



Lane Area Commission on Transportation

859 Willamette Street, Suite 500
Eugene, OR 97401

August 26, 2020

Oregon Transportation Commission

Dear Chair Van Brocklin and Commissioners,

As Chair I am writing on behalf of the Lane Area Commission on Transportation (LaneACT). We appreciate the opportunity to inform development of the 2024-27 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). At our August 12th meeting Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) staff presented on development of the 2024-27 STIP. This presentation provided a sense of overall statewide need, funding shortages, purpose of the different funding categories, funding allocated to each category in the 2021-24 STIP, and the STIP development timeline. As you know, the ACTs' knowledge of local and regional needs is an irreplaceable asset in creating a statewide transportation system that is safe, efficient, and effective in achieving multiple objectives. However, information critical to LaneACT providing informed comment continues to remain elusive.

Last year, the LaneACT provided the following input to ODOT staff: "it is difficult for the ACT to respond to the question without actual data... the slides and talking points we have received from the Director's Office so far describe various investment options but do not provide real numbers along with an analysis of the *implications*." We made essentially this same request again to ODOT staff present on August 12th — please provide data that the LaneACT can use to understand the effectiveness of current and past STIP investments. At this same meeting the ACT passed a motion formally requesting that the OTC grant us an additional month and provide additional data to assist us in providing the OTC with meaningful comments and input.

At the October 2019 meeting, OTC heard concerns about limited communication between the OTC and the ACTs, and a growing frustration over lack of consideration and/or response to input provided to ODOT staff on a range of topics through various outreach efforts. In response Chair Van Brocklin asked Director Strickland to come back to the OTC as soon as February with a plan on how to address these issues. This is the last LaneACT has heard of the matter. We believe that this breakdown in communication makes quick and thoughtful responses to requests for input difficult as there is essentially no context from which to draw: the OTC does not have a solid picture of LaneACT's priorities, issues, opportunities or particular challenges; and LaneACT does not have a solid picture of OTC's issues and challenges, nor of the on the ground funding and policy implications decisions affect.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted our transportation infrastructure weaknesses and strengths. Schools have become even more of a lifeline for rural communities, emphasizing the need to support increased safe bicycle and pedestrian routes to schools for meal and distance learning tool pick up. More people than ever are walking and biking, and at the same time, we are seeing more fatal

crashes on roadways. Efficient movement of goods and services has rarely been more prescient. There is much of great weight for the LaneACT, and the OTC, to consider when determining funding priorities and how we build the needed infrastructure of the future.

Finally, the LaneACT continues to request that the OTC develop illustrative funding priorities for the use of potential additional federal funding. Over the course of the 24-27 STIP it is likely Congress will act to increase federal transportation funding. We believe planning for this potential should occur now, rather than at the last minute, and should include input from the ACTs to thoughtfully make the most of new resources should they materialize.

The LaneACT respectfully requests an additional month to provide input on this important topic per the formal motion adopted at our August 12th meeting. ODOT staff have frequently termed the current phase of STIP development as the “most important” phase for planning and implementation. We see no reason why this comment phase cannot overlap with the next phase of analysis necessary for ODOT staff to stay on target with the STIP timeline. Sufficient time should be allowed for the OTC’s Area Commissions to adequately consider their input.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Claire Syrett". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Claire Syrett, Chair
LaneACT