

October 19, 2017

Dear Chair Baney and Members of the Oregon Transportation Commission:

The members of the Metro Council and the Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation (JPACT) would like to take the opportunity to provide input on the current on-going discussion to develop the 2021-2024 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

We appreciate your consideration of our communication last month concerning the addition of a second forecast option utilizing existing federal funding levels and for more direct engagement with statewide MPO leadership in the development of the statewide and metropolitan TIPs. The invitation of the Chair of the Oregon Metropolitan Planning Organizations Consortium (OMPOC) to engage with you on behalf of the MPOs at your October meeting is a good first step in this direction.

The Portland metropolitan region, wants to continue to convey our region's recommendations regarding the ODOT funding programs and funding levels being considered for the 2021-2024 STIP. As the largest population and employment center in Oregon, the region has some unique transportation challenges which frame our comments around how we desire to see federal and state transportation dollars expended.

The MPO understands the OTC will take action on assigning funding levels to different ODOT administered programs at the December meeting. Recognizing the OTC is gathering stakeholder input, the region wishes to express the outcomes we desire to see from ODOT's investment in the region's transportation system and we urge the OTC consider the following requests related to the 2021-2024 STIP funding categories and programs:

1. Invest comprehensively and adequately in urban arterials.

The Portland metropolitan region has a number of state-owned arterials which have seen tremendous change. As the Portland metropolitan region has grown rapidly in population and employment, these former rural highways or frontage roads are now busy urban corridors serving as the spine to transit routes and have more people walking and bicycling. These are also the same facilities seeing increasing number of crashes resulting in serious injuries or fatalities. While in previous cycles, ODOT programs funded various improvements on these urban arterials, often these investments were piecemeal in addressing the growing demand and needs. These urban arterials need a comprehensive set of multimodal improvements to make the facilities safe and functional for all users while also accommodating greater demand. We desire to see the Enhance, Non-Highway, Leverage, and other programs prioritize and adequately invest in a comprehensive approach to upgrading urban arterials.

2. Invest in project development and the Transportation and Growth Management program to allow future transportation investments to emerge successfully.

While transportation funding is scarce and limited, funding that is eligible to support the necessary planning work to get transportation projects into early design and engineering is more challenging to find. The lack of funding for project development has created a barrier to developing a pipeline of projects ready to seek other sources of revenue to complete the remainder of the project. In the past, ODOT funded a program focusing on project development called the Development, or D-STIP. In supporting a multimodal transportation system, the region desires to see a project development funding program where all different types of transportation projects (e.g. bicycle and pedestrian, roadway, trails) would be eligible. Additionally, the region supports increasing funding to the TGM program to provide those vital dollars to conduct planning work which lead to transportation plans and subsequently projects to address transportation needs and deficiencies.

3. Have all ODOT funding programs create a “shelf-ready” list of priorities for consideration when unexpected revenue emerges.

As previously mentioned in our September comment letter, the Portland metropolitan region desires to see comprehensive deliberation of where to apply new or unexpected revenue when it emerges. Currently, ODOT has certain maintenance programs, mainly under the Fix-It program, which has a developed a list of “shelf-ready” projects prepared to receive funding if new or unexpected funding emerges. While the region supports maintaining this system, other parts of the region’s transportation system have significant needs, which warrant consideration for new revenue. The region suggests the OTC consider having the different funding programs, such as Non-Highway Enhance or Transportation Options, create a “shelf-ready” list of projects and programs, similar to the Fix-It funding programs, which would allow for a meaningful discussion as to how to expend unexpected revenue when it emerges.

4. For funding dedicated to addressing transportation safety, allocate these funds to where they will be the most effective at reducing serious injuries and fatalities.

Crashes which result in serious injuries and fatalities pose significant societal costs. With smart, focused, and strategic investments, crashes which result in death or significant bodily harm can be reduced dramatically. As the state is prepared to receive a significant source of new investment from HB2017 dedicated towards transportation safety, the region wants to express support as to how the All-Roads-Transportation-Safety (ARTS) program, which is primarily federally funded, has used a data driven, jurisdictionally-blind approach to determine the highest crash locations most in need of funding. As the OTC considers how to expend the new infusion of funding for transportation safety projects, the region wants to express that the ARTS approach is a thoughtful strategic approach to apply to this new funding.

5. Further invest in the transportation strategies which are the most effective in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

In 2014, the region adopted the Climate Smart Strategy as its action plan to meet state-mandated reductions in greenhouse gas emissions from light-duty vehicles. Other areas of the state have or will also be developing plans to reduce vehicle emissions. The region’s Climate Smart Strategy focuses on a number of different actions including increasing transit service, building out the regional active transportation network, providing transportation options, and getting the most of the transportation system through system and demand management activities. While the region developed a strategy to get to the target, the price tag to implement the strategy remains greater than resources available. In

partnership with the transit agencies and local jurisdictions, the region continues to chip away implementing the strategies with limited funds. In 2017, the region saw reduction in funding to reducing vehicle emissions, through the CMAQ program redesign and the lost cycle of Connect Oregon, which funded regional off-street bicycle and trails. The considerations listed above support achieving the state and region's transportation goals, including reductions to greenhouse gas emissions. To specifically target vehicle emission reduction goals in a comprehensive manner, however, the region also requests state funding beyond required minimum contributions to the Safety category and to programs in the Non-highway category, such as:

- Active transportation, including off-road pedestrian and bicycle;
- State Travel Options program; and
- Non-Highway Enhance.

The Portland metropolitan region wants to thank the OTC for considering our comments and providing the opportunity to work together on our metropolitan and statewide TIP. We want to continue this collaboration to achieve our mutual goals. The region urges the OTC to continue to engage stakeholders throughout the development of the 2021-2024 STIP and allow the time needed for stakeholders to thoroughly deliberate the options and opportunities to move forward together.

Sincerely,

Tom Hughes
Metro Council President

Craig Dirksen
JPACT Chair
Metro Council District 3

CC: Region 1 Area Commission on Transportation