



To: Joint Committee on Transportation Reinvestment

From: Jason Lawrence, Vice President, ODOT 730 – SEIU 503

Date: June 12, 2025

RE: TRIP Transportation Package

For the record, my name is Jason Lawrence, and I serve as Vice President of Sublocal 730. On behalf of the 1,775 represented ODOT employees, I am speaking in support of the TRIP 2.0 Transportation Package based on the rationale that cutting 1,000 transportation maintenance and support services jobs in the immediate future is in no way in the interest of Oregon residents, taxpayers, or our members. Without a package, ODOT will be forced to lay off up to 1,000 workers over the next few years. You will hear from those workers today.

Before I begin, I would like to thank you for all the work you have done over the last year. I would like to acknowledge that you spent two days in roundtables with us during last summer, you traveled the state on a 12-stop roadshow around the state, and even a few toured the Salem ODOT maintenance shop with our members. Additionally, you have listened to countless hours of testimony.

Following the conversation for over a year, the transportation package shows us one thing: this isn't a budget crisis that can't be fixed, but rather a leadership and vision crisis. We need your brave and bold leadership right now.

Our crews in the field or offices perform so many essential duties and functions to ensure that our loved ones get home every night. We maintain over 8,000 miles of state highways and roads, preserve 2,700 bridges and major culverts, respond to 45,000 crashes annually, assist 13,000 customers per day at the DMV, and so much more. We are also experts at working around an angry public.

Every call to 911 or Ask ODOT report for highway related emergencies is a call to your office as an elected official. A report about a tear in the pavement, a landslide, a downed tree, flipped semi, or fridge in the middle of I-5 is a report to your office. The quality of pavement, guardrails, and fog lines reflects your commitment to your district.

If you've read the news in the last week, like many Oregonians, you'd get the impression that the hard thing is too hard. Working families in Oregon will suffer because of this.

Transportation is foundational to connecting our state and bringing us together. How many of you used our roads today? Our transportation system and the people who maintain it enable the movement of people and products that produce economies of scale and agglomeration. Whether in Portland or Medford, Jordan Valley or Astoria, Joseph or Gold Hill, and regardless of political views or tax bracket, we all need safe roads and bridges. Transportation helps facilitate those social interactions essential to our quality of life, allowing us to worship, explore, play and work together. It is this critical transportation system that our members risk their lives to maintain every day, underfunded and underappreciated for years.

Our support for this revenue bill is an explicit pronouncement that the layoff of 1,000 individuals, as we have previously testified before the TED Committee, would result in catastrophic loss of life along with accelerated degradation of our vital infrastructure. These costs would be especially burdensome for rural and coastal communities, and all are preventable.

But I'm no economist, nor am I a legislator, so what do I know, right?

I know a few things.

I know that if this package doesn't pass, I'll be having conversations with friends and colleagues in places like Hermiston, where following their layoff notice we won't be discussing how their skills and commitment to public service were no longer needed. No, we'll be lamenting the reality that they were undervalued and sacrificed for so-called pragmatic reasons. The state will turn to privatization to perform regular maintenance and emergency operations that we know are far more costly to the public. Knowing the truth of the matter won't help the pain. Knowing the real reasons why we won't put food on their table, or clothes on their children, or pay for their doctor visits.

And I know that you, our elected senators and representatives, have the constitutional authority to prevent all of this. Please make sure you are bold and brave and do so.

Thank you for your time,

Jason Lawrence

