

Oregon Highway Plan

EXTERNAL INTERVIEWS & ACT/MODAL CHAIR WORKSHOP
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

June 2024
STATEWIDE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING UNIT



Introduction

As part of the Oregon Department of Transportation's (ODOT) preparation for the Oregon Highway Plan (OHP) update, ODOT solicited guidance from external partners through a series of external partner interviews and a workshop held at the biannual Area Commissions on Transportation (ACT) and Modal Advisory Committee meeting. The interviews were conducted virtually in March and April of 2024, and the in-person workshop was held on April 8, 2024.

Both engagement efforts involved similar questions regarding what the updated OHP should address. Participants were asked to discuss questions on topics including: critical issues or needs within Oregon Transportation Plan (OTP) goal areas, challenges, trends, or opportunities, and the greatest needs from the OHP update. Their responses will help to inform the development of the scope of work for the updated OHP.

Workshop participants included ACT and modal and topical advisory committee chairs such as the Oregon Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (OBPAC), Safe Routes to School Advisory Committee (SRAC), Oregon Freight Advisory Committee (OFAC), and Oregon Transportation Safety Committee (OTSC). Interviewees included city, county, Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), Council of Government (COG), Port, and Transit District employees, as well as active transportation and freight partners. Comments from participants in both outreach efforts are summarized in this document.

The opinions expressed herein are solely those of the individuals who participated in the external interviews and workshop and do not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of the Oregon Department of Transportation. ODOT makes no claim to the expressed views and provides them solely for informational purposes.

Following this executive summary of feedback from both events, the summary of the external interviews begins on page 5 and the summary of the ACT and Modal Advisory Committee workshop begins on page 20.

Big Ideas

The following bullets contain the overarching, actionable statements that were expressed by participants throughout both engagements.

- **Provide clear definitions, clarity, and transparency** - transparency regarding how decisions are made is needed as some consider this a black box
- **Plan and build for the long term, not just short-term solutions** - recognize that up-front costs benefit long-term solutions, it is okay to look to the future for benefits
- **Preserve and ensure capacity for all modes** - consider freight capacity needs for truck parking, properly sized roundabouts, and passing lanes, invest in bicycle and pedestrian facilities where they are needed and missing
- **Address concerns regarding new planning rules and mobility policies and the desire for new measures that are multimodal, realistic, and adaptable** - seek balance among all users' needs, compromise, and ensure there is something for everyone and not everything for any one interest
- **Look comprehensively at the state and its diversity** - geography, economic base, population

- **Recognize the differences in needs, priorities, and funding, between rural and urban Oregon** and provide equal consideration for each - urban areas need room to experiment and the OHP should be inventive and allow creative solutions
- **Acknowledge the close relationship between maintenance and safety** - funding should flow to safety before other needs, which will assist in addressing additional issues
- **Provide guidance for operations and prioritization** - better communication is needed regarding needs, compromises, and benefits.

Common Themes

Participants in both the interviews and workshop discussed a range of subjects. Some common themes that were frequently addressed during both forms of engagement are discussed below.

Funding

Funding limitations challenge all aspects of transportation and were identified by most as the biggest challenge facing the Oregon transportation system. It was stated that the OHP must identify new funding mechanisms as the system can no longer rely on fuel taxes, which are neither economically nor environmentally sustainable over the long run. Participants felt that ODOT must be more serious about going after needed revenue and stronger when it comes to voicing needs for more funding. A shared opinion was that the current funding shortfalls have affected maintenance, preservation, and operations needs the most and that funding should first prioritize safety needs. It was also expressed that funding should focus on communities that have previously been left out of funding cycles.

Safety

Participants expressed the importance of safety prioritization in the transportation system. It was stated that changes to the system should be led with safety and the OHP should focus on safety first, which will help address conflicts among the modes. The message was that the OHP must balance the needs of all modes and users when contemplating safety improvements. A commonly recognized safety-related issue is the significant increase in fatalities and serious injury crashes on the highway system.

Freight

Freight was another common discussion topic throughout both engagements. Freight needs and obstacles were brought up by multiple individuals. Many participants expressed concern regarding freight capacity issues, such as the lack of truck parking, passing lanes, and adequately sized roundabouts. Freight mobility, access, and reliability were also identified as areas that need recognition and solutions from the updated plan.

Urban and Rural Differences

All participants seemed to agree upon the substantial differences between urban and rural needs, funding, priorities, capabilities, solutions, and more. They would like for the OHP to acknowledge these differences and recognize that one size does not fit all. Policies, targets, and guidelines should give equal consideration to rural areas. Participants feel that the OHP should provide more flexibility when

establishing Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) and mobility targets. They also requested more focused guidance for rural areas.

Resilience

Resilience planning was recognized as an important tool to enhance in the OHP update. This method involves incorporating various approaches to minimize the impacts of disturbances to the transportation system. Some tactics include planning for redundancy by establishing alternative routes, maintaining bridges, and establishing and maintaining lifeline routes. Participants expressed that it is essential for the OHP to provide and enable resilience planning to prepare for the diverse natural disasters that occur throughout Oregon.

Maintenance and Operations

The importance of adequate maintenance and operations was addressed throughout discussions. Participants recognized the significant correlation between maintenance and safety and expressed that more maintenance funding is needed. The current maintenance budget does not meet the needs of the system which will lead to more road hazards, a lack of signage, and overall decline of transportation facilities. These maintenance issues can become safety issues, affecting all users of the transportation system. When basic maintenance is not funded initially, it costs more in the long run to address major issues requiring more than basic repairs.

Conclusion

The participants provided valuable insight regarding the variety of issues and needs to address in the updated Oregon Highway Plan. These individuals represented transportation interests from across the state, providing beneficial perspectives on how to better provide policies and guidance throughout the state. The fact that participants from both engagements shared many of the same views lends greater support to their statements. Information gathered through the interviews and workshop will be used to inform ODOT and various advisory committees as work begins on the new Oregon Highway Plan. Staff will use these suggestions to determine the scope of the update and which topics to address in the update.

