

September 3, 2021

Dear Chair Van Brocklin and members of the Oregon Transportation Commission:

As Oregon anticipates increased federal funding for transportation, the OTC will face many decisions about how to spend and direct those investments. We encourage you to prioritize these spending choices with a focus on building a future transportation system that works for Oregonians -- one that is equitable, safe for people of all ages and abilities, and climate-smart.

Increased federal spending must be allocated to investments that have the best climate and equity outcomes. We urge the Commission to direct that additional funding be directed to projects that are most effective in reducing emissions and VMT. For example, investing in transit investments and service, transportation electrification, and biking and walking infrastructure, focusing in BIPOC and low-income communities, across the state could yield strongly positive climate and equity outcomes. This prioritization would build more momentum in the direction this Commission established in the 2024-2027 STIP decisionmaking and the Governor's Executive Order on Climate Action, especially the implementation of the Statewide Transportation Strategy (STS).

This is also an opportunity to begin building up programs to support the reshaping of the transportation system, particularly where the Highway Trust Fund cannot be used. For example, planning and coordinating substantial growth of transit in and between communities is necessary to support the mode shift we need to see over the next decade. We encourage the Commission to look for opportunities to build ODOT's capacity to support the future transportation system.

This prioritization calls for an updating of ODOT's allocation decision-making framework. The 2024-2027 STIP decisionmaking was predicated on assumptions of how much money would be available in that time period. As Oregon faces both a deepening climate crisis and an increase in federal funds, it is time for an updated accounting and analysis of how the OTC has distributed and used federal funds over the last year and how funds are committed into the future in order to understand how Oregon can meet its many ongoing multimodal funding needs. It will also be necessary to work with local jurisdictions, advocates, and community members to direct these investments where they can most effectively make connections, address community needs, and open up more transportation choices.

We believe that all investments should be prioritized for spending based on their climate and equity outcomes. Screening the influx of federal money in this way is an opportunity to meet the Strategic Action Plan goals and also to test ODOT's existing analysis and planning tools, and refine ways to prioritize better investments.

Thank you for your work. We look forward to engaging in this conversation going forward.

Sincerely,

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Cc: Governor Kate Brown
ODOT Director Kris Strickler