RS EXCHANGE

REGIONAL SOLUTIONS

Monday, September 22nd, 2025

Regional Solutions Program Updates

Upcoming Regional Solutions Advisory Committee (RSAC) Meetings:

- South Central (Klamath and Lake Counties) September 24, 9-11am
  - Virtual Link
- Mid-Valley (Marion, Polk, and Yamhill Counties) October 9, 1:30-3:30pm
  - Virtual Link
- Northeast (Baker, Union, and Wallowa Counties) October 14, 2-4pm
  - Virtual Link

- South Coast (Coos, Curry, and Douglas Counties) ~~September 19, 1-3pm~~
  - Unfortunately, the Advisory Committee had to be cancelled last Friday. This will be rescheduled soon - please watch the Exchange for the rescheduled date & time.

Regional Updates

Central – Scott Aycock

- **Flat Fire:** The Flat Fire started on Thursday August 21, roughly 7 miles west of Culver and about 4 miles Northeast of Sisters. Firefighters initiated an aggressive suppression response, employing both ground and aerial resources. Despite these efforts, the fire advanced rapidly toward communities in Jefferson County and the Governor invoked the Emergency Conflagration Act a day later allowing the mobilization of additional resources and the deployment of the Oregon State Fire Marshal's Red Incident Management Team along with structural task forces. Over the weekend the fire shifted south and west, threatening the community of Sisters. Sunday was a scary day for everyone involved, but we were fortunate to have amazing coordination among local fire districts; OR Dept. of Forestry and the Oregon State Fire Marshal's Office; COFMS (federal); and local governments and community partners. In total, 59 different fire departments from across Oregon sent personnel to the Flat Fire and by Sept. 1 the threat had been mitigated to the point that most affected neighborhoods were no longer under evacuation notice. Some notable stats and takeaways from the fire:

- Key stats:
  - Total acres: 23,380
  - Residences under evacuation notice at the peak: nearly 4,000
  - Structures lost: 5 homes and 11 other structures (outbuildings, sheds, detached garages, etc.)
  - Total personnel on the fire at its peak: 1,481

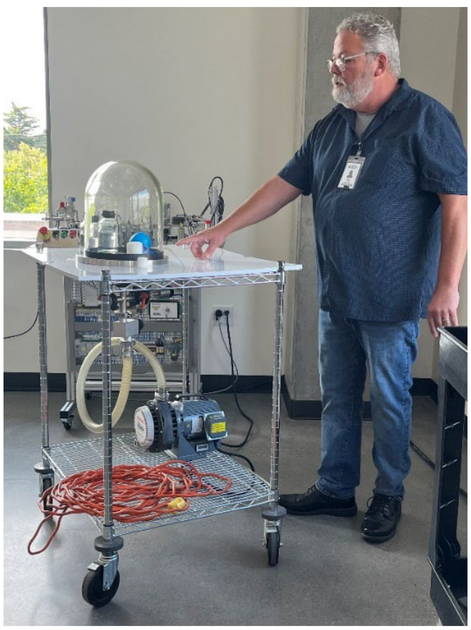
- Coordination: organizers of the August 25 Flat Fire community meeting repeatedly commented on how well the myriad agencies coordinated with each other, and attributed this to the development of proactive protocols and the fact that they are all becoming very experienced in responding quickly and effectively to these rapidly-developing and dangerous fires.