Plan development includes research, defining existing conditions and needs, developing a vision, goals, and policies, and identifying possible performance measures. Please follow the plan website for more information and opportunities to participate. The Oregon Highway Plan Update website can be found at: <https://www.oregon.gov/odot/Planning/Pages/Oregon-Highway-Plan-Update.aspx>

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EXTERNAL INTERVIEWS SUMMARY

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Introduction

The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) is developing an updated Oregon Highway Plan (OHP). The most recent version of the OHP was adopted in 1999 and has been the most amended statewide plan. Many regulatory, demographic, and societal changes have occurred since then, creating a need for an updated OHP to provide a current vision for Oregon's roadways and better policy direction for today and the future. Additionally, the OHP must be updated to be consistent with the current Oregon Transportation Plan (OTP), which was adopted in 2023, as well as other state mode and topic plans.

Once complete, the new OHP will become a part of the Oregon Transportation Plan, which provides the overall policy framework for transportation in the state. The Oregon Highway Plan is a supporting topic plan intended to define more specifically the goals, policies, and strategies that will guide the management and development of roadways throughout the state. The OHP will be developed through consultation with Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), Tribal Governments, Cities, Counties, and State and Federal agency partners. Additionally, many transportation partners representing a variety of disciplines and interests will help inform the new OHP.

In March and April of 2024, ODOT conducted a series of external interviews to inform the development of the scope of work for the updated OHP. The interviews were conducted virtually for one hour.

A total of 18 individuals were interviewed, in a total of 15 interviews. Interviewees included city, county, MPO, Council of Government (COG), Port, and Transit District employees, as well as active transportation and freight partners. Their comments are summarized in this document.

Interviewees were asked a series of questions on topics including: opportunities and challenges, strengths and weaknesses of the existing Plan, current functioning of the system, vision for the new OHP, and major needs from the update. This document summarizes what was shared in the interviews and appended are short summaries from similar early external outreach ODOT has conducted for the OHP Update project.

For the purposes of this document, "highways" refers to state highways in Oregon and "roadways" refers to all roads and streets in the state. This definition may change as work on the OHP gets underway, when specific terms, classifications, designations, and policies included in the Plan will be determined.

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Big Ideas

- Plan for the future, not just today, it is OK to look to future benefits
- Make sure plans are not siloed, they should work together and establish clear roles for each
- Plan should be nimble, adaptable for the future, and actionable
- Provide clear definitions, clarity, and transparency
- Seek balance among users' needs, compromise, and ensure there is something for everyone and not everything for any one interest
- Communicate better about needs, compromises, and benefits

- Transparency about how decisions are made is needed, some consider this a black box
- Seek system efficiency, reliability, and strategic investment
- Urban areas need room to experiment, the OHP should be inventive and allow creative solutions
- Concern about new mobility policy, desire for a new measure that is multimodal, realistic, and adaptable

Major Themes

Participants covered a range of subjects throughout the interviews and the following topics were heard most frequently.

Funding

Participants were asked to identify opportunities and challenges they face in their work. The leading response was funding; whether it was needs, concerns, or reaching goals, funding was the topic on everyone’s minds. Funding was identified as a major transportation issue facing Oregonians today, being the most recognized challenge. The OHP must identify new funding mechanisms as the system can no longer rely on fuel taxes, which are neither economically nor environmentally sustainable over the long run.

Key Funding Ideas:

- Establish sustainable funding for the system
- Firmly declare funding needs and ensure legislature understands
- Provide for maintenance funding

Sustainable Funding

Interviewees stated that there is an urgent need to replace the gas tax and ODOT must be more serious about going after the needed revenue and stronger when it comes to voicing needs for more funding. Both citizens and legislators must understand the value of transportation system investment and its relationship to the economy and opportunities. The Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) and ODOT flexible funding were recognized as successful resources, and some voiced support for OReGO (a pay-per-mile system) and recommended using this and/or finding other more sustainable funding solutions.

Maintenance Funding

A shared opinion was that the current funding shortfalls have affected maintenance, preservation, and operations’ needs the most. Interviewees expressed that when budgeting, funding for maintenance is often left out of the equation. This in turn leads to road hazards, a lack of signage, and overall decline of transportation facilities. These maintenance issues lead to safety issues, affecting all users of the transportation system. Moreover, when basic maintenance is not funded to address minor issues as they arise, it ends up costing more in the long run when the unaddressed problems become major issues requiring more than basic repairs. In order to prevent maintenance issues from developing into safety issues, long-term, sustainable, and resilient maintenance plans should be included for new and existing facilities. These plans must include goals and performance measures for maintaining, preserving, and operating a facility throughout its useful life.

Safety

When identifying top opportunities and challenges, many interviewees identified safety as a key priority. It was stated that any changes to the transportation system should be led with safety and that the OHP provides an opportunity to do so. The Safe Systems approach ([Zero Deaths and Safe System | FHWA \(dot.gov\)](#)) was brought up as a framework to guide the OHP's safety standards and practices as well as the rest of the Plan. It is essential that the OHP build upon the OTP's emphasis on safety as a primary focus.

Key Safety Ideas:

- Provide funding for safety where it is needed
- Enhance active transportation safety and comfort
- Address the increase in fatal and serious-injury crashes

Funding for Safety

Funding and investments for safety-related projects are a substantial concern for participants. They shared that as transportation safety is a major focus, funding must be provided for addressing safety in areas where it is needed, no matter the location in the statewide system or who owns the facility. Plans and funding often focus on making new improvements rather than maintaining the existing infrastructure and addressing the costs to maintain the facility throughout its useful life. When these maintenance and funding needs get pushed out by other goals, it can cause traffic safety issues. ODOT maintenance affects safety throughout the state and facilities should be maintained to prevent such safety issues. The original expected lack of funding for winter maintenance in the 2023-2024 season was addressed multiple times during the interviews, exemplifying how ODOT maintenance funding affects all system users and local jurisdictions.

