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It's been a devastating several weeks for ODOT. The potential layoffs have shaken not only our workforce, but the spirit of an agency built on public service. Behind every position lost is a colleague whose knowledge, skill, and commitment made a difference every single day.

I want to share real facts and the reality of the what layoffs at ODOT truly mean for all Oregonians.

These layoffs don't just impact state employees. They ripple out to the communities, consultants, local businesses, and cities. They touch every corner of Oregon—our economy, our infrastructure, public safety, and the unemployment office

ODOT is far more than just roads, maintenance, transit and bridges. We have transportation maintenance specialists on our highways every day, helping stranded motorists and assisting emergency responders at crash scenes. It's also DMV offices, rest stops, speed zone safety, permits for freight and bridges, and many other behind the scenes support that keeps our state moving.

Our right-of-way group collaborates with cities, communities, and railroads to keep critical infrastructure projects on track. The assist with graffiti and clean up for areas of homeless camps. Environmental specialists ensure construction is done responsibly by safeguarding Oregon's archaeology, artifacts, fish, wildlife, and native vegetation.

We have teams that assess and repair landslides, inspect culverts, and uphold the safety and integrity of our infrastructure. Our statewide lab tests construction materials to ensure they meet the rigorous standards needed for long-lasting, safe roads and bridges. Construction offices partner with counties and private contractors to oversee projects, ensuring quality and accountability.

We also work hand-in-hand with cities to invest federal funds wisely, so more projects can move forward and more communities benefit.

If the expectation is that ODOT should focus on priorities, then we must make difficult choices. Large-scale efforts such as the Rose Quarter are mega projects that consume significant resources. When compared to the Interstate Bridge—a structure more than 100 years old and critical to the region's economy, safety, and mobility—

the need for prioritization becomes clear.

It is also important to note that for most of our 112-year history, ODOT has largely self-funded its work and took only 10-15% general funds. But we are now at a point where, like other Departments of Transportation across the country, we need help to meet our infrastructure responsibilities. For perspective, New York State an agency with less geographic area to cover—has roughly double the number of employees, because they rely on a broader set of funding sources. Oregon cannot continue to meet growing demands with shrinking resources.

New York State

- * Total Area: 54,556 sq mi (141,300 km²)
- * Land Area: 47,126 sq mi (122,057 km²)
- * Water Area: 7,430 sq mi (19,240 km²)
- * Ranking 27th largest state
- * Employees 8,300

Oregon:

- * Total Area: 98,379 square miles (254,800 km²)
- * Land Area: 95,996.8 square miles
- * Water Area: 2,381.8 square miles
- * Ranking: The 10th-largest state in the U.S. by total area.
- * Employees 4,700

We must align our funding and attention to our core functions and the most urgent infrastructure needs. Continuing to pursue projects that are not essential to public safety or long-term system preservation stretches our limited resources too thin, while risking displacement of families and communities.

This isn't just about jobs being lost, we are losing institutional knowledge and highly specialized skills that simply can't be replaced. The pipeline of talent is shrinking, and the agency cannot keep up. We urgently need a solution as these vital services being dismantled will impact every Oregonian in the state for decades to come.