

Testimony in Favor of HB 3362

Before the Joint Committee on Transportation
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Oregon needs to *change* primary focus from road construction/expansion to investment in Safe, Economical, Environmental and Equitable rail (passenger and freight) and public transportation. HB 3362 helps move us in the direction we must travel to realize a viable transportation system.

On **February 24, 2025**, **Brian Worley, County Road Program Director of the Association of Oregon Counties** testified before the Joint Transportation Committee (JTC) that ignoring roadway maintenance results in greatly increased costs. Replacing neglected roadways costs *5-12 times more* than maintenance.

The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) is in a difficult place. During the hearings JTC held throughout Oregon ODOT repeatedly stated our top priority is to “fix it first.” We need to maintain pavement. But while claiming to focus on fix-it first, ODOT is asking to borrow and obligate *future* state dollars, including General Funds, to *expand* pavement.¹

Over the past decades we have **not** lacked funds to build and maintain roads. The problem is our failure to build a comprehensive, balanced transportation system. Until recently, and since World War II, the pot of gold to *expand* roadways has been almost without limit. Prior to and immediately after WWII passenger rail and public transit existed in the *private, for-profit sector* – they were *not* a government/taxpayer burden.

After WWII federal transportation tax dollars were almost exclusively dedicated to roadway *expansion*. Taxes on railroad right-of-way help to fund (subsidize) services upon which road users, waterways and aviation depend. There are many factors involved in this **transition from private sector rail and transit to dependency on long haul trucks and single occupant vehicles (SOVs)**.

Paved roads are important, especially in rural/agricultural areas. But in urban areas, road expansion cannot meet our transportation needs. Urban sprawl, fueled by wider roads and tax policies, consumes land needed for agriculture. It inflates costs of public and private services/infrastructure. Rural *and* urban legislators must work together, connect our communities, bring our state together.

Transportation agencies claim to focus on safety. We have squandered an endless stream of dollars for “roadway safety.” The results are dismal. Real transportation professionals understand that passenger and freight rail, and public transit, offer a Safe, Economic, Environmental and Equitable option, reduce road construction/maintenance costs and congestion.

No single mode can meet all our transportation needs. Over-dependence on long haul trucks and SOVs *impairs* our freedom of mobility, not just in transportation generally, but also on the roads “we want to drive on.” We cannot pave our way out of this transportation crisis. **Keeping the price of tires down is not the answer we need.**

¹ The I-5 *expansion* and bridge over the Columbia, and the Rose Quarter, are two very expensive *expansion* projects.