Active Transportation

Interviewees identified a specific area of concern in the safety of those who utilize the system without a vehicle. Throughout the state, the system is lacking when it comes to the safety and comfort of individuals who bike, roll, or walk to reach their destinations. There are numerous locations where it is dangerous to be a bicyclist or pedestrian. The OHP must balance the needs of all modes and users while considering the needs of active transportation users when contemplating safety improvements. The OHP should consider opportunities to improve the safety and user experience of this population through means such as sidewalk and trail improvements, mitigating issues with pedestrian and bicycle access, and safe crossings.

Increase in Serious Injury and Fatality Crashes

Another recognized safety-related issue is the significant increase in fatalities and serious injury crashes on the highway system. Crashes, including those with major injuries and fatalities, have been rising for the last several years, and people continue to move to the state, adding to the numbers of drivers, cars, and miles driven. This surge of crashes is a key concern to citizens and agencies across the state. Interviewees would like to see targeted action to reverse this trend and work towards eliminating fatal incidents. Both urban and rural highways were mentioned as areas of concern.

One Size does not Fit All

One concern heard from interviewees is the common belief that transportation planning, policies, and funding tend to focus on meeting the needs of urban areas while failing to create guidance for rural areas. It was stated that policies are typically based on land use, population, resources, and density of urban areas without consideration for the differences in these measures compared to rural areas. Many interviewees mentioned planning, policies, goals, and targets should reflect context, and local jurisdictions should have some flexibility in how they can define and meet requirements.

Key No One Size Ideas:

- Separate guidance, policies, and measures for urban and rural areas
- Portland is its own unique situation and should be recognized as such
- More guidance and flexibility are needed for state facilities in rural towns

Different Planning and Policies for Rural and Urban Needs

Participants felt the OHP should acknowledge that one solution will not necessarily solve the same problem in different places. More attention and consideration are needed for rural areas. Rural areas have very different demographics, land use patterns, funding options, and transportation needs compared to urban areas. These differences necessitate separate guidelines and targets for the two types of areas. This separation would assist rural municipalities in achieving such things as Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) and other mobility targets. Additionally, rural and urban areas have further air quality and environmental needs that may differ from one another, such as pollution proximity to environmental justice communities in urban areas, and dust and other particulates in rural areas.

Portland is Different

Multiple interviewees recognized that, on the urban end of this spectrum, the Portland metro area itself is significantly different than any other area in the state. While it is necessary to allow for differences between urban and rural policies and regulations, it is also important to permit this region to have some of its own exceptions to enable creativity when addressing issues as their solutions can become transferable to other locations. Several interviewees commented that the OHP should anticipate change, be flexible for unexpected changes, and enable communities to try out creative solutions.

State Facilities through Rural Towns

Some shared that challenges exist when attempting to make local changes or upgrades to state facilities that run through small towns. The OHP should provide more flexibility and guidance regarding rural areas instead of focusing planning and policies on urban areas. Places have unique needs such as urban, rural, fast-growing, or tourism-based communities; leading to very diverse expectations in terms of highway purpose, context, and future needs. The OHP should make it easier to reflect community needs and values. Several interviewees commented that the OHP should anticipate change, be flexible for unexpected changes, and enable communities to try out creative solutions.

Freight Needs

When discussing needs and visions for the updated OHP, freight needs and obstacles were brought up by multiple individuals, not just freight representatives/interests. As freight travels through and into every city and town throughout Oregon while providing needed goods and supplies, it affects each community and the functionality of their transportation system. Most interviewees wanted to ensure that freight considerations are reflected in the OHP update.

Key Freight Needs Ideas:

- Freight needs affect every city and town and should be prioritized
- Plan for, accommodate, and fund freight infrastructure
- System reliability and on-time performance are key to both freight and transit

Freight Infrastructure

Interviewees stressed that the OHP must accommodate freight mobility, truck parking, freight reliability, and freight access, the latter of which was noted to be often left out of local facility planning. Some of the foremost issues that affect freight mobility and access, creating last-mile issues, are improperly designed round-a-bouts and a lack of short-term and overnight truck parking. The lack of parking can lead to safety concerns when trucks are forced to park in unsafe locations that could impede traffic or be an unsafe environment for the driver and their haul.

System Reliability

Reliability in the system is a key need for both transit and the freight industry. Dependability is a requirement for these industries who must commit to their customer bases that products or services can be delivered in a certain time frame and schedules will run on time. The current transportation network has created unreliability in this aspect due in part to congestion and failed intersections and corridors.

Policy Requirements Affordability

There was concern regarding the levels of funding and resources needed to meet policy requirements of the new OHP, new rules, and new legislation. For example, urban transportation experts expressed concern about uncertainties in meeting and funding new Climate Friendly and Equitable Communities (CFEC) requirements. Other interviewees noted that it can often be difficult for rural communities to attain requirements set forth in new policies due to financial constraints and the greater travel distances needed in rural areas.

Key Requirements Affordability Ideas:

- Policy requirements are not affordable for many locals
- Meeting requirements is harder for rural areas
- Do not set communities up for failure with unattainable requirements

Unattainable Goals

Participants noted that specifically, it can be challenging to afford the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions reductions asked for as well as some mobility targets. In various places, securing adequate funding is very difficult and money simply does not exist. In these situations, policy is pushing communities to accomplish goals that are not feasible. It was expressed that policies should not punish those who cannot achieve targets if funding is not provided to meet these requirements. The OHP must recognize

that most rural communities will not be able to afford many of the new climate requirements, i.e. carbon reduction, and identify what cities can and should do if they cannot meet targets.

Resilience Planning

The OTP defines resilience as “the ability to anticipate, prepare for, and adapt to changing conditions and withstand, respond to, and recover rapidly from disruptions.” Resilience planning involves incorporating various methods of minimizing the impacts of disturbances to the transportation system in projects and plans. Interviewees expressed that it is essential for the OHP to provide and enable resilience planning in order to prepare for the diverse natural disasters that occur throughout Oregon, including seismic, climate, flooding, fire, and landslides.

