



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

June 6, 2017

Senator Lee Beyer, Co-Chair  
Representative Caddy McKeown, Co-Chair  
Joint Committee on Transportation Preservation and Modernization  
79<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly  
Oregon State Capitol  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, Oregon 97301

Co-Chairs Beyer and McKeown:

Thank you for the hard work already accomplished by the Joint Committee on Transportation Preservation and Modernization. Given the decades-long disinvestment in our public infrastructure, I am heartened by the dedication, energy, and thoughtfulness of your approach: the draft plan reflects the passion you bring to this endeavor.

From the beginning, you have emphasized objective measures for investment. Your framework emphasizes specific goals, among them:

- Protecting Oregon's investment in its existing bridges, streets, roads, and highways
- Preparing the transportation system for a Cascadia Zone earthquake
- Replacing aging bridges to improve safety, resiliency, and continuity of traffic and freight systems

The long-term investment program was built upon increments that outline the critical nature of maintenance and preservation of existing infrastructure as well as seismic preparedness, including bridges on lifeline and recovery routes. Understanding the need to balance preservation with emergent modernization strategies is critical for both short-term and long-term success.

To that end, I request a small adjustment to the draft proposal. The existing bridges spanning the Willamette River in Salem (linking Marion and Polk Counties) are currently identified as "intercommunity" rather than "intracommunity" within the tiered "lifeline" planning documents. As such, they are lower on the priority list than they should be – given the realities of 2017. Right now, today, were a catastrophic event occur over 24,000 souls living in West Salem would not – could not – access emergency care less than a mile away, within eyesight of the banks of the river. This means the population of West Salem would likely be "on their own" despite the availability of nearby services.

Seismic resiliency is a critical requirement for any successful transportation strategy. And while I would wish that both bridges could be rehabilitated during the ten-year horizon of the plan under consideration – I am a realist – I understand the constraints of our circumstances. Therefore, I ask for the following: reclassification of both bridges (Center Street Bridge and the Marion Street Bridge), and seismic rehabilitation and upgrades for one of these bridges (preferably the Center Street Bridge) within the next ten-years. This is my top priority for all/any available transportation funding because the value of sustaining at least one critical pathway for emergency services is so high.

Please understand that I am aware of, even supportive of, additional transportation proposals presented to the committee by local and regional advocates. We have legitimate needs for maintenance sustainability as well as development of new projects. That said, I believe we must be open-eyed about our situation. I was taught on the farm that financial management requires a “conservative” perspective: that we must do what we need to do, before attempting to do what we may want to do. I want you to know that I realize this view will not “win” me any friends – but as you know too well – the right thing is not often the easy thing.

Over the next few weeks you will undoubtedly hear from people who live or work in Salem and believe we must prioritize other needs: bicycle routes, transit expansion, and an additional river crossing. These are important issues; the need for added capacity is real. If new revenues become available in coming years, I hope to work on development of key investments in these efforts – and more. But that day is not today. Today we must focus on our most important investments. There is no other proposal, no alternative project, no investment for future capacities within our region equal to the sustainability of our life/safety pathway. Accordingly, I ask for your help in securing at least one of the bridges the life and safety of our people depend upon: before the catastrophe we all know is coming.

Thank you for your consideration on this matter. While I appreciate your dedication and devotion to this mission, I do not envy the hard choices you must begin to make. Please let me know what more information you may need, or questions I may be able to answer about this request.

Respectfully,



Paul L. Evans  
State Representative

Cc: Senator Brian Boquist, Vice-Co-Chair  
Representative Cliff Bentz, Vice-Co-Chair