



COMMISSIONER PHIL CHANG

To: Joint Special Committee on Referendum Petition 2026-302

From: Commissioner Phil Chang

February 9, 2026

Co-Chairs Jama and Gomberg and members of the Committee,

My name is Phil Chang and I serve on both the Oregon Transportation Commission and the Deschutes County Board of Commissioners.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and to request that you send Referendum Petition 2026-302 to the voters in May 2026 so that ODOT gains clarity on how to keep Oregonians moving and safe on over 8000 miles of heavily used state highway.

The legislature passed House Bill 2017 8.5 years ago and it provides the funding framework for Operations and Maintenance that we operate under today.

Back in 2017 the legislature couldn't anticipate the inflation of the last 8.5 years so basic maintenance is now chronically underfunded at ODOT. This leaves the agency less prepared to respond to snow storms, crashes, floods, landslides and other stressors and leaves Oregonians less safe and mobile.

So the sooner we know whether the new revenue from HB 3991 is available or not, the sooner we can address our maintenance funding crisis.

As a County Commissioner I understand the timing of this referendum has consequences for electoral politics. Many County Commissioner elections around the state are decided in May and putting this referendum on the May ballot will provide advantage to candidates who I frankly would prefer not to serve with on my County Commission.

So while it pains me as a politician to ask for this referendum to be on the May ballot, as an elected official I want to prevent as many severe and fatal crashes for my constituents as possible.

Please place the referendum on the May 19 ballot. Thank you.

Phil Chang
Deschutes County Commissioner