Key Resilience Planning Ideas:

- Provide and enable resilience planning
- Plan for redundancy and alternative routes
- Enhance infrastructure outside of the highway system

Resiliency Tools

Suggested mitigations to prepare for disasters include development of alternative routes and addressing seismic bridge maintenance, prioritization, and funding. The OHP should ensure that redundancy is built into planning to ensure that other travel options are available when one mode or corridor is not. A means of establishing highway resiliency is by enhancing infrastructure outside of highways, such as better access management and roadways that are traversable by all vehicles. Lifeline routes, which the current OTP defines as “a roadway or transportation facility that is essential to meet basic health and safety needs including delivery of goods, emergency supplies, and personnel, and to provide for evacuation. This can also refer to a transit route that a disadvantaged community relies on to access essential services such as groceries and medical centers,” also play a role in resiliency and participants felt they should be revisited.

Conflicting Points of View

Throughout the interviews, participants shared differing points of view on a few important topics. The following is an overview of these different positions.

What to Include

One point of conflicting views was regarding what the OHP should encompass. A frequently shared opinion stated that the OHP should reflect what the state is really seeking, a multimodal system and a preference for a system plan that meets all travelers’ needs. These experts expressed that the current Plan may constrict the outcomes by focusing on highways exclusively. Many stated that the updated OHP should be different from the existing OHP in prioritizations and multimodal considerations. These interviewees want to ensure that the Highway Plan does not just focus on vehicles but also includes people who use public transit, bike, or walk.

A conflicting, minority point of view was expressed that the Highway Plan should be a *Highway* Plan and not focus on other topics. It was stated that the Plan will not be successful if it covers other topics and does not focus on highways and vehicular movement; these interviewees feel that the OHP should not focus on anything other than moving freight and people. It was stated that, at the end of the day, cars and trucks primarily pay for the road system and the Plan should reflect this.

How the System is Working

Some stated that the current roadway system works well, specifically for Single Occupancy Vehicles (SOVs) and freight, with rural highways in good shape and well-maintained. Others, especially multimodal interests, felt the system is more hit or miss. While there are some good sections, the further out from the central city or town, the less bike and pedestrian infrastructure exists. The current roadway system works for people who are private car owners but, for transit riders, cyclists, and pedestrians, it does not work so well. Crossing to get to a bus stop or a destination after exiting is often unsafe for pedestrians, especially those with disabilities.

Expansion

Some expressed the need for minor highway expansion in the form of passing lanes in order to relieve congestion and improve safety and reliability of the system. Specific suggested locations for additional passing lanes include HWY 101 from Bandon to Curry County and HWY 97 north and south of Bend and Redmond. Others do not support highway expansion of any kind and believe the funding would be better spent elsewhere. It was stated that there are already enough vehicular facilities and roadways and adding more is usually at the detriment of active transportation infrastructure, environmental health, and disadvantaged communities. Most interviewees expressed a clear preference for funding maintenance and operations and did not talk about expansion needs except for safety adjustments such as passing lanes and improvements to multimodal facilities.

Greatest Transportation Challenge

As stated in the above major themes section, funding was largely identified as the greatest challenge facing the transportation sector. Two major funding concerns were the lack of sustainable funding and maintenance funding. While funding was overwhelmingly recognized as the greatest transportation challenge, some transit experts felt that funding had been the greatest challenge for many years up until House Bill 2017 (HB 2017), the legislative bill that added significant funds for transit and other transportation investments. Now, transit providers feel the greatest challenge is in finding staff, specifically drivers and administrative staff. Overall, those affected seemed to find the STIF money very helpful and expressed appreciation for ODOT's habit of flexing funds to transit and local jurisdictions as well.

Equity

Another topic where interviewees had differing views was equity. There was a clear distinction between how urban and rural individuals define and prioritize equity, though most thought this topic was important for the OHP. Those from urban areas were more likely to discuss restorative justice and other similar racial justice ideas. In rural areas, geographic equity and forced reliance on SOVs were the greatest concerns. Despite these differences, both urban and rural participants brought up transportation equity issues in regard to isolated populations and underinvested areas. They also voiced strong support for a multimodal transportation system and supporting infrastructure as well as basic access.

While many of the interviewees voiced a need for equity to be taken into consideration in the updated OHP, a lesser mentioned topic was the idea of restorative equity to address past misdoings. It was stated that in order to ensure equity the OHP must enable restorative justice. Examples provided include addressing orphan highways (identified as urban thruways, district highways, and at-grade routes that

have been disinvested), air pollution, and community division in marginalized communities. Doing so will improve the lives of many marginalized people.

Other Notable Comments

SOV Incentives

It was recognized that in today's world, there are many incentives to drive an SOV and many barriers that disincentivize transit usage. With high mileage per gallon vehicles, inexpensive gas, and cheap or free parking, most individuals will continue to choose driving alone over other options such as utilizing transit or active transportation modes. It was mentioned that it is crucial to stop avoiding the idea of SOV reduction and believing that people will freely choose other options over their own SOV. The new OHP should incentivize not driving an SOV. In order to reduce SOV usage, the OHP must be creative and utilize or support many methods such as investments in alternative mode infrastructure, vanpools, car shares, and mode and trip generator regulations.

Unfinished Business

Multiple interviewees voiced concern over various projects that have not been completed due to funding constraints. Recent investment packages such as those in HB 2017 provided funding for specific projects and programs, however, as complications arose from COVID-19 and costs rose quickly, projects exceeded budgets, and places were left with important, planned projects that may have no way of moving forward. Completing these was foremost in mind for interviewees when speaking of a new funding package. Interviewees did not express the need for new major projects, aside from strategic investments which include those that address a problem or safety need and improve the system for all users and modes. Overall, interviewees frequently voiced the need to better balance investments and serve all users.

Conclusion

The partners interviewed provided valuable information regarding the variety of issues and needs to address in the updated Oregon Highway Plan. These individuals represented a wide array of transportation disciplines, jurisdictions, and interests in Oregon, and their experiences provided beneficial perspectives on how to better provide policies and guidance for the highway system throughout the state. The information gathered through the interviews will be used to inform ODOT and the planning process as work begins on the new Oregon Highway Plan.