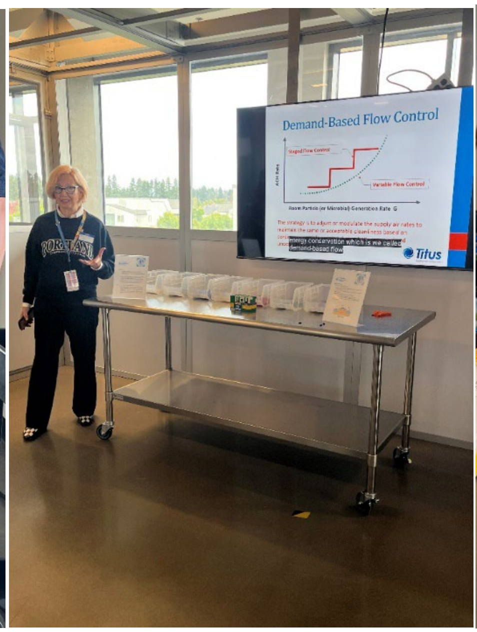
- Funding and preparation: At the August 25 Flat Fire community meeting (attended by 1,000+ residents; see image below), Sisters Mayor Jennifer Letz noted the impact of programs to increase Oregon's readiness, including Senate Bill 762 (2021) investments that increased readiness resources for fire districts and state agencies. Firefighters also shared many stories of the effectiveness of defensible space and fuel treatment actions, stating that the fire essentially dropped to the ground and passed around treated properties.

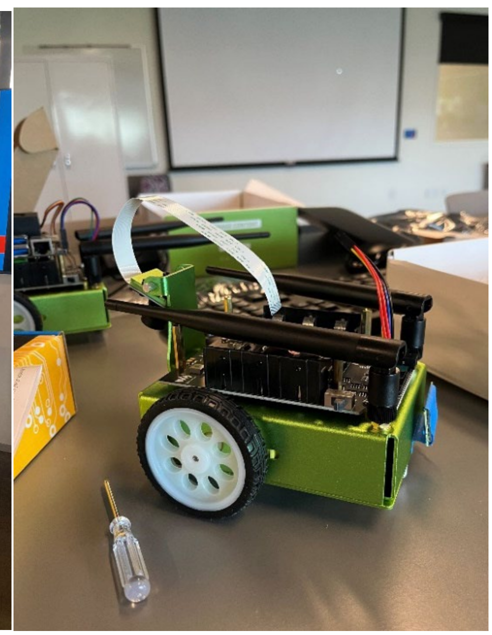
Regional Solutions monitored the fire, engaged in communication with local elected officials, and we are currently working with Business Oregon to assess business impacts and potential resources to address them.

Metro – Kathy Hyzy

- **PCC Technology Innovation Space Grand Opening**: Regional Solutions attended the ribbon cutting for Portland Community College's Willow Creek Opportunity Center. This new space serves as a dynamic hub featuring the Teaching Cleanroom, the Quick Start to Semiconducting Lab, and the Artificial Intelligence Lab. It provides students and the community with hands-on access to emerging technologies. The grand opening included interactive tours of the three new spaces, featuring demos and instruction by the many Intel retirees who now teach there. Funded in part by a $1.67 million state workforce grant, the teaching cleanroom provides hands-on experience for biosciences and wafer manufacturing. Among other offerings, this is where PCC offers their successful two-week short courses to ready students for entry-level positions in manufacturing and clean tech; many of those students go on to attain degrees at PCC. PCC works closely with local businesses to continually refine their program offerings, and many pieces of equipment in the center were donations from these businesses. It's wonderful to see this valuable public-private partnership come to fruition.







- **City of Beaverton**: Over the past decade, downtown Beaverton has reinvented itself as a cultural hub for Washington County. The construction of The Round and the Reser Performing Arts Center, the MAX Red Line station, pedestrian-friendly design, and the addition of a hopping food cart pod and other attractive elements have made it the place to be! I had the chance to talk with Beaverton's economic development team and learn about how the choices they made over the years resulted in where they are today, and to hear more about the challenges and opportunities ahead for their city. Like many cities across the state, they face dwindling income and constraints on their development options. They recently completed a round of outreach to local businesses to learn more about what they can do as a city to better support their work, and it was instructive to hear a bit about the preliminary results of that work. If you're in the area, take walk through downtown Beaverton and see how it's grown!

