When it comes to smart transportation policy that will keep our state moving, reduce climate pollution, and protect community health, Oregon is headed in the wrong direction. About 40% of Oregon’s climate pollution comes from transportation — and that number is steadily rising.

Big changes are needed, and lawmakers have an opportunity — and a duty — to make our state’s transportation system work better for all Oregonians.

Lawmakers can act now by supporting policies that enable and direct ODOT to maintain an efficient, cost-effective, and sustainable transportation system.

To meet our climate pollution reduction goals, we must:
- Reduce driving by at least 20%.
- Stop expanding highways that encourage more cars on the road.
- Invest in transportation systems that make it affordable, convenient, and safe to get around without driving.

THE ROADMAP IS CLEAR
The Oregon Statewide Transportation Strategy, adopted by the Oregon Transportation Commission, outlines these strategies:
- Stop expanding highways and screen all road expansions carefully;
- Prioritize all transportation investments based on climate and equity outcomes;
- Support robust transit planning for the long-term, big expansions we know we’ll need;
- Invest in transit infrastructure and service;
- Develop a comprehensive transportation revenue approach based on state goals, not just on bringing money into the system;
- Invest in safe, convenient infrastructure for biking and walking; and
- Invest in public electric vehicle charging infrastructure across the state.
What can lawmakers do?
The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) currently spends only a small part of its budget on transit, biking, walking, and efforts to decarbonize driving. This needs to change. ODOT has the expertise to modernize Oregon’s transportation system. With lawmakers’ help putting forward-thinking policies in place, ODOT can shift away from expanding roads and focus more on efforts to modernize our state’s transportation system.

Oregonians need lawmakers to:
- Support effective congestion management that uses pricing to discourage voluntary driving at peak times and invests money in biking, walking, and transit.
- Support a holistic, true-cost pricing approach to transportation revenue that is more equitable and sustainable than the status quo.
- Guide ODOT to prioritize climate and equity in all investments.
- Support transportation electrification - as we build a better system, we need all miles driven to be electric.

Why not just build more roads?
People often believe that the best way to reduce congestion is to widen current roads or build new ones. This is a temporary and expensive fix — and one that ends up contributing more to the problem instead of solving it. Every new mile of freeway costs $24,000 per year to maintain.

When you add more space for driving, people drive more. Sprawl is encouraged, and job sites, stores, and other destinations get built even farther away. Roads fill up again with more vehicles than before, which creates more pollution, more congestion, and more demand for road expansion. And so the cycle continues. Instead of the ineffective, expensive mindset that building more roads is the answer, we need to embrace policies that will reduce driving, expand transit, and encourage vehicle electrification.

For more information, contact:
Sara Wright
Transportation Program Director
SaraW@oeconline.org
971-353-7962 (d)

Morgan Gratz-Weiser
Legislative Director
MorganG@oeconline.org
707-672-2618 (c)