Plan development includes research, defining existing conditions and needs, developing a vision, goals, and policies, identifying possible performance measures, etc. Public outreach will be a large component of the planning process. Please follow the Plan website for more information and opportunities to participate. The Oregon Highway Plan Update website can be found at:

<https://www.oregon.gov/odot/Planning/Pages/Oregon-Highway-Plan-Update.aspx>

Appendix A: Interview Response Summary by Question

Q 1: What are some broad transportation opportunities or challenges you face in your work?

- Funding issues, managing growing needs with dwindling resources for all modes
- Safety
- Growth
- Staffing
- Equity
- Congestion has increased due to significant changes in commute patterns
- Balancing priorities
- Applicable, accurate, and accessible data is not always available
- Climate and hazard adaptation and resilience
- Driving and parking an SOV is relatively cheap or free, incentivizing usage
- Accessibility, climate, and equity concerns which were not a consideration when creating the 1999 OHP
- Advocating for transportation and transportation funding
- Transit justice should be emphasized with a public transit focus

Q 2: How is the current roadway system working for you?

- Works well for vehicles and freight traffic
- Fabulously, physically the roadway system is awesome and very easy to drive in a SOV
- Currently we are funding a system that isn't necessarily what communities want in the future
- The built environment is not necessarily conducive for system users
- Outside of Portland it works pretty well with a few exceptions and some freight access issues
- Roadways in Oregon are fantastic; reliably maintained and no issues with pavement degradation
- System users are struggling with the state system more than the local system
- The system is incredibly constrained with many failed and critical intersections
- There is an increase in safety concerns and the persistence of death and serious injuries on highways
- It is functioning ok and mostly meeting mobility targets
- The system is working overall with some maintenance issues which can cause safety issues
- Works for people who are private car owners but for transit dependent people it doesn't work that well
- Works well on major throughways and the highway system

Q 3: What transportation policy areas do you most often encounter?

- Regulations
- Finance and capacity
- Highway Safety Manual

- Americans with Disabilities Act requirements which can vary between state and local system
- Mobility and mobility targets and policies
- Safety
- Housing and land use policies
- Lifeline Routes and Reduction Review Routes
- Access to vehicles and for vehicles to reach locations
- Freight
- Multimodal Policy
- Public transit
- Public health outcomes

Q 4: Can you describe how have you used or been affected by state or local transportation plans, policy, or guidance documents?

- A state asset or highway classification may not meet local needs and changing it is challenging
- Utilize statewide plans, policy, and guidance when updating local plans
- Transitioning to Climate Friendly Areas (CFAs)
- Local governments refer to mobility and access management standards but not much else from the OHP
- Prioritization of funding and projects
- STIF funding has had a major impact on multimodal options
- Small cities often default to state guidance and planning documents
- The many state plans and policies making it unrealistic to fully understand, grasp, and distill down into the work being done
- Senate Bill 1553 (modifies crime of interfering with public transportation to include drug use) will cause some riders to be targeted more than others

Q 5: What is your vision of the Oregon highway system?

- Highways with major congestion issues expanded from 2 to 4 lanes
- To figure out how to replace the resource in gas tax
- To achieve the desired multimodal system through necessary investment
- Provide robust infrastructure that meets multimodal needs of freight, transit, and active transportation
- Introduce a Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) fee that reflects travel costs and considers equity
- Prioritization of capacity needs now and in the future
- Enhance reliability in the system
- Suggested tools for reducing transportation's carbon footprint such as electric highways and hydrogen- and battery-powered vehicles
- Enable transportation to play an oversized role in CFEC and addressing climate issues
- Consideration of non-drive modes such as investment in infrastructure that supports non-SOV travel
- Make it harder to drive a SOV and easier not to
- A system that best meets the needs of as many system users as possible

- Guidance on maintaining the existing system and making strategic investments where needed

Q 6: How do you think the OHP affects your work or your organization?

- The OHP lays out for cities and counties what the goals and requirements are, serving as the leading document for local plans
- The OHP deals more with urban areas and highways and does not have as much of an effect on rural areas
- The OHP serves as a guiding document for how Oregon prioritizes the way people move and prioritize investments
- The off-system improvements policy is very impactful and should be updated to address current and future needs

Q 7: Which challenges, trends, or opportunities should the OHP address?

- Taking the OHP from plan to action; a lot of time is put into planning efforts and less into implementation and maintenance planning
- Provide strategy to get to measurable, achievable outcomes
- The need for correct data to accurately prioritize
- Funding issues, specifically the lack of maintenance funding and replacing the gas tax
- Leadership must be more honest and sterner about revenue needs and go after it
- How to be stronger when voicing funding needs to legislators and providing realistic updates on the budget and funding
- Provide better guidance on access management
- Capacity and efficiency challenges
- Lack of freight infrastructure, specifically safe harbor and parking for trucks
- Safety challenges and integration of encouragement and education into safety advancement tools
- Improved access for different types of transportation
- Mobility policies
- Explore the possibilities of off-system improvements and strategic investments for bike and pedestrian infrastructure
- Move away from focusing on highways and look at the entire transportation system
- Balancing climate, safety, equity, and the economy

Q 8: What do you need most from a new OHP?