- **Downtown Portland Summer Foot Traffic Report**: This week Portland's Downtown Clean & Safe released a reporting highlighting great news about downtown Portland's recovery. This was the busiest summer for pedestrian traffic since before the pandemic, with over 21.45M visits over the summer to the downtown core. For the first time in recent years, there were six consecutive months of year-over-year foot traffic growth from March through August. Weekend events are driving the sustained increase. While there's still work to do around increasing weekday worker foot traffic downtown, the overall numbers reflect the sustained improvement in downtown's vibrancy.

<u>Mid-Valley – Beth Wytoski</u>

- **Regional Solid Waste:** The state is recruiting for a newly formed Task Force on Municipal Solid Waste in the Willamette Valley. The group is intended to pick up where a related Benton County work group has left off. After vetting more than 90 recommendations, a Sustainable Materials Management Plan will be further considered by representatives of: Association of Oregon Counties, League of Oregon Cities, Office of the Governor, solid waste haulers, subject matter experts, and environmental experts. The application is live on Workday: Board & Commission Member Opportunities and early consideration will begin next week!

- **Three Basin Rule:** Reconsideration of the Three Basin Rule is ongoing, with the public comment period concluding on September 21. After the comment period is closed, DEQ will respond to comments and prepare a report for the EQC to consider. A final decision is expected in November, which will determine whether DEQ will be allowed to issue NPDES permits for certain systems without direct effluent discharge along restricted areas of the Clackamas, North Santiam, and McKenzie rivers.

- **Reworld Closure**: Local governments have already had to make rate adjustments after the Reworld (formerly Covanta) incinerator stopped taking in local trash. Salem Health is expecting to spend more than $1 million in *increased* rates in order to dispose of regular and biological/medical waste. In contrast, some local leaders are noting a potential reduction in respiratory risks and poor air quality as a result of incinerator operation. Regardless of how the closure is perceived, it has now been nearly completed with the incinerator ceasing operations and the company terminating its permits with DEQ.

- **Celebrating with SEDCOR:** Many local leaders in business and government gathered at the Salem Convention Center to attend the annual awards and membership meeting. The event highlighted a great year of growth with more than 350 new jobs added, $179 million in regional investment, and $3.4 million in new expected property tax revenue. There were dozens of companies honored for expansion, innovation, and job development, and a handful being honored with specific awards:
    - **Agri-Business of the Year:** *West Coast Companies* – A family-run Salem firm that has grown from seed cleaners into a leading provider of agricultural processing equipment while helping strengthen the region’s ag economy.

- **Business Partner of the Year:** *Oregon Entrepreneurs Network* – A statewide leader in entrepreneurial support that has brought resources, networks, and capital to Mid-Valley entrepreneurs.
- **Community Leadership Award:** *Shawn Daley, George Fox University* – Recognized for championing innovation and hosting the Oregon Startup Conference.
- **Innovative Product/Process of the Year:** *Agility Robotics* – Globally recognized for its Salem-based robotics facility and contributions to automation and supply chain growth.
- **Dynamic Development Award:** *The Merchant Block, Dayton* – Combining historic preservation with forward-looking design, the project has revitalized the heart of Dayton, creating a welcoming destination for locals and visitors alike. The effort, carried out by a partnership including architect Paul Falsetto, the City of Dayton, Twin Towers, and The Stoller Group, reflects both vision and commitment to rural economic development and became a legacy project with the recent passing of Bill Stoller.
- **Entrepreneur of the Year:** *Max's Booch* – Founded by Max Ransom at Indy Commons, this handcrafted kombucha has grown from farmers markets to local shelves, fueled by community spirit and resilience.
- **Outstanding Public/Private Partnership:** *AHIVOY* – Empowering Latinx vineyard stewards with training and career pathways that are reshaping the wine industry.
- **Small Business of the Year:** *Salt Creek Cider House* – A family-owned cidery that has become both a gathering place and a regional destination, with products reaching local retailers and beyond.
- **Economic Development Champion:** *Russ Monk, High Impact Technology* – Honored for his leadership in international trade and advanced manufacturing innovations.
- **Manufacturer of the Year:** *Don Pancho Authentic Mexican Foods* – Recognized for reinvesting in Salem, transforming a former NORPAC plant into a state-of-the-art facility, and choosing to grow locally despite out-of-state offers.

