



Oregon

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Department of Aviation Director Betty Stansbury
Testimony on HB 2402 to the Joint Committee on Transportation
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Chairman Beyer, Chairwoman McKeown, members of the committee, I am Betty Stansbury, Director for the Department of Aviation, and I would like to briefly summarize the needs of Oregon's public use airports.

There are 97 public use airports throughout Oregon. Airports are very capital intensive facilities, and preservation of the existing infrastructure is vital for these airports to continue operating. From 2006 to 2016, Connect Oregon lottery funds were used to fund 75 projects at 35 airports, for a total of almost \$98 million. These critical airport improvement projects allowed Corvallis, McMinnville, Ontario and The Dalles to do runway rehabs, to name just a few. Since 2016, airports have not been awarded any Connect Oregon dollars, and instead rely on the Department of Aviation's grant program, which is funded by a tax on aviation fuels. This tax generates about \$3.7 million a year, which is significantly less than what was available through Connect Oregon.

A little over half of the 97 public use airports are eligible for federal grants, which may fund up to about 90% of a projects cost. Those 57 airports have a total of **\$279 million in capital improvement projects** planned for the next five years. And no, the majority of that is NOT at Portland International. PDX projects account for only 12% of that amount. The majority of these projects are aimed at preserving existing infrastructure – the runways, taxiways and other pavements, lighting systems and fences and obstruction removal. The runways at Baker City, Bend, Condon, Corvallis, Creswell, Eugene, Illinois Valley, John Day, Klamath Falls, La Grande, Pendleton, PDX, Hillsboro, Troutdale, Prineville and Scappoose all need major runway repairs in the next five years. Seventeen airports need repairs to their taxiways, twelve need repairs to their aprons, and five need repairs to lighting or navigational aids.

In the last three years, grants from the state aviation programs have provided \$11.5M for 108 projects all across the state, from a runway rehab at Redmond, to lighting repair at Roseburg, and sewer repairs at La Grande. From gorse removal at Bandon, drainage improvements at Independence, and runway lights at Enterprise, to helping North Bend, Klamath Falls, Medford and Salem to recruit or restore commercial airline service. All of this is possible because of a tax on aviation fuel that is one of the lowest in the country.

But what about the other forty public use airports that are not eligible for federal funds? These airports must shoulder the cost of repairs themselves, as the existing state grant program does not have sufficient funds to assist them. As these small communities struggle with providing funding for even the most basic services, repairs at the airport are often deferred, and can snowball to the point where the airport becomes unusable. And as we begin gearing up for another wildfire season, consider how much more challenging it would be to fight fires without aircraft support, which require airports for staging, launch and recovery.

Oregon provides about \$20M a year in subsidies to Amtrak, but no subsidy exists for the 97 public use airports that touch every corner of Oregon. The aviation fuel tax is a user fee, and is one of the lowest in the country, and it will sunset in two years.