

OREGON HIGHWAY PLAN UPDATE

Project News



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INTRODUCTION

The Oregon Department of Transportation has begun an update to the Oregon Highway Plan advancing and helping to implement the 2023 Oregon Transportation Plan's vision and goals.

The project is just beginning, with upcoming opportunities to get involved and help shape priorities. Visit the [OHP Update website](#) to learn more and sign up for email updates.

This update process will look different than prior plan updates. ODOT is doing this update mostly with in-house staff. There was early outreach with staff units, peers, and stakeholder interviews. The results are informing staff development and drafting of initial ideas before reshaping those with wider outreach. ODOT is also responding to limited resources and other agency initiatives. Consequently, priorities may change or the update project may speed up or slow down as needed. In any case, further opportunities to participate are coming and the website will help you stay informed of those.

Key goals of the update include:

- Respect differences around the state.
- Link roadway expectations to land use context.
- Update key policies, keep ones that are working.
- Provide options for performance measurement.
- Provide guidance for prioritization.
- Be frank about trade-offs and consequences.
- Support other plans, rules, and the new Capital Improvement Plan Process.



WHAT WE'VE HEARD

The plan update will reflect input from staff and partners across Oregon. Participants so far want a clearer, more structured, and financially realistic highway plan to support consistent, defensible decision-making statewide. Key guidance includes:

- Provide a clear decision-making and prioritization framework.
- Safety must be the top concern.
- Urban and rural contexts require flexibility and adaptability.
- Freight mobility and reliability are essential.
- Integrate climate, resilience, and environmental stewardship.
- Modernize and align performance measurement and report results.

OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

As ODOT updates the plan, the agency is evaluating major trends that will shape the future of the state's highway system. These insights will help guide future goals, policies, and investment decisions. Several key themes have emerged.

Smarter Planning with Better Data – Advances in data are improving understanding of travel patterns and system performance, creating opportunities for more informed decision-making.

Planning for Regional Differences – Transportation needs vary across Oregon. The plan update offers an opportunity to better tailor strategies and align with local land use planning.

Improving Safety – Safety remains a top priority. Aligning with the Safe System Approach can help target effective strategies.

Preserving the System – Much of the highway system is aging, and rising costs make it increasingly difficult to maintain infrastructure in good condition.

Funding in a Changing Economy – Declining fuel tax revenues and evolving vehicle technology are straining funding, creating a need to update investment strategies.

Preparing for Technology and Climate Change – New technologies offer opportunities, while climate change increases risks from extreme weather, requiring stronger resilience.

Expanding Mobility and Access – The plan update can strengthen how mobility, access, and fairness are addressed.

EXISTING CONDITIONS OF OREGON'S HIGHWAYS

ODOT began the plan update by gathering info about the highway system. Data shows:

- Most travel occurs on urban interstates and arterials, though Oregon also has an extensive and important rural network.
- Serious injuries have increased since 2019, despite recent improvements in fatality rates.
- Most congestion is concentrated in metropolitan areas.
- Transit ridership has not fully recovered from COVID, and most trips are still made by car.
- Freight demand is expected to grow significantly, increasing pressure on key corridors.

NEXT STEPS

ODOT is early in the plan update process. Steps like those above have been completed and more are coming. Upcoming efforts will include:

- Revisit definitions of our functional classifications and make sure they still work.
- Explore the different kinds of designations we have along the highway system, learn where they come from, how they overlap, and what is still necessary and relevant or missing.
- Consider how to apply the OTP goals to the highway system.
- Begin updating OHP policies for the new plan.
- Consider how the OHP will link to the land use contexts described in the OTP.
- Identify the performance measures ODOT has in its plans and in its reports and used by its partners and determine which may help the OHP.
- Begin the next aspects of outreach, sending this newsletter and updates to interested parties and posting them on our website, and planning for workshops to test and improve ideas.