"These honorees exemplify what makes our region strong—hard work, innovation, and a deep commitment to community," said SEDCOR Board Chair Tony Schacher.

North Coast – Nate Stice

- **Tillamook County Adopts MIRL Ordinance to Boost Workforce Housing:** Tillamook County has adopted an ordinance to participate in the **Moderate-Income Revolving Loan (MIRL) Program**, becoming the second community in Oregon to do so after Coos Bay. Administered by **Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS)**, MIRL enables local governments to access revolving loan funds to support housing for households earning up to 120% of Area Median Income. MIRL funds can be used for infrastructure, predevelopment, construction, and land write-downs.

  The ordinance positions the County to support projects like a proposed **72-unit workforce housing development** in Tillamook. Located on a remediated brownfield site near the hospital, the project includes three residential buildings, a leasing office, and 109 parking spaces. MIRL participation will help address infrastructure needs and improve funding competitiveness.

The Regional Solutions Team is coordinating with local and state partners to support implementation and project readiness, and some team members met with the project this week to discuss infrastructure funding.

Communities interested in launching a MIRL program can explore OHCS's Sponsoring Jurisdiction Toolkit and are encouraged to reach out to their Regional Solutions Coordinator to learn more.

Greater Eastern – Courtney Crowell

- **Highway 20 Wildlife Crossing Oregon Solutions Project:** Last week Oregon Solutions kicked off the Highway 20 Wildlife Crossing Project in Juntura, Oregon. We had about 15 people who joined us at the Juntura community center to discuss the Oregon Solutions process, agree to the working conditions and begin a discussion about possible opportunities and solutions. It was a great conversation and a great representation of stakeholders across the spectrum. We discussed both traffic safety ideas as well as wildlife mitigation and habitat restoration options. The plan is to meet monthly for about the next 4-6 months to try and get to a set of agreements from the project team.

- **Power Eastern Oregon Conference:** Attended the annual Power Eastern Oregon Conference that the Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative (OTEC) holds every year. It was great to connect with business and government leaders from across Eastern Oregon and the service area of OTEC (Union, Baker, Grant and Harney counties). Heard a great report about the economic outlook and a specific focus on Eastern Oregon counties.

- **Wheeler County Rural EMS Oregon Solutions Kick-Off meeting:** Oregon Solutions recently kicked off the Wheeler County Rural EMS project with a project team meeting in Fossil. It was a great opportunity for all the project team members to meet each other, talk about our shared visions for success and begin to dig into the details about the challenges with rural EMS in Wheeler County. The group learned about the three (two currently operating) different ambulance services that Wheeler County has (Spray, Mitchell and Fossil), the challenges they face and began to ask questions about potential solutions for serving the community. Regional Solutions is serving on the project team moving forward.

- **Pendleton Round-Up:** Had the opportunity to attend the Cowboy breakfast, Westward Ho! Parade and Governor's luncheon at the Pendleton Round-Up. It was great having the Governor attend the Round-Up this year and celebrate Pendleton and the annual event. Huge thanks to the Eastern Oregon Women's Coalition for the always wonderful Governor's luncheon and the opportunity to connect with so many state and regional leaders.

Southern – Jessica LaBerge

- **Rogue Water Forum Update:** In the last exchange, the Sept 5th Rogue Water Forum was mentioned, which brought together many water interests to initiate some local water planning. *A small clarification*: the Inland Rogue is pursuing a planning process separately from Place-Base Planning funds. They will likely apply for those funds to support their work but are starting to organize in response to significant concern about future water availability in the region. Link here for more information on the Inland Rogue Water Resiliency Group.

