

# Research Stage 1 Problem Statement

**PROPOSED TITLE:** Coordinating Committee for Transportation Surveys and Public Engagement Outreach at ODOT: Improving Efficiency, Effectiveness, Equity, and Environmental Impact Assessment

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

Public outreach surveys and engagement activities at ODOT are currently siloed across programs, regions, and business lines, resulting in duplication, inconsistent methodology, and inefficient use of taxpayer resources. Without a coordinated, agency-wide approach, ODOT cannot fully leverage economies of scale, ensure consistency in public-facing communications, or systematically assess community preferences and perceptions. This fragmentation weakens the agency's ability to evaluate equity, environmental implications, and the effectiveness of transportation programs. Additionally, the absence of a centralized coordinating body limits oversight of ethical and policy considerations associated with public research activities. A standing committee is needed to better organize, align, and modernize ODOT's survey and engagement work.

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

This research should produce a framework, charter, and operational model for a standing ODOT Coordinating Committee responsible for aligning transportation surveys and public engagement activities across the agency. The final product should include committee membership structure, governance protocols, subject matter expertise requirements, recommended workflows, review and approval roles (including IRB-equivalent ethical reviews), and standardized survey and engagement guidelines. It should also identify recommended tools, data management practices, communications channels, and performance measures for evaluating engagement outcomes.

The research should produce a set of policy recommendations and implementation steps for how ODOT can optimize public engagement resources to increase efficiency, reduce duplicative outreach efforts, improve equity outcomes, strengthen environmental impact assessment, and increase public trust. Output may include an engagement coordination plan, a central survey inventory, standardized communications templates, metadata and reporting requirements, and guidance for integrating public perception data into agency decision-making processes.

## 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.

Name	Title	Email
Kevin Glenn	ODOT Communications	On file
Justin Hauschild	ODOT External Relations (Public Affairs)	
Travis Brouwer	Deputy Director - RFC	

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## 4. Other comments:

ODOT conducts numerous public engagement efforts each year, including modal surveys, project-specific outreach, community impact assessments, environmental justice engagement, legislative reports, safety campaigns, and customer service evaluations. These activities are often conducted independently, resulting in inconsistent quality, missed opportunities for shared learning, and survey fatigue among community partners. Establishing a centralized coordinating committee would allow ODOT to benchmark best practices from peer DOTs, academic institutions, and national public involvement standards, while harmonizing methodologies across business lines.

Potential tasks include: (1) assessing current practices across ODOT divisions and regions; (2) creating an inventory of ongoing and planned surveys and outreach initiatives; (3) evaluating redundancies and opportunities for integration; (4) developing standardized tools, templates, and IRB-type ethical review protocols; (5) establishing data governance and reporting requirements; and (6) identifying long-term evaluation metrics. This committee could help ODOT meet federal, state, and community expectations for equitable, transparent, and consistent engagement, while improving the agency's insight into public perceptions of transportation priorities.

This work supports ODOT's Strategic Action Plan by improving institutional capacity, strengthening community relationships, expanding equitable participation, and integrating environmental and socio-economic considerations into transportation decision-making.

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## 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:

While climate is not the primary focus, coordinated engagement may strengthen public understanding of climate-related transportation initiatives and enable more consistent gathering of community input regarding climate resilience, environmental impacts, and sustainable travel behaviors.

## 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:

A coordinated committee would ensure that surveys and engagement efforts adhere to equity best practices, improve participation from systemically excluded communities, and reduce inconsistencies in how equity data is collected and applied. This work directly aligns with the ODOT Strategic Action Plan's equity goals by creating a unified framework for ensuring engagement is accessible, representative, equitable, and transparent. Standardized processes would also prevent duplicative outreach burdens on underserved communities.

## 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:

Coordination of public outreach will improve ODOT's ability to gather accurate feedback on transportation safety concerns, safety behavior perceptions, multimodal use, and community-identified risks. More unified public engagement helps inform prioritization of safety investments and resource allocation.

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## 6. Corresponding Submitter's Contact Information:

Name:	Matt Bagwell
Title:	Principal Research Analyst
Affiliation:	ODOT
Telephone:	
Email:	

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## 7. ODOT Sponsor Contact Information (Required if Submitter is not an ODOT employee)

Name:	
Title:	
Crew Number:	
Telephone:	
Email:	

**POTENTIAL SUPPORTERS: TRAVIS BROUWER, KEVIN GLENN & JUSTIN HAUSCHILD.**

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.