

# Research Stage 1 Problem Statement

**PROPOSED TITLE:** State Transportation Improvement Fund Investment Analysis

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

The Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) was established by House Bill 2017 to provide a dedicated source of funding for improving, maintaining, and expanding public transportation for all users. ORS 184.758(8)(a)(A-H) identifies eight metrics to be reported on by agencies in their STIF Formula Plans. In turn, the Public Transportation Division (PTD) reports these eight metrics in a biennial report to the Legislature, in periodic reports to the OTC, as well as a number of internal and external communications and decision-making. Having accurate, complete and reliable data is central to PTD's ability to report the impacts of more than \$200M in STIF investments each year, evaluate its effectiveness, and implement program improvements.

The eight statutory metrics are listed below:

- (1) Increased frequency of bus service schedules in communities with a high percentage of low-income households;
- (2) Procurement of buses that are powered by natural gas or electricity for use in areas with a population of 200,000 or more;
- (3) Implementation of programs to reduce fares for public transportation in communities with a high percentage of low-income households;
- (4) Expansion of bus routes and bus services to reach communities with a high percentage of low-income households;
- (5) Improvement in the frequency and reliability of service connections between communities inside and outside of the qualified entity's service area;
- (6) Coordination between public transportation service providers to reduce fragmentation in the provision of transportation services;
- (7) Implementation of programs to provide student transit services for students in grades 9 through 12; and
- (8) Services for older adults and people with disabilities.

Currently, the data PTD collects is lacking in consistency and does not accurately and reliably report on the impacts of the investments captured by these metrics. PTD collects data through the STIF Periodic Report that is submitted quarterly by providers. This data focuses on expenditures toward the eight metrics above, and rides and service miles provided through the STIF investment. This data does not represent the full impact of STIF or wholly consider the outcomes of the investment. Additionally, this data collection method puts a large reporting load on providers and is consistently problematic due to reporting discrepancies.

Research assistance is needed to determine supplementary data and identify additional data collection processes to communicate outcomes of each of the eight legislative metrics, and additional analysis methods to isolate the impacts of STIF investments from other influences such as COVID, Federal and Local funding, and other latent factors. Additionally, PTD would benefit from a research and reporting strategy to be able to explain the wider economic, educational, environmental and health-related benefits of the STIF Program.<sup>1</sup>

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

PTD would like a data and methods guidebook to communicate the outcomes of the eight legislative metrics. Some measures may have simpler solutions, relying on existing data about rides, reduction of headway at transit stops, number of new bus routes in an area, while other measures may require more complex data collection and analysis to determine outcomes such as increased access to medical care for older adults and people with disabilities, reduced absences at schools, access to jobs for people who live in communities of a high percentage of low income households theoretically made possible by the investment from the STIF. For consistent, holistic, and actionable metric reporting, PTD needs an actionable data collection and analysis strategy.

This most recent legislative session passed a doubling of STIF that will sunset in two years. It is critical that a process is put in place now to be able to identify, track, and communicate the benefits of this investment in documents that are provided to the legislature and the public.

The legislature requests a STIF Biennial Update which reports on the eight outcomes. This document identifies the benefits of STIF and provides support for continued investment. In addition to improving the Biennial Update, the data and methods guidebook will be used to integrate data into a platform, such as a web-based GIS tool or dashboard, that will communicate the outcomes of investment in public transit through STIF to the Legislature and the public. Collaboration has already begun between PTD and ODOT’s GIS team to discuss development of these tools. The development of a guidebook and web based tools will enable PTD to develop internal reporting policies that will ensure consistent reporting to the Legislature, and to track progress over time.

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**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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Andrea Durbin	PTD Policy and Strategic Investment Manager	Andrea.Durbin@ODOT.oregon.gov	971.453.2302

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<sup>1</sup> For an example of the wider benefits PTD could be reporting on, see Todd Litman, “Evaluating Public Transit Benefits and Costs: Best Practices Guidebook,” 18 September 2025, Victoria Transport Policy Institute, available from <https://www.vtpi.org/tranben.pdf>.

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#### 4. Other comments:

### 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:

Identifying outcomes of the 8 legislative STIF metrics, particularly metric (B), will highlight how investment from STIF has increased the purchase of electric buses in Oregon communities. A direct outcome of this would be a decrease in greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, any STIF investment that increases ridership or induces mode shift from single occupancy cars to transit would result in a reduction in Vehicle Miles Traveled. More impacts on greenhouse gas emissions could be identified as outcomes to STIF investment during the research project.

### 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:

Several of the legislative STIF metrics focus on outcomes for older adults, people with disabilities, and people who live in communities with a high percentage of low-income housing. The outcomes of this research will track how these groups are affected by the investment from STIF. This research could be used to advocate for more resources to support these groups.

### *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.  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**?

☒ Yes☐ No☐ Unsure

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

Identifying the outcomes of STIF as related to the eight legislative metrics will contribute to safety through healthy and livable communities and provide data to guide investments in safety. Data that is produced through this research could be used to argue for an increase in STIF funding, which in turn will be invested in Oregon's transit operations. Transit is far safer than driving, with Scientific American stating that the rate of car deaths per 100 million passenger miles in recent years was more than 50 times that of buses. Additionally, data driven decisions could guide the STIF Discretionary Program to evaluate safety more heavily, resulting in an even larger investment in safety.

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## 6. Corresponding Submitter's Contact Information:

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

Name:	
Title:	
Crew Number:	
Telephone:	
Email:	

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.