- **League of Oregon Cities Meeting – Revenue Reform Discussion:** On September 11, 2025, as part of the President's tour, the City of Jacksonville hosted a regional session focused on the League of Oregon Cities' (LOC) Revenue Reform Project. The event brought together representatives from 14 municipalities across Douglas, Jackson, and Josephine counties. Regional Solutions (RS) joined the session, which featured a robust discussion and presentation on the challenges and opportunities surrounding municipal revenue reform. The LOC Revenue Reform Project aims to identify sustainable strategies for cities facing revenue shortfalls. The project seeks to help municipalities achieve financial stability and meet future community needs.
  Key Questions Addressed:
    - How did cities arrive at current revenue challenges?
    - What systemic barriers exist to achieving fiscal sustainability?

  Historical Context: Two key ballot measures were identified as foundational to Oregon's current municipal revenue structure:
    - Measure 5 (1990): Limited property taxes for schools and general government, shifting more funding responsibility to the state.
    - Measure 50 (1997): Restructured the property tax system and imposed long-term constraints on local revenue growth.

  Key Provisions:
    - Permanent Tax Rates: Replaced most local levies with fixed, permanent tax rates that cannot be increased.
    - Assessed Value Cap: Introduced a new assessed value system, capping annual growth at 3%, regardless of actual market value increases.
    - Local Option Levies: Allowed for temporary voter-approved levies, but only for limited durations and purposes.

  Impact on Municipalities:
    - The 3% cap on assessed value growth has not kept pace with inflation or rising service costs.
    - Municipalities face structural budget imbalances, especially in fast-growing areas where demand for services outpaces revenue growth.
    - Cities report challenges in maintaining infrastructure, staffing, and emergency response capacity under these constraints.

    Key Findings from the Project
    1. Funding Crisis: Cities are experiencing a growing funding crisis, though this is not yet widely recognized by voters.
    2. Public Understanding: There is a general lack of voter understanding regarding city revenue streams and tax structures.

3. Community Concerns: Voters are increasingly concerned about growth management and the impacts of tourism.
4. Fragmented Advocacy: While cities share similar revenue challenges, there is no unified voice advocating for reform.

Resources Provided: **Local Revenue Tools Guidebook** (by LOC):

- **Southern Regional Solutions Advisory Committee Meeting:** The September 17th meeting included a presentation on the Rogue Valley Community Food Assessment. The Rogue Valley Food System Network (RVFSN) conducted a three-year food assessment (2020–2024) across Jackson and Josephine Counties, culminating in the 2025 State of the Food System Report and a 2025–2030 Food Action Plan. This initiative involved over 2,000 community members and more than 20 partner organizations.

  Key Findings from the Food Assessment:
  - 50% increase in local food producers since 2012.
  - Persistent food insecurity, especially in rural and low-income communities.
  - Infrastructure gaps for small farms, including limited processing and distribution capacity.
  - Environmental concerns such as soil degradation and water scarcity.
  - High levels of food waste, with opportunities for recovery and composting.
  - Strong community engagement and a call for climate-resilient food systems.

  Vision - A thriving, equitable, and resilient food system that:
  - Supports economic vitality
  - Ensures access to healthy food
  - Promotes environmental sustainability
  - Strengthens local farmers and food producers

  Additional Committee Topics and Discussions
  - Economic and Social Concerns, including regarding Oregon's economic outlook, systemic issues, and workforce housing.
  - Environmental and Infrastructure Updates, including the growing risks of wildfires and drought. A 2-million-gallon reservoir in North Phoenix is nearing completion, which is expected to double fire-fighting capacity.
  - Regional Coordination and Projects, including Jackson County's new pandemic response center which is roughly a year from being completed, and the Medford Airport's plans for an 85,000 sq. ft. expansion
  - Employment Trends (Jackson & Josephine)
    - Job Gains: Healthcare and transportation sectors
    - Job Losses: Retail and wholesale trade sectors
  - Legislative and Forecasting Discussions, including water rights legislation and Economic forecasts & the need for comprehensive economic reporting

