



Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

Oregon Transportation Commission

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DATE: February 27, 2023
TO: Oregon Transportation Commission

FROM: Kristopher W. Strickler
Director

SUBJECT: **Agenda H** – Improving Pedestrian Safety Initiative - Evaluation Results and Bicycle Pedestrian Safety Action Program Proposal

Requested Action:

Receive an informational update on the evaluation effort and proposal to dedicate HB 2017 state safety funds to establish and implement an ongoing pedestrian and bicycle safety improvement initiative.

Background:

Between 2016 and 2020, crashes involving people walking and bicycling accounted for 13 percent of the total fatal and serious injury crashes statewide. Based on preliminary data for 2021 and 2022; that number is trending up with a 44 percent increase in preliminary pedestrian fatalities from 2021 to 2022. A recent ODOT study, Understanding Pedestrian Injuries and Social Equity (2021), also found a disproportionate number of pedestrian fatalities occur in Oregon's low-income and BIPOC communities. Nationally, pedestrian deaths have increased by 53 percent in the past decade.

Through a number of existing programs, ODOT invests tens of millions of dollars annually in safety improvements across state and local roads. These programs are based on data-driven prioritization of locations and improvements. However, these programmatic investments often take years to scope, bid and construct.

Informed by these study results and identified trends, and supported by the OTC, ODOT initiated an effort in 2021 to identify ways to consistently and rapidly review, assess and deliver infrastructure safety improvements for pedestrians and bicycles on the state highway system, particularly in low-income and BIPOC communities. ODOT hired a consultant to evaluate existing agency transportation and safety related programs to recommend program structure to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety in a fast, effective and equitable manner. The proposed result is the tentatively named Bicycle Pedestrian Safety Action Program.

ODOT plans to invest \$5.6 million annually (FY 2025-2027) of HB 2017 State Safety Priority Funds (SSPF) to create the Bicycle Pedestrian Safety Action Program. The program intends to ensure ODOT has a consistent process for addressing serious pedestrian and bicycle safety events equitably across Oregon. The key steps in the program process include:

- The triggering event will be assessed by established criteria to determine the level of response.

- The location will be assigned to a regional team to identify and assess larger improvements and quickly implementable pedestrian/bike safety improvements using pre-approved safety countermeasures with proven crash reduction factors.
- ODOT program staff will review the resulting improvements proposal and other recommendations for consistency with program guidance. If eligible, funding for short-term implementation items will be approved. Long-term recommendations will be directed to program managers and ODOT regions for funding consideration through other means.
- Regions and partners will deliver short-term improvements on a quick delivery timeline (one year or less).
- Any additional funds not spent via triggering event assessments will be used on other pedestrian/bicycle improvements identified by ODOT program staff through corridor screening of existing active transportation safety data.

Outcomes:

With OTC's endorsement, this program will enable ODOT to respond consistently and rapidly to serious crashes involving people walking and biking across the state. Many of the projects identified through this initiative will be implemented within one year. Longer-term investment needs identified through crash assessments will strengthen and improve the pipeline of safety projects for future STIP investments and grant opportunities. Combined with safety and active transportation investments through other programs, this will improve vulnerable user safety in those areas of greatest need.

Without OTC's endorsement, the department will lack dedicated funding to quickly respond to these critical safety issues.