



**Lane Area Commission on Transportation**

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## Transmittal

**DATE:** September 11, 2020

**TO:** Oregon Transportation Commission

**FROM:** Claire Syrett – LaneACT Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Claire Syrett".

**RE:** Questions to inform development the 2024-27 STIP

Attached are LaneACT's responses to the questions ODOT staff provided to help the OTC in developing the 2024-27 STIP.

Because of the short timeframe for responding, we were not able to prepare responses in time for them to be included in the OTC agenda packet for the September 17 meeting. We're relying on ODOT staff to provide them to you for consideration in advance of the meeting.

The LaneACT met on September 9 to discuss and approve these responses. Unfortunately we didn't have a quorum. Many members were absent because of impacts on them personally due to the wildfires burning in the area. At least one member was evacuated from their home. Consequently, these responses were not formally approved by the LaneACT. They do not necessarily represent a consensus opinion of all the members.

We hope we will have additional opportunities to provide the OTC with input. If you haven't seen it already, please review the letter I sent to the OTC previously, dated August 26. It requests more data and analysis from ODOT staff to better inform our responses, and more time to provide more thorough responses.

### **Attached**

LaneACT responses (3 pages) [break]

## Questions to inform development of the 2024-27 STIP

Responses from LaneACT – September 11, 2020

### Question 1

What are the highest priority transportation needs for funding statewide, and how should the OTC allocate funding between modes of transportation and categories of funding to meet the state's goals?

*Note: The different modes of transportation include: motorized vehicles (highways), bicycles and pedestrians, public transportation, rail, aviation.*

#### **RESPONSE:**

The LaneACT believes all modes of transportation are important. Because we are so dependent on highways, maintaining the existing system is clearly important. However, because changes in the economy and society are affecting travel behavior, the LaneACT believes the state needs to rebalance its priorities. Making it easier to drive shouldn't necessarily be the top priority. There needs to be more investment in bicycle and pedestrian facilities, transit, and rail.

### Question 2

How should the OTC allocate funding among Fix-It, Safety, and Highway Enhance programs to meet statewide goals and needs?

#### **RESPONSE:**

The LaneACT agrees the top priorities for the state should continue to be maintenance and preservation (Fix-It) of the existing system, and improvements to the existing system that address safety concerns. These were OTC priorities in previous STIPs. Because this consumes such a large portion of the budget, the LaneACT understands there is relatively little funding remaining for Highway Enhance. The LaneACT also understands that other programs that are important to the LaneACT (bike & ped, safe routes to schools, Active Transportation Leverage, and transit) are funded through the Non-Highway Program, which is not addressed in this question.

### Question 3

How should the OTC target non-highway spending to address statewide goals and needs?

*Note: Non-highway programs include (1) public transportation, (2) bicycle and pedestrian, and (3) transportation options. Transportation Options (T.O.) includes (a) public outreach and education to promote carpooling, vanpooling, biking, walking and transit options, and (b) managing the statewide ride matching database (Get There) to help people connect with carpools, vanpools and other travel options.*

#### **RESPONSE:**

The LaneACT recognizes the importance of all these programs. Without data and analysis from ODOT staff it's difficult for the ACT to recommend program priorities or funding distributions. For instance, a gap analysis of some kind comparing the historical levels of investment to the unmet needs for each program would help inform the discussion. A benefit-cost analysis would also be helpful.

*Denise – please see my added response below. I think members offered some responses at the recent meeting that could be put here.*

### Question 4

Given that transportation system needs exceed available funding, how would you recommend the OTC make tradeoffs when deciding how to allocate limited funding?

#### **RESPONSE:**

The LaneACT appreciates the difficult task the OTC has in making these complex funding decisions. As discussed in the response to the previous question, we assume ODOT staff will provide the OTC with data and analysis to help inform and simplify the decisions. The LaneACT could provide more meaningful input if this information was available now. We hope we will have another opportunity to comment when this information is available.

Several members of the Lane ACT advocated for reprioritizing funding new bike/ped/transit infrastructure over creating increased capacity on highway or major roadways. They cited the current extreme weather that lead to the fires burning nearby as evidence that climate change is impacting our communities now and transportation

planning needs to account for this new normal. They expressed a position that building more capacity for cars and trucks should not be set as the first priority. Instead other modes of transit should be prioritized first.

### Additional comments

1. The Central Lane MPO (CLMPO) Metropolitan Policy Committee (MPC) recently submitted their responses to these same questions. A number of LaneACT members agreed with the feedback they provided to the OTC. The following is a summary of their key points:
  - Prioritize grant programs for local governments.
  - Prioritize Non-Highway funding. Re-establish the STIP Enhance Non-Highway funding category that was included in previous STIPs.
  - In addition to increasing the funding levels for Local and Non-Highway programs, the process of selecting projects should be more transparent and involve local stakeholders.
  - Be prepared for the possibility of additional federal funds being available instead of only being prepared for reductions. Determine in advance how potential additional funds will be used. This includes additional federal or state flexible funds, cost savings from other projects, and federal redistribution funds. Allocate these funds to Safety, Safe Routes to School (SRTS), and the Oregon Community Paths Program.
  - The short timeframe provided for responding to these questions is not sufficient for stakeholders to engage in and comment on what ODOT itself calls this “most important” phase in developing the new STIP.
2. Technology, the economy and society are changing rapidly. ODOT policies and practices don’t reflect these changes. Micromobility, for instance, is an emerging trend that isn’t addressed in ODOT plans and policies. In order to adapt, we need to make adjustments to the system. We can’t simply keep doing what we’ve always done.
3. Airports are important too. The state needs a dedicated funding source for aviation. Airports are critical infrastructure. They’re used for fighting fires and responding to other natural disasters.