Resources and Opportunities

- **Business Oregon Housing Infrastructure Grants: Apply by September 30th**
  Business Oregon has opened the second application round for the **Housing Infrastructure Support Fund Program (HISF)**. The HISF was created to provide capacity and support for infrastructure planning to cities to enable them to plan and finance infrastructure for water, sewers and sanitation, stormwater and transportation to produce housing at densities not less than:
  - Seventeen dwelling units per net residential acre if sited within the Metro urban growth boundary;
  - Ten units per net residential acre if sited with a population of 30,000 or greater;
  - Six units per net residential acre if sited in a city with a population of 2,500 or greater and less than 30,000; or
  - Five units per net residential acre if sited in a city with a population less than 2,500.

  Capacity and support include: assistance with local financing opportunities; state and federal grant navigation, writing, review and administration; resource sharing; regional collaboration support; and technical support, including engineering and design assistance. **Applications will be accepted until 11:59 p.m. on September 30.**

  Please review the information in the Request for Grant Application and sample contract and use the information to complete the application. If you have any questions, please contact Becky Baxter at 503-931-4403 or via e-mail at **becky.baxter@biz.oregon.gov**.

- **USDA Emergency Livestock Relief Program – Apply by Oct. 31**
  The *American Relief Act*, 2025, provides for $2 billion in emergency relief payments to livestock producers suffering losses due to drought, wildfires, or flooding in calendar years 2023 and 2024. The Emergency Livestock Relief Program (ELRP) is administered as two programs:
  1. **Emergency Livestock Relief Program (ELRP) 2023 and 2024 Drought and Wildfire**, announced in May, compensates producers who suffered eligible grazing losses due to drought and wildfire in 2023 and/or 2024.

  2. **Emergency Livestock Relief Program (ELRP) 2023 and 2024 Flood and Wildfire** helps offset increased supplemental feed costs due to qualifying floods or wildfires on non-federally managed land in 2023 and/or 2024.

These programs are administered separately as they provide compensation for different losses and have different eligibility requirements and payment calculations. Livestock producers must submit applications and materials by **Oct. 31, 2025.**

- **<u>Child Care Infrastructure Fund Now Accepting Applications for Round Three</u>**
  $20 million will be awarded for infrastructure projects at Oregon child care facilities.

  Business Oregon is pleased to announce that the application portal for Round Three of the Child Care Infrastructure Fund Program opened on September 17th. The Child Care Infrastructure Fund Program, created in response to Oregon's House Bill 3005 (2023), provides critical financial assistance for infrastructure activities that support child care facilities. Business Oregon is working with the Department of Early Learning and Care, other state agencies, and private and non-profit entities to implement this grant and loan program.

  With $50 million in lottery bonds approved by the Oregon Legislature at the recommendation of Governor Kotek, the Child Care Infrastructure Fund Program is dedicated to improving and expanding the spaces where Oregon's youngest minds learn and grow, ultimately making a significant impact on children, families, and communities statewide. This third and final round of the Child Care Infrastructure Fund Program offers grant funding for minor repairs and renovations, new construction, major renovations, and property acquisition awards.

  The Child Care Infrastructure Fund Program directly supports Governor Kotek's Education and Early Learning priority by expanding and improving child care infrastructure so that children in Oregon have the opportunity to thrive in their early learning environments and families are empowered with the child care support they need to succeed.

  "Every Oregon family deserves access to affordable, high-quality childcare, no matter where they live," Governor Kotek said. "This third round of child care infrastructure funding will create and expand vital childcare options across the state, helping ensure Oregon's future is strong, equitable, and full of opportunity."

