



February 11, 2025

Joint Committee on Transportation
900 Court St. NE,
Salem, Oregon 97301

Co-Chairs Gorsek and McLain, Co-Vice-Chairs Starr and Boshart Davis, Members of the Joint Committee on Transportation,

Washington County urges your support for House Bill 2154, with the -1 Amendments, which makes the County Safety Corridor Program permanent.

County roads are a critical component of Oregon's integrated transportation network. Washington County manages over 1,300 miles of roads with over 180 bridges, over 350 traffic signals and thousands of street signs, culverts, guardrails, streetlights and other safety features. We urge your support to pass HB 2154-1 to establish a permanent County Safety Corridor Program, which would give us another tool to promote roadway safety in all of Oregon's counties.

County road departments play a key role in managing Oregon's rural traffic safety. The first goal in Washington County's Transportation System Plan is "to provide a safe transportation system for all users." Rural county roadways have inherent safety challenges that differ from urban areas, including reduced cell phone reception coverage, longer emergency response times, narrower roadway infrastructure, higher travel speeds, and a less forgiving environment when drivers engage in risky behaviors. While most vehicle crashes occur in urban areas, the crashes that occur on rural county roads have a significantly higher risk of resulting in fatality or serious injury. Washington County suffered 172 fatal and serious injury crashes on county roads in 2022 according to the latest official data, so we must collectively continue pursuing every tool to improve transportation safety.

House Bill 3213 (2019) directed the Oregon Department of Transportation, through a County Safety Corridor Advisory Group, to establish a Safety Corridor Pilot Program to develop the processes for, and evaluate the effectiveness of, allowing counties to designate safety corridors with doubled traffic fines. While not one of the pilot counties, Washington County Engineer Stacy Shetler chaired the advisory group and was able to see how the Pilot Program clearly demonstrated that doubled traffic fines, implemented in conjunction with safety improvements, community outreach and engagement, and enforcement, led to immediate reductions of fatal and serious injury crashes on two stretches of county roadway that previously had a high incidence of these crashes. In addition, county safety corridor designations have allowed counties to successfully apply for competitive state and federal safety grants.

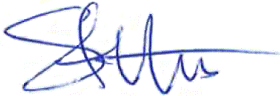
Approximately 18% of Washington County's land area is within an urban growth boundary, but many community members commute between urban areas on rural roads. Many of these rural roads carry significant amounts of commuter traffic. These rural roads generally lack turn lanes, shoulders and other improvements that can help reduce or mitigate crashes. In addition to these inherent safety challenges, high volumes of fast-moving commuter traffic on rural roads creates both safety and logistical challenges for the movement of farm vehicles and equipment. Many cyclists also ride on rural county roads.

All these road users would benefit from a county safety corridor designation. The county safety corridor program is a tool Washington County could use to help make some routes safer until there are funding resources available for major safety improvements to these rural roads.

Without action this session, the County Safety Corridor Pilot Program will be repealed on January 2, 2026. This lifesaving, practical program is ready to move from its pilot phase to a permanent tool for all counties.

Washington County asks for your support to pass HB 2154-1.

Sincerely,



Stephen Roberts, AICP
Director of Land Use & Transportation



Stacy Shetler, P.E.
County Engineer