- Clarity of goals, intended achievements, and how to balance values and prioritization
- Tie together transportation and health, equity, and environmental goals
- Leave space for innovation and change
- More flexibility between rural and urban populations when it comes to policies and standards
- More planning guidance for natural hazards, including expansion of alternative routes network
- Be more direct regarding SOV reduction; consider incentives, stronger regulations on congestion-causing trip generators, and a mode usage regulatory system

- Realize the importance of multimodal transportation
- Thoughtful placement of Electric Vehicle (EV) chargers and recognition that GHG reduction will not be solved with just EVs
- A plan that provides guidance well into the future, and not just addresses today's issues
- Policy and guidance to enhance safety which focus on users' general safety, environmental health impacts, and active transportation amenities
- Guidance for completing budgeted-constrained HB 2017 projects

Appendix B: OHP Early Interviewees

Name	Organization / Agency	ODOT Region
Paige West	Rogue Valley Transit District	3
Brittany White	CCNO – Malheur Council on Aging and Community Services	5
Kim Curley	Commute Options	4
Tammy Baney	Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council (COIC)	4
Jana Jarvis	Oregon Trucking Associations	all
Carmen Merlo	Port of Portland	1
Nathan Crater	City of Astoria	2
Joseph Marek	Clackamas County	1
Juan Carlos Gonzalez, Tom Kloster, Catherine Ciarlo	Metro	1
Tyler Deke	Bend MPO	4
Marie Dodds	AAA	all
Marianne Brisson, Abby Griffith	OPAL	1
John Vial	City of Medford	3
Jill Rolfe	Coos County	3
Mark Willrett	Klamath Falls	4

Oregon Highway Plan

ACT & MODAL CHAIR WORKSHOP SUMMARY

June 2024

STATEWIDE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING UNIT



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Introduction

As part of the Oregon Department of Transportation's (ODOT) preparation for the Oregon Highway Plan (OHP) update, ODOT solicited guidance from Area Commissions on Transportation (ACT) and Modal Advisory Committee Chairs. On April 8th, 2024, ODOT held a workshop at the biannual ACT and Modal Chair Committee meeting (Appendix A for Agenda). The in-person workshop involved participants seated together at tables as discussion groups, deliberating on a set of questions similar to some of those asked in the previous external interviews. These questions were distributed as a worksheet (Appendix B) to each table. The questions focused on what the updated OHP should address. At the end of the workshop, responses from each table were collected and discussed with the entire room of attendees. The responses will help to inform the development of the scope of work for the updated OHP.

A total of 55 individuals (including staff) attended the ACT and Modal Chair meeting with 20 guests participating in the workshop. Participants included ACT chairs and members as well as representatives from modal and topical committees such as the Oregon Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (OBPAC), Safe Routes to School Advisory Committee (SRAC), Oregon Freight Advisory Committee (OFAC), and Oregon Transportation Safety Committee (OTSC). A full list of Workshop participants is located in Appendix C and their comments are reflected in this document.

Participants were asked to discuss a series of questions on topics including: critical issues or needs within Oregon Transportation Plan (OTP) goal areas, challenges, trends, or opportunities, and greatest needs from the OHP update. This document summarizes what was shared at the Workshop by identifying popular topics of discussion and providing short briefs on the overall conversation, followed by quotes from the dialogue.

The opinions expressed herein are solely those of the individuals who participated in the workshop and do not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of the Oregon Department of Transportation. ODOT makes no claim to the expressed views and provides them solely for informational purposes.

Big Ideas

- Recognize the differences in needs, priorities, and funding between rural and urban Oregon and provide equal consideration for each
- Look comprehensively at the state and its diversity – geography, economic base, population
- Address safety and other issues caused by highways running through small- to mid-sized towns
- Address and plan for tourism, including by utilizing seasonal traffic numbers
- Preserve and ensure capacity for all modes, consider freight capacity needs for truck parking, properly sized roundabouts, and passing lanes
- Plan and build for the long term, not just short-term solutions, recognize that up-front costs benefit long-term solutions
- Balance mobility for all users of the system
- Acknowledge the close relationship between maintenance and safety; funding should flow to safety before other needs, which will assist in addressing additional issues
- Provide guidance for operations and prioritization
- Recognize and maintain specified routes such as Freight and Lifeline

Common Topics

Participants covered a range of subjects throughout the workshop and the following topics were heard most frequently.

Funding

Funding was the most common topic of discussion throughout the workshop. Many comments focused on the need for sustainable funding for the system as a whole, as well as specific areas of concern. Some frequently identified areas that require additional funding include safety, maintenance and operations, and rural funding. Below are remarks shared by workshop participants regarding funding.

- Funding limitations challenge all aspects of transportation
- Develop a sustainable funding model for all modes that considers maintenance and overhead costs
- Prioritize funding for safety
- Provide adequate funding for maintenance and operations; 2% of funding for maintenance is a broken model
- Address rural funding needs as local transportation funding is limited and rural areas experience challenges competing for federal funding
- Add clarity for transportation funding
- Develop a long-term investment plan that includes efficiencies while researching and promoting long-term returns on investments and leverage effects and consumer costs
- Provide non-siloed funds (flexible, for multiple uses)
- Include communities that were previously left out of funding cycles
- Create funding that is not a long grant funding system and requires less paperwork to apply
- Recognize that having policy ready can help lead to funding
- Mitigate the challenge that arises when it is necessary to spend funding money quickly and in the timeframe it is available
- Include in the plan a means of funding and executing large state projects, such as plans for areas that have been historically neglected
- Consider a designated income tax with exemptions or rebates for Oregon residents as part of a funding strategy and index whatever tax support is used

Freight

Freight was another frequently discussed topic. Multiple participants expressed concern regarding freight capacity, specifically regarding the lack of truck parking and adequate roundabout size. Many participants also voiced their support for maintaining and preserving freight routes, especially as freight is expected to grow. While many of the freight comments focused on freight needs, they also expressed the importance of balancing freight needs with the needs of other system users.

- Freight needs help
- Recognize, maintain, and preserve Freight Routes as freight will grow
- Develop a long-term plan for freight investment
- Current roadway infrastructure creates freight issues; build for freight capacity

- Provide guidance for moving freight from roadways to rail
- Include truck parking, roundabout size, passing lanes, and electrification of the network in freight capacity considerations
- Establish a parallel plan for highways and rail
- Recognize that efficiencies reduce freight costs and freight's impact on climate change by reducing truck hours on the road and therefore emissions
- Develop short-term costs that benefit long-term solutions for freight
- Establish an East-West route in Southern Oregon
- Enhance freight mobility and increase safety in other areas, such as on Highway 97 in and around Bend; utilize crash data to develop solutions to safety issues
- Balance freight needs with other users of the system
- Address land use issues for freight such as the lack of truck parking

Urban and Rural Differences

Participants repeatedly noted the differences between urban and rural needs, funding, priorities, capabilities, solutions, and more. They wanted to ensure that ODOT is not only aware of these distinctions but takes action to guarantee that differences will be addressed with separate policies, guidelines, and standards. Participants expressed that the new OHP should take a comprehensive look at the state and its diversity – geographic, economic base, and population – and allow for flexibility.

