



RV Times Joint Op-Ed
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Southern Oregon's Transportation Crisis Needs Action Now

By-
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As leaders in Jackson County and Medford, we agree on the need to have a safe, functional, and well-maintained transportation system. Our transportation infrastructure, whether a State highway, County road, or City street, is critical to our daily lives.

We rely on our streets daily, whether on the way to work, school, or a medical provider. Our roads are essential to providing access for first responders to serve our needs when emergencies strike. Roads accommodate a growing economy. Whether an urban street or a rural road, our residents likely never think twice about the condition of this infrastructure when traveling on it. They trust it will be maintained, as it is the backbone of our daily travels.

Maintaining our local transportation infrastructure is becoming more challenging as costs continue to rise, while statewide revenues remain flat and are forecasted to decrease. Local jurisdictions, including Jackson County and Medford, are faced with difficult decisions in prioritizing the services we provide on our roadways. Much-needed capital projects are being placed on hold and, if left unaddressed, potholes will proliferate and pavement will begin to degrade across our County. It is far cheaper to maintain our pavement as opposed to rebuilding it due to lack of maintenance. Simply put, proper maintenance saves taxpayer dollars over time.

Without a funding fix, the system will degrade and bridges will be weight-limited, negatively affecting builders, developers, and first responders, and our roads will become less safe for all users. Our residents and local businesses will begin seeing these negative results in their daily travels if Oregon's legislature does not pass a robust transportation package this legislative session.

This is why we support ongoing constructive conversations about the need to reform transportation funding in our State. Both Jackson County and Medford have been involved in these discussions over the last 12 months in order to ensure local governments maintain a proportionate share of transportation funding, as a significant portion of our statewide transportation system is maintained by cities and counties. This includes the 919 miles of roads in the Jackson County road system and 288 miles of streets in the City of Medford system.

We will soon see the result of these funding discussions when the Oregon Transportation Reinvestment Package (TRIP) is published. However, we already know enough about the framework of that bill to know that we need to continue to be involved and make sure Southern Oregon remains at the table.

The framework of TRIP dedicates 50% of new revenue to cities and counties, and takes us back to the basics, where maintaining our roads is the number one priority with the majority of funding allocated to operations, maintenance, and safety improvements. This would provide Jackson County Roads an estimated \$14,000,000 of new annual revenues once fully implemented and increase the City of Medford's share of the State Highway Fund by nearly 70%. This is an essential increase. If passed, residents will see a direct benefit on our local roads.

A vital piece in our mind is the fairness in the TRIP framework, which ensures all users pay a fair amount for use of the transportation system, whether an electric vehicle or a diesel-powered heavy vehicle. If we use our roads, we should all be paying to ensure they are maintained.

We recognize the new revenue streams proposed in TRIP will come at a cost, but taking no action is simply not acceptable. Letting our roads and bridges deteriorate is irresponsible and dangerous. We also agree that a bipartisan oversight committee is needed to ensure the Oregon Department of Transportation uses their allocation responsibly.

We want Southern Oregon to continue to be at the table to help build a bipartisan package our citizens can support. Our roads simply cannot wait any longer.



Danny Jordan
Jackson County Administrator

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Rob Field
Medford City Manager

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