Research Stage 1 Problem Statement

PROPOSED TITLE: Evaluating the impact of ODOT-approved driver education programs.

1. Concisely describe the transportation issue (including problems, improvements, or untested solutions) that Oregon needs to research.

Transportation safety professionals and advocates have long been interested in finding ways to understand and measure the impact of driver education. However prior research has produced mixed results. Several factors may explain the mixed results in prior research, including:

1. Some prior studies did not account for a wide range of confounding factors. It is difficult to isolate the true impact of driver education without accounting for factors like population density, urban/rural location, gender, race, and socio-economic levels

2. Some prior studies measured impact through crashes and/ or convictions, which is a narrow scope

3. Self-selection bias among the teens who complete Driver Education

2. What final product or information needs to be produced to enable this research to be implemented?

ODOT can likely address challenges #1 and #2 given a new data set created under the Risky Driver research project with Oregon State University. The team at Oregon State has created a linked database combining driver, verdict, citation, accident, and crash data from ODOT. In addition, the project team hopes to add each driver's address to the dataset in future iterations. This new data set enables ODOT to shape a research project centered on Driver Education efficacy measuring impact across a wider scope (inclusive of all citations), and accounting for a broad range of factors such as gender, population density, race, and socio-economic level (using driver address.)

Goal: is to evaluate the impact of ODOT-approved driver education programs on teen driving outcomes in Oregon, with a focus on how program efficacy varies by census tract-level characteristics including race/ethnicity, median household income, and population density. For the purposes of this study, outcomes could be measured through post-permit indicators within 6 or 12 months of licensure such as : (1) traffic citation rates, (2) crash involvement, (3) licensing success (pass/fail on first attempt), and (4) program completion rates."

3. (Optional) Are there any individuals in Oregon who will be instrumental to the success of implementing any solution that is identified by this research? If so, please list them below.

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4. Other comments:

Driver education in Oregon is offered to teens between the ages of 15 and 17 years old, who hold a PIP (Provisional Instruction Permit). Students who complete an ODOT-approved course between the ages of 15-17 qualify for benefits like reduced supervised driving hours and a DMV drive test waiver. An ODOT-Approved Driver Education course must be 35 days (with max of 180 days) in duration and include the following:

- Minimum 30 hours classroom instruction
- 6 hours of in-car driving
- 6 hours observing another student driver
- At least 1 parent meeting during the course.

5. State of Oregon Decision Making Lenses

State decision making lenses are a part of the state of Oregon's policy structure. State policy and federal policy are not always aligned. The state will prioritize research according to state policy, however ODOT may be required to skip prioritized proposals based on constraints placed on the use of federal funds. If state funds are available ODOT will attempt to fund prioritized research that is deemed ineligible for federal funding.

Please complete the following three sections. Your answers to these questions will be applied on a programmatic basis to support agency decisions. Answering yes to the questions below is not required. Resolving a narrowly focused technical research problem may meet agency needs without answering yes to any of the following questions. The ODOT Research Section will seek a balanced portfolio some projects will answer yes to one of the three categories below (e.g. climate, equity, and/ or safety) and other projects in a different category.

We are looking for an overall program balance and no one project is expected to balance all categories. Generally, a research problem statement is expected to be able to answer yes with clear and verifiable information in only one of the three categories below, some projects may be able to answer yes in two or even three categories. Some projects (i.e. needs focused on specific elements of infrastructure design), may have no 'yes' answers but may still be a high value research need.

Climate

Oregon recognizes the climate crisis and makes systemic changes to reduce emissions caused by travel. To that end, we seek research that reduces carbon emissions from construction activities and materials, and from maintenance equipment and operations. Oregon envisions a transportation system that is resilient, this means a system that is durable in the face of seismic events and extreme weather to avoid negative impacts, withstand them or bounce back quickly to resume system function. We seek research that improves the ability of the transportation system to adapt or cope with more frequent and extreme weather events. This may include innovations in data and data sharing, construction materials and project design, communication, emergency planning and response, and more. Similarly, we seek

research that avoids negative impacts on key habitats and ecosystems that can buffer or reduce damage to infrastructure and improve environmental conditions for wildlife and native vegetation. For definitions and details please review the equity vision, goals, and objectives of the [ODOT Strategic Action Plan](#) and [Oregon Transportation Plan](#).

5a. Will addressing the transportation issue identified as a need in Question 1 develop, or **validate methods for the estimation, measurement, or monitoring** of transportation generated greenhouse gases (GHG)?

   ☐Yes   ☒No   ☐Unsure

5b. If climate or GHG is not the focus of this **transportation issue** identified in this problem statement, will the research apply a GHG analysis to transportation infrastructure, planning, operations, maintenance, or materials?

   ☐Yes   ☒No   ☐Unsure

5c. Will addressing the **transportation issue** include development or testing of construction practices, methods, or materials to establish potential reductions in greenhouse gas emissions?