- Recognize that one size does not fit all; we need to hear from more local voices, not just interest groups
- Acknowledge urban and rural communities have different needs, priorities, and solutions
- Give equal consideration to rural areas
- Priorities can differ based on urban and rural contexts
- Recognize that non-metro areas are different when discussing VMT (Vehicle Miles Traveled) reduction and the metric has an urban feel; in rural communities, mobility targets and/or reducing VMT may not be appropriate metrics considering the inequalities surrounding access to food, education, healthcare, and other necessities
- Include VMT and mobility standards that are flexible
- Acknowledge that a funding divide exists with very little funding available for rural areas
- Consider how things look in the different contexts of urban and rural
- There are different pollution and safety concerns such as dust, air quality, and other elements; for example, Umatilla County's air particulates is a more critical safety issue for the area than Green House Gas (GHG) emissions
- Policy and planning should take a comprehensive approach
- Slow down or divert ODOT roads in small towns as they cause problems; challenges often exist in locations where rural highways are used as main streets; one example is in Columbia County where HWY 30 is being used as a bypass
- Look comprehensively at the state and its diversity – geographic, economic base, and population
- Provide easy guidance for small- and mid-sized cities and counties; checklists could be a useful tool

Multimodal

The desire for a multimodal system was clear. Participants stressed the need to consider different users, modes, and contexts when updating the OHP. Capacity for all modes was also recognized as an important element to include. Extra attention was paid to active transportation modes and the need to support and facilitate safer and more active transportation facilities.

- Look past volumes to the needs of different users, these will look different in different contexts
- Support Complete Streets with considerations for trucking, cycling, walking, etc.
- Promote and support more active transportation
- Active transportation provides equity for children, older adults, people with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) needs, and people who do not drive
- Support local, safe bike and pedestrian routes
- Recognize and mitigate the effects of a transportation system where all modes are competing for capacity; address capacity for all modes
- Integrate multimodal uses
- Provide guidance for bringing mass transit to Oregon
- Provide guidance on how to foster transit services on highways
- Consider multimodal transportation's effect on Public Health and the impact the ability to walk and bike to work have on air pollution levels
- Address mobility challenges; reasonable expectations of mobility include continuity and last mile facilitation
- Establish routes for different modes
- Address needs and issues with oversized vehicles

Resilience

Resilience planning emerged as another key element for participants. They recognized the importance of maintaining and preserving lifeline and alternate routes as well as the associated challenges when establishing these routes, due to the many considerations of such a wide variety of hazards across the state. Participants stressed the importance of maintaining bridges and addressing bridges that were left out of the third iteration of the Oregon Transportation Investment Act III (OTIA III). They also emphasized the importance of planning and building for the long-term while ensuring future capacity.

- Lifeline Routes have many hazards to account for
- Address bridges that were left out of OTIA III
- Guidance on how to manage assets and data tools
- Plan and build for the long-term
- Preserve and ensure future capacity
- There are major system bypass and alternate route issues to address
- Consider the lack of drainage systems on private roads that affect highways, such as the 101 in Lincoln County
- Observed trends working against resilience include climate change and growth of the wealth gap
- The new OHP should take a proactive approach rather than reactive
- Plan for 50 years in advance using long-term plans, not just short-term solutions

- Plan for land use changes while keeping timing in mind

Prioritization

Many of the workshop participants had opinions regarding prioritization. A lot of them are looking for the OHP update to provide guidance on how to prioritize various transportation considerations: modes, operations, and other elements. Others wanted to ensure that certain things would be prioritized over others: safety funding first, user experience, and considering all roads not just highways. A few users voiced concern for not bankrupting transportation funds in order to fund social justice and equity matters, rather the priority should be a functioning transportation system.

- Establish how to prioritize different modes
- Provide direction for operations and prioritization
- Prioritize safety funding first to address other issues
- Prioritize user experience as it is important
- Consider and support all roads, not just highways
- Do not bankrupt transportation to pay for social justice and equity; a functioning transportation system is needed for individuals and businesses
- Funding for social justice and equity should match the extent that the transportation system performs
- Provide policy foundation for decision-making and clarify who has the authority to make what decisions

Maintenance and Operations

The importance of adequate maintenance and operations was addressed throughout conversations. Of utmost significance for participants was the correlation between maintenance and operations and safety. It was stated that more maintenance funding is needed, and the priority for maintenance funding should be safety-related needs.

- Recognize the correlation between maintenance and operations and safety
- Funding for maintenance should go to safety-related needs first
- Provide more funding for maintenance; investigate if ODOT is too top heavy and work to reduce overhead
- Guard rails and striping emphasize the strong ties between maintenance and safety
- Plan for the impact of natural conditions on operations and maintenance
- Increase maintenance of the system throughout
- Take rail maintenance into consideration

Safety

While safety topics were weaved in throughout conversations focused on other topics, there were some valuable discussions directly relating to safety itself. It was noted that crash trends are going up and the OHP must take actions to reverse the trends. One way of doing so was identified as setting realistic safety targets rather than things like Vision Zero. It was suggested that utilizing a safety-first mindset would settle conflicts within the modes.

- Set realistic targets rather than Vision Zero
- Recognize socioeconomic connections to safety
- Crash trends are going up
- Safety, especially when highways go through mid-size or small towns
- Safety first addresses conflicts within the modes
- Should safety be improved by design or technology?

Modernization

Some participants mentioned the need to maintain a modernized system and various system aspects that should also be modernized. These included multimodal planning, safety planning and policies, resilience planning, and electric vehicle (EV) planning and needs. While modernization is a priority, participants also wanted modernization to make it easier to adopt to future advancements and revisions.

