to ensure compliance with federal and state law as well as engineering best practices. Those standards and policies support other members who investigate, design, and develop contract plans and specifications, including communication with the public, buying right of way and clearing utility conflicts such that contractors can bid on, be awarded and begin construction on projects.

Once awarded, our members inspect and manage those projects ensuring contractors perform the work in accordance with the bid plans and specifications to guarantee Oregonians get what they are paying for.

Post-construction we monitor, operate, maintain and repair the transportation system in conjunction with our SEIU, unrepresented and management colleagues, balancing needs to available resources. That is key. A reduction in funding won't mean that transportation infrastructure will become cheaper. Rather, it will allow the system to further degrade. Deferred maintenance only makes repairs more costly.

We heard repeatedly on Monday and in HB2025 testimony that a continued funding failure will impact ODOT, local agencies, transit districts and all Oregonians. Largely, the testimony from governmental entities and public servants advocated funding and discussed with specificity how the funding would be used. What I didn't hear, and failed to condense into my testimony, is the specific loss to engineering capacity non-funding will bring.

Laid off AEE staff will not only lose their position at the agency but are at greater risk of needing to relocate to find work. Our skillsets are just not very common. Because the legislative concept and legislation preceding it have been written in a manner that impacts every agency with transportation services, a failure for one becomes a failure for all. Engineers departing ODOT won't find work at counties or local agencies; they're in the same funding crisis. Consultant firms might absorb a few, but only if they forecast federal and state match money to be available to drive demand for engineering services. Both are in question. You're well aware of the state funding challenges. You should be aware that federal money is in some capacity reliant on successful Surface Transportation Act reauthorization in 2026. Based on the federal administration's published transportation priorities it appears likely that Oregon will receive a lesser share of those funds, if any exist to begin with.

We will lose talented Oregonians to states who choose to fund their transportation infrastructure and value their public servants and the services they provide. And there is no undo button.

Worse, just because layoffs haven't arrived yet doesn't mean that impacts from the lack of a transportation package in 2023 and failure of HB2025 aren't already very real. We have tolerated positions being held vacant longer than typical, absorbed additional workload and deprioritized some work to reduce expenditure rates in the 23-25 biennium. In addition to this long-standing delay in hiring, we are now losing staff – but not from layoffs, at least yet.

Many folks eligible to retire but who hadn't planned to do so yet are leaving. Others feel unappreciated, like political pawns, or that the stability historically experienced by public servants no longer exists and are leaving for a combination of those reasons. Departures since the end of legislative session provide little to no opportunity to turn over key information to remaining or replacement staff. This will predictably result in public, embarrassing failures that result in further erosion of public trust.

We are losing productivity. Agency policies and collective bargaining agreements require steps to be taken to implement layoffs. Impacted staff are having to spend otherwise productive time thinking about how they will respond to a layoff notice - either from the initial list or bumping, updating their Workday profile so management can know their qualifications, ponder whether they are prepared to displace others at the agency through the bumping process, and decide whether they are willing or able to relocate for a position, because when an position is offered an answer is expected within the hour. Further complicating those decisions is the expectation of another round of layoffs in January - putting those same folks (and others) back at risk.

Regardless of funding, ODOT will struggle in the future to recruit talent because of this quagmire. One of our members related she specifically chose ODOT over other agencies because we hadn't had layoffs in a very long time and never of the magnitude we're looking at today. Another member relocated his family from Florida to work here. He's now on the layoff list. Both provide immense value and skillsets to the agency. I am skeptical we'll find folks of their caliber in the near future. The risk of wasted relocation, stress and turmoil is too high. I listened to opposing testimony too. Specifically, the Oregonians that are saying this is too expensive, or that they are taxed to death or that the taxpayer well is dried up. There seems to be some interesting reasoning going on as well. Many shared how rate hikes in food, fuel, goods and insurance have strapped their budget.

None appeared to acknowledge that the same market forces have stretched ODOT's budget as well. Labor, equipment, and material costs have increased. ODOT is now at the point of having to reduce the volume of work performed to compensate.

Faced with that service reduction other commentators specifically stated that they do not want workers to lose their jobs, roads to go unplowed or unmaintained, or safety to degrade. I hope you recognize these desires, short of alternate funding sources, are incompatible and that until legislature decides to index taxes to inflation this argument over tax increases will repeat.

I also heard claims of mismanagement within ODOT along with fiscal irresponsibility. ODOT - like any entity – undoubtedly has room for improvement. The prior audits I've reviewed and comparison with other DOTs do make some recommendations for changes. None will fill the funding hole we're discussing.

The reality is that infrastructure is expensive, complicated, often limited by conflicting guiding principles and user desires, and its failures are highly visible and impactful. Its projects are also very susceptible to scope creep, fantastically expensive constraints, ever changing federal standards and risks that can balloon costs – often outside of ODOT's control.

But we aren't here to make excuses. We welcome audits and continuous improvement approach. We recognize the public trust is low and want to mend that fence.

Ultimately, Oregonians will pay for the decision you make this session one way or another - through increased taxes and fees - which I estimate at less than \$16 per month for the average household - or through decreased mobility, abandoned megaprojects, increased road closures

from weather and debris flows, longer outages from failed equipment, more damage to property and more injuries- and even death - of our fellow citizens.

We do not want that. We also do not want our colleagues to lose their livelihoods or be forced to relocate outside of their communities to find work. They have served the public and deserve better.

So where can we go from here?

The general trend shown by ASCE's national infrastructure report card over the years shows a gradual decline and a consistent funding gap. Currently, nationwide roads and transit rate a D+ and bridges a C. There is a funding chasm between today's transportation system and one which provides for safe, effective and efficient transportation. That cannot be fixed by LC2 nor is it LC2s intent.

I mention this because there are very difficult conversations in the years ahead. There will never be a time a tax increase will be popular – even if only to tie it to inflation. We see that in how transportation funding occurs federally – that gas tax last increased in 1993 and funding is increasingly coming from general funds and debt while decoupling the true cost of transportation from the users of the system.

You can make the decision to use general fund money in this special session, but I urge you not to.

- For consumers to make responsible choices about where they live, work, recreate and visit they must see the costs of those decisions.
- For producers to make efficient choices about production, transport, warehousing and logistics timelines they and their consumers must see the costs of those decisions.
- Counties and cities funding would suffer under this model.

You can make the decision to reallocate payroll tax funds from transit, but I urge you not to.

- Transit users are the least likely among us to be able to afford alternate transportation. We heard testimony from some of them.
- Transit users reduce the volume of cars required to serve demand. Shifting those users back to single and low occupancy vehicles will cause congestion to be considerably worsened.
- Counties and cities funding would suffer under this model.
- If this model is pursued it requires more time for consideration than the special session can afford and needs a slow roll out to allow users to prepare.

You can also make the decision to remove the landmark project set-asides and allow that money to be spent on operation and maintenance. Based on the ASCE scorecard, that would appear to only worsen the pain when the funding gap bandaid eventually comes off.

In closing, I will reiterate AEE-PAC and my support for LC2 as the least bad option and urge you to prepare for a more comprehensive solution in the near future.

I would be remiss not to note that I take exception to Representative Drazen's discounting the value of written testimony provided by ODOT employees. I grant that we are biased and heavily impacted but that doesn't invalidate our testimony or make the public's voice more valuable than ours – particularly if you contrast the plethora of one-line 'No more tax' submissions to the more nuanced and deliberative testimony most supporters have provided.