   ☐Yes   ☒No   ☐Unsure

5d. Will solving the **transportation issue** in question 1 study or support the reduction of vehicle miles traveled and single occupancy vehicle travel or support transition to electric vehicles (or other types of zero emission vehicles) or low-carbon alternative fuels?

   ☐Yes   ☒No   ☐Unsure

5e. Will the solving the **transportation issue** in question 1 lead to work that will support, measure, or monitor, transportation system resilience in response to expected climate events, effects, or natural disasters in general?

   ☐Yes   ☒No   ☐Unsure

5f. Will solving the **transportation issue** in question 1 lead to work that may result in better environmental conditions for wildlife and native vegetation?

   ☐Yes   ☒No   ☐Unsure

5g. If you answered yes to any of the climate questions above or can provide alternative details related to climate, please provide additional information: NA

Equity

Equity can have many dimensions and impacts relating to communities and transportation. It is important that problem statement proposals clearly explain the equity dimensions or impacts being examined. Oregon commits to social equity in the OTP, specifically to *improve access to safe and affordable transportation for all, recognizing the unmet mobility needs of people who have been systemically excluded and underserved. Create an equitable and transparent engagement and communications decision-making structure that builds public trust*. We seek research that studies elements of this goal or applies analysis to specific transportation topics to ensure the resulting research

recommendation is consistent with agency equity goals. For definitions and details please review the equity vision, goals, and objectives of the ODOT Strategic Action Plan and Oregon Transportation Plan.

5h. Is the **transportation issue** identified as a need in Question 1 specifically focused on transportation equity?

☐Yes   ☒No   ☐Unsure

5i. If the **transportation issue** is not focused on transportation equity, will the primary topic be assessed for equity benefits or impacts within the research project?

☒Yes   ☐No   ☐Unsure

5j. Is the implementation of potential findings from this research likely to directly involve participation from an identified group that would benefit from an equitable process or outcome?

☐Yes   ☐No   ☒Unsure

5k. Is the intended final product or information expected to support ODOT's equity efforts (Including but not limited to supporting one of the equity related objectives of the ODOT's Strategic Action Plan or Oregon Transportation Plan) ?

☐Yes   ☐No   ☒Unsure

5l. If you answered yes to any of the equity questions above or can provide alternative details related to equity, please provide additional information:

This research project supports ODOT's goal of improving access to safe and affordable transportation for all Oregonians by embedding equity considerations into the design and analysis of driver education outcomes. By evaluating the efficacy of ODOT-approved driver education programs through the lens of census tract-level characteristics (including race/ethnicity, household income, population density), the study will identify disparities in access, participation, and outcomes. Specifically, the project could:

- Demonstrate systemic barriers that may prevent youth in low-income, rural, or racially diverse communities from accessing or benefiting equally from driver education programs.
- Use the linked ODOT and geographic data to assess whether program benefits (e.g., reduced citations, improved licensing outcomes) are equitably distributed.
- Inform safety programming to expand access to driver education in areas with unmet need or disparate results

Safety

Research outcomes may include interventions and countermeasures to prevent or reduce the frequency of crashes or other causes of transportation-related injury or death; or may include measures to reduce severity of injury (including prevention of death) after a crash or other injurious event. For definitions and details please review the equity vision, goals, and objectives of the ODOT Strategic Action Plan, Oregon Transportation Safety Action Plan and Oregon Transportation Plan.

5m. Will solving the **transportation issue** in question 1 support improving **safety culture** for either transportation workers or the traveling public?

☒Yes   ☐No   ☐Unsure

5n. Will the solving the **transportation issue** support improving safety through **healthy and livable communities**?

☒Yes   ☐No   ☐Unsure

5o. Will solving the **transportation issue** support improving safety through using **best available technologies**?

☐Yes   ☐No   ☒Unsure

5p. Will solving the **transportation issue** support improving safety through **communication and collaboration**?

☐Yes   ☐No   ☒Unsure

5q. Will solving the **transportation issue** support improving safety through **investing strategically**? 5r. If you answered yes to any of the safety questions above or can provide alternative details related to safety, please provide additional information:

This research project supports ODOT's mission to improve roadway safety by evaluating the effectiveness of ODOT-approved driver education programs in reducing risky driving behaviors and adverse outcomes among Oregon teen drivers. By analyzing post-permit safety indicators, such as traffic citations and crash involvement, this study will provide evidence-based findings into how driver education contributes to safer driving outcomes among Oregon teens. With a linked dataset that includes citation, crash, and licensing data, ODOT will be able to assess if driver education leads to measurable reductions in high-risk behaviors, such as speeding, distracted driving, or failure to yield.

6. Corresponding Submitter's Contact Information:

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This form is not a grant application or contract document. Please do not include proprietary information on this form. Once this form is received ODOT may revise and publish the problem statement. If selected, ODOT will assign investigator(s) of the department's choosing to conduct research.