



Board of Commissioners

Andy Nichols, Commissioner
Position One

Kelley Minty, Commissioner
Position Two

Derrick DeGroot, Commissioner
Position Three

June 11, 2025

Oregon Transportation Commission

Subject: Klamath County - Highway 97 Fatalities vs House Bill 2025 Transportation Funding

Dear Oregon Transportation Commission,


The Klamath County Board of County Commissioners would like to encourage the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) and the Joint Committee on Transportation Reinvestment (JCTR) to consider a large investment in safety upgrades to Highway 97 in Southern Oregon. We have researched DMV records and found that between May of 2023 and May of 2025 that there were 17 fatalities on Highway 97 within Klamath County. Every time a fatality occurs it has a ripple effect through our community on emergency services, law enforcement, families of the victims, etc.

Far too often we receive letters and emails from family members pleading the county to perform safety upgrades along Highway 97. The route is approximately 120 miles long and under state (ODOT) jurisdiction. We understand the logistics of upgrading a road, primarily related to funding. We would encourage considering short term safety upgrades such as rumble strips, more passing lanes, reduced speed limit, safety zones, additional state trooper patrol, better winter maintenance, etc. In addition to short term upgrades, there is a large need for longer term larger upgrades such as divided highway sections, access control, etc.

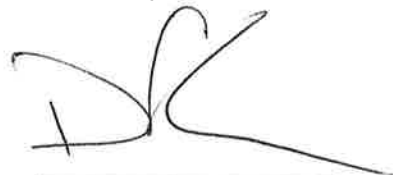
In the past, we have seen a few passing lane miles each STIP Cycle (every 3 years). If this rate of upgrades continues (3 miles every 3 years), it would mean that the entire distance would be converted to four lanes in approximately 120 years. This is unacceptable and will continue to cause Highway 97 to be one of the deadliest highways in Oregon.

The OTC and JCTR have a unique opportunity in front of us this year with House Bill 2025. In Klamath County, we are tired of the continual burden of fatalities on Highway 97, please consider earmarking House Bill 2025 funds for short and long term safety upgrades on Highway 97.

Sincerely,


Andy Nichols
Commissioner


Kelley Minty
Chair


Derrick DeGroot
Vice Chair

When you're here, you're home

305 Main Street, Klamath Falls, Oregon 97601
Phone: (541) 883-5100 | Fax: (541) 883-5163 | Email: bocc@klamathcounty.org