

OREGON TRANSPORTATION FORUM
TRANSPORTATION FUNDING AND POLICY PACKAGE
Adopted at the November 6, 2014 Annual Membership Meeting

Oregon's roads are crumbling. Freight movement faces serious bottlenecks. Many bridges need reinforcement to withstand earthquakes. Our public transit agencies are unable to keep up with demand for service. Some rural communities do not have easy access to essential services. Many Oregonians are unable to safely walk or bicycle in their neighborhoods. Past transportation decisions have failed to adequately consider impacts on public health and the environment. Federal funding is more and more tenuous, and instead of financing new projects, a large portion of current funds must pay off earlier investments.

While transportation is not an end in itself, a safe and reliable transportation system provides a critical foundation for our prosperity and quality of life. It is our responsibility to invest in a better transportation system, immediately and over the long run, to ensure the health and economic wellbeing of our state's residents and communities.

It is for these reasons that the following proposal is being considered.

GOALS OF THE PROPOSAL

- Put Oregonians to work creating cutting-edge multimodal transportation networks to connect people to jobs, attract new talent, and compete on a global scale.
- Address costly and time-consuming bottlenecks and improve connections to ports and freight yards to better serve agriculture, forestry, manufacturing and other key Oregon industries.
- To keep goods and people moving safely and reliably, maintain the transportation system in a state of good repair and increase its resiliency to natural disasters.
- Improve public health and air quality by making our neighborhoods walkable and bikeable and improving access to transit.
- Serve all Oregonians in every part of the state without regard to age, race, disability, or income.
- Reduce transportation-related pollution, preserve our natural environment, and make our transportation system more resilient to the impacts of climate change.

PRINCIPLES

- **FUND ALL MODES:** There is an urgent need to provide adequate funding for all transportation modes that move passengers and freight to improve the safety and reliability of the system and to support economic prosperity, community livability, and environmental quality.

- **FIX IT FIRST:** The State of Oregon’s first priority should be to maintain, rehabilitate and operate existing transportation facilities before building new ones.
- **PROVIDE RELIABLE FUNDING:** Stable and predictable revenues are critical to support ongoing road operations and maintenance as well as transit service enhancements.
- **SHARE COSTS FAIRLY:** The State of Oregon should raise revenue from system users, as appropriate, based on the benefits they derive or the costs they impose on the system.
- **PRESERVE LOCAL OPTIONS:** Addressing our transportation needs will require new funding at all levels of government. Accordingly, the Legislature should remove existing restrictions on local and regional revenue-raising authority and avoid enacting new limitations or pre-emptions.

PACKAGE FUNDING AND POLICY ELEMENTS OF THE PACKAGE

HIGHWAY

- **Prevent loss of highway fund revenue by indexing gas taxes to increases in fuel efficiency of the automobile fleet.**

Comments: This form of indexing acts as a stop-gap measure to prevent further erosion of automobile taxes due to increased fuel efficiency of the fleet until a road user charge can be fully implemented. It does not address the issue of some vehicles that do not pay the fuels tax (e.g. electric vehicles), and it does not impact truck taxes as the indexing will only prevent reduction of revenue owed by automobiles as a class under the cost responsibility requirement of the constitution. Increased revenues from indexing for fuel efficiency would be spent to stabilize revenues available for maintenance and operations.

- **Highway Maintenance and Preservation (“Fix-It”) Tax Increase \$ _____**

Comments: This proposal is intended to address the ongoing cost of maintaining the existing highway system and preventing increased costs caused by postponing maintenance efforts. Any revenue proposal by reference will include provisions for taxation that maintain heavy/light vehicle cost responsibility.

- **Highway Modernization (“Enhance”) Tax Increase \$ _____**

Comments: This proposal will help to resolve costly and time-consuming bottlenecks and improve connections to ports and freight yards to better serve agriculture, forestry, manufacturing and other key Oregon industries as well as reduce congestion for those travelling to and from their place of employment.

- **Address “orphan highways” and freight corridors by adopting a 1-cent gas tax for a pilot program to facilitate the transfer of road miles between ODOT and local governments to better align ownership and responsibility with state vs. local interests.**

Comments: Jurisdiction over segments of roadway could be more efficiently and appropriately aligned so that those affected by the roadway have decision making authority over it. The State should transfer “orphan highways” – segments of state highway that function more like urban arterials to local governments. Local governments find themselves responsible for local roads and streets that have become statewide freight corridors in practice. Jurisdiction transfers can realign responsibility and authority. However, transfers are not frequent, mostly because of the inability of the receiving entity to pay for maintenance and enhancement of the transferred asset. This proposal seeks to eliminate that obstacle. It is anticipated that a program of this sort would be evaluated after ten years to determine whether it is still needed; if not, the revenue stream could be redirected to the general highway fund.

NON-HIGHWAY

- **Increase funds to enhance non-highway modal infrastructure by restoring the *Connect Oregon* multi-modal funding level to \$100 million in lottery bonds for the 2015-17 biennium. Funds would be used for grants and loans to support capital projects that involve one or more of the following modes of transportation: air; marine; freight rail; passenger rail; public transit; bicycle; and pedestrian.**

Comments: This is a short-term step to be taken while we progress toward the creation of a Multi-Modal Trust Fund analogous to the Highway Trust Fund, with dedicated revenues evenly split between passenger and freight investments.

- **Provide \$22.6 million per biennium for operation of Amtrak Cascades service.**

Comments: This proposal requests state general funds to cover the lost federal funds that were used to operate and maintain Oregon’s portion of the Amtrak Cascades service. This amount is in addition to \$6.8 million from custom license plate revenue and \$3.16 million from gas taxes on lawn mowers and other non-road equipment.

- **Provide \$75 million per biennium of state funds to cover the cost of elderly and disabled transit service.**

Comments: This proposal is intended to provide stability to funding for elderly and disabled transit services and provide a nexus for transit related state planning efforts. The rationale is that the state already has significant responsibility for providing services to vulnerable populations. Most of the funding for those services comes from the General Fund.

- **Provide up to \$20 million per biennium for Youth Transit Passes**

Comments: This proposal helps high-school-aged youth get to school, weekend and evening educational opportunities, extracurriculars and employment through better access to transit. Transit agencies can use the funds to support increased transit service that might be needed to transport youth quickly and dependably, as well as to provide free or reduced-cost transit passes for youth.

POLICY

- **Develop a 10-year multi-modal transportation needs assessment to establish and quantify the need to operate, maintain and improve the system on a consistent statewide basis. This will serve as the basis for funding proposals to be considered by future Legislatures.**

Comments: This proposal is intended to provide a thoughtful framework of clearly defined system needs and quantification of costs and benefits associated with such needs in such a way that allows policy makers to make informed future decisions about transportation funding.

- **Recommend that state transportation planning efforts (a) include findings regarding how each mode should best interconnect with other modes to maximize use of system resources and (b) evaluate the impact of the plans' findings on other transportation modes.**

Comments: This proposal attempts to alleviate siloing effect of modal planning so that it allows for a fuller consideration of modal connectivity in a systemic and holistic manner.

- **Direct ODOT to enter into agreements with other state agencies or local governments to share the costs of facilities and equipment, to the extent that the facilities and equipment meet the needs of both entities and provide efficiencies to taxpayers. ODOT shall attempt to develop one facility and/or equipment sharing project in each of the five ODOT Regions.**

Comments: This proposal provides direction to ODOT to look for those opportunities where co-locations of facilities and sharing of equipment can work well for both parties or for all parties. Co-location could reduce the overall cost of providing roadway maintenance and operations. Surplus facilities and equipment would be disposed of or repurposed.