



JOINT COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 3, 2025

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Transportation Co-Chairs Announce Framework to Fix Crumbling Infrastructure, Strengthen Economy

*Urgent action is needed this session to build a stable, sufficient and
accountable transportation system for the 21st Century*

SALEM, Ore. – With Oregon’s roads and bridges showing alarming signs of deterioration, Joint Committee on Transportation Co-Chairs **Rep. Susan McLain (D-Hillsboro)** and **Sen. Chris Gorsek (D-Gresham)** released a framework on Thursday for bold action to support Oregon's transportation systems.

The Oregon Transportation ReInvestment Package (TRIP) framework is informed by more than two years of work and represents a starting point for detailed conversations and action this legislative session to keep Oregon's roads paved, bridges safe, and economy strong.

“From public testimony in committee, to last year’s statewide transportation listening tour, Oregonians have been clear that they want action, not delay,” Rep. McLain said. “They want clean, safe streets. They want reliable public transit. They want to know the bridges their children cross every day are structurally sound.”

Oregon’s transportation systems — the backbone of our economy and daily life — are in crisis. More than 90 state-owned bridges across the state have major structural defects, dangerous potholes are going months without repair, school zones lack sidewalks, major promised projects are still unfinished, and much more.

Without stable and sufficient funding, essential workers at transportation agencies will be laid off and Oregonians will feel those impacts: longer wait times to clear traffic accidents, fewer roads with safety striping, less frequent road repairs and unplowed roads in the wintertime.

"Oregon TRIP is focused on the safety and maintenance of our roads, bridges and transit — not just for today, but for years to come," Sen. Gorsek said. "Inaction is not only irresponsible, it's dangerous. This framework is a starting point and we are looking forward to sitting down with stakeholders and our colleagues on both sides of the aisle to finalize a package this session."

Oregon was the first state in the nation to institute a gas tax in 1919, and since then it has formed the core for how the state pays for transportation. Now, Oregon is facing modern transportation challenges, including increased freight traffic, a growing population, and the rapid rise of electric and fuel-efficient vehicles, which contribute less to the fuels tax that has long funded the system.

These shifts underscore the need for a more resilient, updated approach to transportation planning and investment.

"Bad transportation infrastructure is more than just an inconvenience, it harms Oregon's economy. Employees need to be able to get to work, businesses and truckers need to be able to move goods, students need to be able to get to school," Sen. Gorsek said. "At a time when everyday costs are already too high, we cannot afford to allow crumbling infrastructure to undermine Oregon's economy."

The framework proposes stabilizing current funding streams with the majority dedicated to operations, maintenance and preservation efforts distributed between the state, counties and cities. It lays the foundation for a 21st Century funding structure, with a phase-in of a Road Usage Charge for electric vehicles to make sure all drivers are paying their fair share for use of the roads.

It also invests in buses, rail, bicycles and pedestrians to ensure that Oregonians who can't or don't want to drive can still fully participate in daily life.

Finally, accountability is a key component of the package. There is broad bipartisan support for meaningful oversight of the Oregon Department of Transportation to ensure that taxpayer dollars are being used effectively and that the agency is keeping the promises it has made to Oregonians.

A team of external transportation experts is currently reviewing ODOT's project delivery and accounting practices with the oversight of the Joint Committee on Transportation. Their results will be released in May and incorporated into the final package.

"This framework is grounded in fairness and accountability," Rep. McLain said. "It ensures every user of the system pays their fair share and includes oversight from a bipartisan committee and independent transportation experts. But most importantly, it puts the focus where it's urgently needed: operations, safety, and maintenance."

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