  The first round of Child Care Infrastructure Fund Program awarded a total of $10 million in grants to 64 child care businesses in 29 different Oregon counties for eligible projects involving fixed, immovable assets including new construction, repairs, renovations, modernizations, retrofitting, property acquisition and planning projects. The second round of Child Care Infrastructure Fund Program awarded a total of $20 million in grants to 57 child care businesses in 30 different Oregon counties for eligible projects including minor renovation and repairs, major renovation, or new construction and property acquisition. This third round of awards will be the last round of funding awarded from the Child Care Infrastructure Fund Program unless additional funds are allocated for the program. Learn more about the awarded projects at www.oregon.gov/biz/.

This third round of the Child Care Infrastructure Fund program will continue to make a meaningful difference in the availability and quality of child care services throughout Oregon. Access to the application portal for Round 3 can be found on the Business Oregon Child Care Infrastructure Program webpage at https://www.oregon.gov/biz/. Applications are due by December 16, 2025. Award notification is expected on or after February 17, 2026.

There are many upcoming technical assistance webinars to support prospective applicants with their Round 3 applications. Each webinar focuses on a different aspect of the application process and is offered in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Russian, and Chinese. To register for these informational webinars, visit www.oregon.gov/delc/.

If you have questions or need technical assistance completing the Child Care Infrastructure Program application, please contact one of the technical assistance providers below:

Northwest Native Chamber: www.nwnc.org/ccif/, ccifsupport@nwnc.org
First Children's Finance: www.fcforegon.org/, InfoOregon@FirstChildrensFinance.org

To read this information in Spanish, click here.

- **DEQ's 2026 Reduce, Reuse, Reimagine Grants**

  Join DEQ's Materials Management team to learn about the 2026 Reduce, Reuse, Reimagine grant cycle: Built for Well-Being: Reducing Exposure to Toxic Substances in Building Materials. The agency is hosting webinars designed to share information on the 2026 funding area, highlight project examples, and connect with DEQ staff to learn about program goals and project eligibility.

  There are two opportunities to attend a webinar, with identical content in each session. Click the links below to register:

  - 1pm, Thursday, November 6th 2025
  - 11am, Thursday, November 13th 2025

  For those who can't attend during the above dates, a recording will be available on our website and shared through our newsletter once available. Additionally, we will host additional live sessions of this webinar in early 2026. To learn more, you can sign-up for our newsletter here: Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)

- **ODOT Jurisdictional Transfer Committee Provides Assistance to Local Jurisdictions**

  During the 2023 legislative session, the Oregon Legislature passed House Bill 2793, which established a Jurisdictional Transfer Advisory Committee, with the charge to make recommendations to the Oregon State Legislature's Joint Committee on Transportation. The committee was appointed by the Governor and is staffed by the ODOT.

  The Committee is tasked with developing a list of three jurisdictional transfer candidates per biennium interested in receiving funding to support transferring portions of state highways from ODOT to a city or county. These recommendations will be made in consultation with the Oregon Transportation Commission.

  No later than Sept. 15th of each even-numbered year, the committee will submit a report to the Joint Committee on Transportation that includes the list of jurisdictional transfers recommended for funding. The committee is advisory; they do not have a budget and do not distribute funds.

  The first step in a jurisdictional transfer is for a city or county to engage in conversation with their local ODOT district and region. A city or county may wish to transfer ownership of a highway from ODOT to themselves for a variety of reasons. Frequently it is because the highway segment no longer fills a statewide need and instead supports local access to jobs, shopping and housing. While the uses of the highway have shifted, the design has remained constant.

  Reconstructing the roadway to support local users can be costly, as such these transfers require new funding to complete. Cities and counties may apply, with the support and assistance of ODOT staff, to the Jurisdictional Transfer Advisory Committee to be considered for recommendation to the legislature for financial support of the transfer.

  Learn more on the committee's webpage:
  Oregon Department of Transportation : Jurisdictional Transfer Advisory Committee