- Work to modernize multimodal planning
- Work to modernize safety planning and policies
- Consider modernization in resilience planning
- Address EV planning and needs
- Make it easier to adopt technological changes and to make revisions as technology changes
- Research the opportunity for future/new systems
- Consider modernizing metrics with different measures such as safety, economic viability, and high need locations

Coordination

Participants provided suggestions for ODOT regarding its coordination efforts for the OHP update. They wanted to ensure that ODOT would get more input from rail, work with our partners in housing, economic development, and water systems, get Transportation Growth Management (TGM) involved, and look into coordinating with other state agencies regarding transportation, economic development, housing, water, and energy.

- Get more input from Rail
- Ensure we are working with our partners in housing, economic development, and water systems
- Get Transportation Growth Management (TGM) involved
- Support ACT activities and traffic safety committees
- Look into coordinating with other state agencies regarding transportation, economic development, housing, water, and energy
- Bi-directional communication is needed in decision making

Tourism

While tourism was a more limited topic of discussion there were still some important ideas mentioned.

- Address tourism in terms of byways, facilities, and funding
- Address and plan for tourism and seasonal traffic numbers

- An example of improper consideration of tourism’s transportation impact is in Wallowa County where there is heavy tourism, but road planning and maintenance is based on the number of permanent residents instead of how many vehicles actually use the road

Land Use

Most of the comments involving land use were tied into other topics. However, there were a few valuable points that related most to land use itself.

- Address land use plans
- Recognize transportation barriers to housing production and streamline policies to address these obstacles when possible
- Research Transportation Planning Rule (TPR) coordination and land use

Conclusion

The workshop participants provided valuable insight regarding the variety of issues and needs to address in the updated Oregon Highway Plan. These individuals represented transportation interests from across the state, and their experiences provided beneficial perspectives on how to better provide policies and guidance for the highway system throughout the state. One notable impression from this workshop was the fact that participants echoed many of the statements that were shared in the early external interview process, lending further support to interviewees statements. Information gathered through the workshop will be used to inform ODOT and various committees as work begins on the new Oregon Highway Plan.

Plan development includes research, defining existing conditions and needs, developing a vision, goals, and policies, identifying possible performance measures, etc. Please follow the plan website for more information and opportunities to participate. The Oregon Highway Plan Update website can be found at: <https://www.oregon.gov/odot/Planning/Pages/Oregon-Highway-Plan-Update.aspx>

Appendix A: Oregon ACT and Modal Advisory Committee Chairs' Meeting Agenda

Oregon ACT and Modal Advisory Committee Chairs' Meeting

Meeting Agenda April 08, 2024

Keizer Civic Center
930 Chemawa Road NE
Keizer, OR 97303
Iris B Conference Room

10:30 AM	A)	Welcome and introductions	Welcome & introductions, meeting purpose & goals <i>(10 mins, OTC Chair Brown, Vice Chair Beyer)</i>
10:40 AM	B)	OTC Updates	OTC Updates. <i>(15 mins, OTC Chair Brown, Vice Chair Beyer)</i>
10:55AM	C)	Dec Meeting Recap	What we heard at the December meeting <i>(5 mins, PDAD Administrator Amanda Pietz)</i>
11:00 AM	D)	Legislative Updates – Transportation Funding Needs	Legislative Updates/Transportation Funding Needs <i>(45 mins, ODOT Director Kris Strickler)</i>
11:45 AM	E)	Lunch Break	Lunch and Networking <i>(30 mins)</i>
12:15 PM	F)	Highway Plan Discussion & Workshop	Lunch continued & Oregon Highway Plan Workshop <i>(1 ½ hrs., PDAD Administrator Amanda Pietz, Statewide Transportation Planning Unit Manager Michael Rock)</i>
1:45 PM	G)	Closing Remarks	Meeting wrap-up <i>(10 mins, PDAD Administrator Amanda Pietz)</i>

Appendix B: OHP Update Discussion Questions and Examples

- 1. Pick one OTP goal area (mobility, safety, climate, etc.) What are the most critical issues or needs for the OHP to address in that area?**
 - a. Freight mobility and reliability
 - b. Safety for bicycle and pedestrian travelers, urban or rural highway safety
- 2. What other challenges, trends, or opportunities should the OHP address?**
 - a. Particular needs when the highway is a main street or an urban thoroughfare
 - b. Rapidly changing transportation environment, vehicles, tech, needs, etc.
- 3. What do you need most from a new OHP?**
 - a. Policy to clarify ... and aid local decisions
 - b. Specific strategies to address ...

Appendix C: OHP Update ACT/Modal Chair Workshop Participants

Participant	Affiliation
Michael Montero	Rogue Valley Area Commission on Transportation (RVACT)
Mark Gibson	Oregon Trucking Association (OTA)
Bill Jablonski	Northwest Oregon Area Commission on Transportation (NWACT)
Beth Young	Oregon Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (OBPAC)
Nikki Messenger	South West Area Commission on Transportation (SWACT)
Jerry Marmon	Rogue Valley Area Commission on Transportation (RVACT)
David Anzur	Oregon Freight Advisory Committee (OFAC)
Ken Woods	Mid-Willamette Valley Area Commission on Transportation (MWACT)
Julie Brown	Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC)
Keith Weiss	Lane Area Commission on Transportation (LACT)
Bill Hart	South East Area Commission on Transportation (SEACT)
Lee Beyer	Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC)
Shelly Clark	Lane Area Commission on Transportation (LACT)
Brant Boyer	South West Area Commission on Transportation (SWACT)
Victor Hoffer	Oregon Transportation Safety Committee (OTSC)
Mavis Hartz	Safe Routes to School Advisory Committee (SRAC)
Robert Townsend	Lower John Day Area Commission on Transportation (LJDACT), Central Oregon Area Commission on Transportation (COACT)
Vidal Francis	Lane Area Commission on Transportation (LACT)
Roger Nyquist	Cascades West Area Commission on Transportation (CWACT)
Sean Maloney	South East Area Commission on Transportation (SEACT)