

SB 1544 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY**Carrier:** Sen. Starr**Senate Committee On Transportation****Action Date:** 02/16/26**Action:** Do pass with amendments. (Printed A-Eng.)**Vote:** 5-0-0-0**Yeas:** 5 - Frederick, Gorsek, Pham, Starr, Weber**Fiscal:** Fiscal impact issued**Revenue:** No revenue impact**Prepared By:** Kevin Rancik, LPRO Analyst**Meeting Dates:** 2/16**WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:**

The measure requires the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) to establish a “department of transportation university,” create an equivalent to Washington State’s Gray Notebook, and report to the legislature on these and on results from its performance audit and implementation of design practices. The measure focuses regional offices’ efforts on highway operations and maintenance, and it repeals the statutory Joint Committee on Transportation. It directs cities or counties to approve supplemental dismantler certificates under the same circumstances as for standard dismantler certificates and removes renewals from these requirements. It removes the requirement that dismantler and supplemental certificate holders receive local government approval to renew their certificates. It allows intergovernmental entities that provide public transportation services on behalf of counties or Tribes to designate a public transportation service provider as the designated qualified entity for distributing funds from the Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF). The measure takes effect on the 91st day following adjournment sine die.

Detailed Summary:

- Requires ODOT to report to transportation-related legislative committees by December 31, 2027, with results from its performance audit required by House Bill 3991 (2025) and progress in implementing transportation design practices and establishing a department of transportation university
- Directs ODOT to review its best practices by December 27, 2027
- Repeals the statutory Joint Committee on Transportation and updates statute accordingly

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Accountability and best practices in other states
- Whether additional steps would delay ODOT projects
- Accessibility of information from the transportation university
- Elimination of the Joint Committee on Transportation
- Previous fire incidents at dismantler facilities
- Impact on funding for public transit in central Oregon

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

The amendment replaces the measure.

BACKGROUND:

The Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) is established by statute, Oregon Revised Statutes (ORS) 366.205, and is directed to supervise and control matters pertaining to Oregon’s highways and winter maintenance policy. The OTC adopts rules for infrastructure loans and assistance, approves funding plans, and selects projects for established programs. The Joint Committee on Transportation is established by statute (ORS 171.858) and comprises members from both legislative chambers. The joint committee is tasked with examining

SB 1544 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

transportation-related policies and project expenditures, making transportation-related recommendations to the Joint Committee on Ways and Means, and providing oversight of ODOT.

The STIF was established in House Bill 2017 (2017) to fund public transportation investments, improvements, and services, except for light rail capital expenses. The STIF is funded through a state payroll tax equal to one-tenth of 1 percent, ID card fees, non-highway gas taxes, and cigarette taxes. Qualified recipients include counties without a transportation district, mass transit and transportation districts under specified statutes, and federally recognized Indian Tribes (ORS 184.752).

Holders of dismantler certificates in Oregon may operate businesses that buy, sell, deal in, or process vehicles for destruction or salvage, or businesses that deal in or process major component parts of used vehicles. House Bill 2706 (2025) extended the validity period of dismantler certificates from one to two years. Requirements to obtain a certificate include, but are not limited to, a \$1,000 fee, local government approval, a \$100,000 surety bond, and a fire response plan. Some requirements were added or modified by Senate Bill 792 (2019), including ODOT inspections. Dismantlers are covered in Chapter 822 of Oregon statute.