



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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Dear Members of the 83rd Oregon Legislative Assembly,
Several funding proposals for the 2025-27 Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) budget have included massive tax increases. As usual, these proposals pair with boondoggle spending items and do absolutely nothing to provide a long-term fix for ODOT's budget woes. These proposals are bad policy ideas, and we want to make it explicitly clear: protect our county and *do not* raise our constituents' taxes.

Time and again we have been sold a false bill of goods when it comes to transportation budgets and tax increases. Typically, promises are made that revenue from proposed transportation tax increases will benefit infrastructure projects statewide. That means all 36 Oregon counties.

However, a disproportionate amount of those funds goes to the Portland area, funding projects that are frequently delayed and run over on costs. Meanwhile, our county's roads and bridges languish from Salem's neglect. This time, we are saying no to this false bill of goods.

These proposed tax increases are also counterproductive to our county's mission to serve our residents. They will undoubtedly drive operating costs higher for our county, the consequences of which will be borne by our constituents through diminished quality and quantity of services provided.

As for ODOT, the agency has consistently shown that its core issue is not a budgetary shortage, but a misplacement of priorities. ODOT should be using its budget to effectively build, upgrade, and maintain transportation systems in our county and others across the state. Instead, ODOT has experienced severe mission creep which has pulled state resources toward projects that do not align with ODOT's core mission. Instead of raising our taxes, the legislature should be focused on realigning ODOT's work with its mission.

Furthermore, if ODOT truly needs more funding, as is claimed, there is plenty budgetary maneuvering that can occur that does not include raising taxes. Recent revenue forecasts have shown that Oregon will collect record revenues over the next biennium. Perhaps some of that money should be directed toward shoring up legitimate budget holes instead of funding new projects that don't align with core missions. Better yet, why not return that money to the overburdened Oregon taxpayer?

Oregon already has some of the most punitive tax rates in the nation. The last thing Oregonians need is for their taxes to be increased because an agency that is supposed to serve them has lost focus. We encourage you to stand up for us and our fellow Oregonians. Protect our county. Do not raise taxes.

Sincerely,

Kit Johnston
Chair

Mary Starrett
Vice-Chair

Absent

David "Bubba" King
Commissioner