



VANESSA CORNWALL

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DATE: June 13, 2025
TO: Joint Committee on Transportation Reinvestment
FROM: Heather Buch, Lane County Commissioner, District 5
RE: HB 2025, Relating to transportation

Dear Co-Chairs Gorsek and McLain, Co-Vice-Chairs Starr and Boshart Davis, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today before the Joint Committee on Transportation Reinvestment.

From the coast to the crest of the Cascades, Lane County's roadways serve as the backbone of our rural communities. As the steward of 1,400 miles of roadway and 425 bridges, county infrastructure is vital for our residents to commute to work, attend school, and access essential services like groceries and medical care.

Lane County was once the leading county level producer of timber on a national scale; as such, our transportation system was exceedingly well funded. Today, Lane County relies on the State Highway Fund to maintain and preserve our road infrastructure – the vast majority of which was built over 100 years ago. And with escalating costs, we are falling further behind in our maintenance and preservation backlog. Without action toward a more modern and sustainable State Highway Fund, counties face a grim reality: deteriorating roads, aging bridges, and reduced maintenance capacity.

Facing challenges from inflation, declining fuel consumption, reductions in federal funding, and limited local revenue raising options, counties across Oregon have had to postpone routine maintenance and crucial safety upgrades, leading to a decline in road quality and safety. Fatal crashes occur at a higher rate in Lane County than our peers, and we've joined the "Toward Zero Deaths" movement to focus energy on the work we know is needed to improve safety. We know the engineering solutions that would make a difference, but we don't have the \$2 billion in construction funds needed to bring just our most traveled roads to basic engineering standards.

The safety of *all* Oregonians is a critical hallmark of an effective transportation system. We know statewide that one in four Oregonians don't have a driver's license and we've learned here locally that over half of our rural residents said they would walk and bike more if they felt safe enough to do so on rural roads. Investing in pedestrian infrastructure through programs like Safe Routes to School ensures Oregonians of all ages and abilities, regardless of mode of transport, get where they need to go safely.

I am encouraged by the thoughtfulness of the House Bill 2025, which will bring critical funding for safety upgrades, bridge replacements, and maintenance support for communities across the state, with meaningful impacts right here in Lane County. The State Highway Fund is essential to ODOT, to counties and to cities – and all of our



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costs are increasing. Our roadways – like our lives, our communities, and our local-regional economies – are all interconnected. Underfunding one piece just moves the problems from one place to another and nothing is really solved for Oregonians.

The legislature must pass a comprehensive transportation package this session that preserves the 30% share of State Highway Funds for counties, modernizes revenue sources, and stabilizes long-term funding.

While there is positive movement for counties, Lane County needs to flag a potential issue with the “off the top” program spending outlined in Section 110. We believe the intent of the transfer tax is to pay for these programs, and the new fuels taxes and registration fees should be going to operations and maintenance costs. As new revenues and programs start, we will continue to track the balance of new revenues and new spending to ensure the funding streams are working as intended.

In closing, Co-Chairs, I'm grateful for the opportunity to address the Joint Committee. Lane County urges our legislators to act now in support of efforts to increase investments in maintenance and improved safety. And we firmly believe that a larger State Highway Fund as a whole should continue to be allocated as it is today with 30% and 20% flowing to counties and cities.

Thank you.

ELECTRONICALLY SUBMITTED BY VANESSA CORNWALL, LANE COUNTY
INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS OFFICER