

HOOD RIVER COUNTY PUBLIC WORKS



Director Cori Wiessner, P.E.

918 18th Street • Hood River, OR 97031 • (541) 386-2616 • FAX (541) 386-2912

To: Chair McLain, Vice-Chairs Boshart-Davis and Gamba, and Members of the House Committee on Transportation.

From: Cori Wiessner, Hood River County Public Works Director

RE: HB 4126

Hood River County is a partner in the transportation system and serves all Oregonians. Hood River County maintains over 200 miles of roadway, 27 bridges, and over 3,500 culverts. Hood River County has stewarded state and federal revenue with a maintenance first mindset; ensuring we take care of the assets we have. We are no longer paving, and must focus on chip seal operations to maintain our roadways. The last time we were able to complete a capital project was in 2019.

In the 2026-2027 fiscal year, Hood River County is projected to receive just over \$3.3 million from the State Highway Fund, Small County Allotment, Secure Rural Schools and Federal Exchange Program. The Hood River County Road Fund has a total of 16 full-time employees, two employees funded at 70% and two seasonal employees. Staffing costs alone are over \$3 million, leaving about \$300,000 for discretionary spending. We hope that reserves will carry us through until a robust transportation package passes. Otherwise, we will be forced to cut both staffing and maintenance operations. We are in a similar funding crisis as ODOT without the ability to divert funds from capital projects.

The AOC 2024 County Road Needs Study reported that Hood River County's forecast over the next five years shows a 65 percent shortfall, amounting to a need for an additional \$7.5 million. This includes an identified \$4.2 million need in new revenue for preservation, operations, and maintenance.

Since the AOC County Needs Study was released, Hood River County has developed a Bridge Capital Investment Plan to manage how we can effectively direct our limited funding. We inspected our National Bridge Inventory (NBI) and non-NBI bridges (those under 20-feet). It was determined that the cost to bring four (14%) of our bridges up to standard was greater than the cost of replacements. Hood River County has had no choice but to halt maintenance for those bridges and instead seek to replace them through grant applications.

The cost to complete the Bridge Capital Investment Plan was just under \$75,000 and took 12 months to complete. The plan assumes a \$200,000 expense on bridge spending each year, with a total cost for bridge maintenance at over \$2 million, and replacement expense of over \$13.5 million. Hood River County collects our Pavement Condition Index (PCI) rating on our roadways on a three-year cycle and is scheduled to collect it again over the summer. With limited funding, we are not likely to be able to collect that data this cycle.

Hood River County has applied for grants to complete a culvert assessment which would cost approximately \$600,000, and applied for grants to create a safety action plan. Hood River

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County is actively working with our partners in the federal government to pursue competitive grant funding, and legislative support. To date, we have not received grant funding or federal legislation to complete any of our necessary work.

As proposed in House Bill 4126, Hood River County understands that there is a need to better track and record pavement conditions, bridge replacement timelines, and maintenance costs, across Oregon's full transportation system. To get a full picture of needs, culverts, signs, striping, and other roadway features would be valuable. Many counties, including Hood River County, simply do not have staffing expertise or funding available to capture this information on their own and would be required to contract with consultants to perform the work, causing further expense and delay. Mandating that Hood River County complete this vital work by January 2026 will be difficult and costly to our already limited funding.

I have spoken with many of you throughout the 2024 Transportation Road Tour, throughout the 2025 legislative session, between the 2025 and 2026 legislative session and earlier this month. I am looking forward to working with you all to determine a long-term strategy to fund operations, maintenance, and deferred maintenance for the entire transportation system throughout the state to meet the needs of all Oregonians.