Expressways

A Highway System Classification of the Oregon Highway Plan

Expressways are defined in the Oregon Highway Plan as:
“...complete routes or segments of existing two-lane and multi-lane highways and planned multi-lane highways that provide for safe and efficient high speed and high volume traffic movements. Their primary function is to provide for interurban travel and connections to ports and major recreation areas with minimal interruptions. A secondary function is to provide for long distance inter-urban travel in metropolitan areas. In urban areas, speeds are moderate to high. In rural areas, speeds are high. Usually there are no pedestrian facilities, and bikeways may be separated from the roadway.”

Expressways give priority to the efficient movement of people and goods traveling through an area within specific segments of a highway. This is achieved by limiting access and turn movements on the highway facility, allowing for higher speeds and smooth flow. Expressway designation may be applied as an overlay to the following four highway classifications designated in the Oregon Highway Plan (OHP), Policy 1A:
1. Interstate
2. Statewide Highways
3. Regional Highways
4. District Highways

Expressways are classified based on the following criteria:
• Importance as an NHS route with high volumes of traffic;
• Designation as a part of the State Highway Freight System;
• Designation as a safety corridor; or
• Function as an urban bypass.

Expressway designation identifies areas where more detailed modernization and management priorities will be applied. Features to support the function of an Expressway may be implemented over time on an existing roadway or in construction of a new expressway. The following are the main characteristics that are associated with Expressways:
• Private access is discouraged;
• Public road connections are controlled;
• Traffic signals are discouraged in rural areas;
• Nontraversable medians are typically included;
• Parking is prohibited;
• Segment Designations (STA, Commercial Center, etc.) are prohibited; and
• Posted speeds are generally 50 miles per hour or greater.

Expressways are identified by ODOT Region staff in consultation with local governments and approved by the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC). The OTC will classify new Expressways as a subset of Interstate and Statewide highways in consultation with local governments. The OTC will classify new Expressways as a subset of Regional and District Highways with the agreement of directly affected local governments. For more information on Expressways, consult the Oregon Highway Plan.