



## TSAP PARTNER INTERVIEW SUMMARY

DATE: September 2, 2025

TO: Mary McGowan, PMT | Oregon DOT

FROM: Brian Chandler, Consultant Team | DKS Associates

SUBJECT: TSAP Partner Interview Summary

Project #25008-000

Task 2.3.2

### PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVE

In support of the 2026 update to the Oregon Transportation Safety Action Plan (TSAP), the project team facilitated a series of **six partner interviews** to help identify the following:

- Key issues to address, including elements of the 2021 TSAP that need to be reconsidered
- Refinement of the Public Involvement and Partner Consultation Plan (PIPCCP) activities

The findings from the partner interviews will be used to inform future tasks, including emphasis areas, strategies, and actions in the 2026 TSAP update.

### INTERVIEWEES

The selection of interviewees was consistent with FHWA's Strategic Highway Safety Plan Guidance, OTC's Public Involvement Policy, Oregon's State Agency Coordination Program, the standards for Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Public Participation and Engagement, and ODOT's commitment to Tribal government consultation for statewide planning.

The project team collaborated with the PMT to compile a list of interviewees, invited them to participate in a 1-hour virtual interview, and subsequently refined the list based on availability. Conducting the interviews in June and July posed scheduling challenges and limited the number of attendees at some of the events.

Following are the final interview groups, their role as it relates to the TSAP, and the date of each interview. The table below also lists the ODOT PMT and consultant team member(s) who participated in each interview.

**TABLE 1. TSAP PARTNERS INTERVIEWS**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Role/ Perspective</b>	<b>Interviewees</b>	<b>TSAP Project Team</b>
6/16/25	Regional agencies, local agencies, motorcyclists	Tyler Deke, Bend MPO Scott Fleury, City of Ashland Public Works Chris Henry, GAC Motorcycle Safety Chair and City of Eugene Carl Lund, Marion County Melissa Norman, Washington County Becky Taylor, Lane County Clay Veka, PBOT Vision Zero	Brian Chandler, DKS Anthony Gamallo, DKS Stacey Goldstein, ODOT
7/8/25	Behavioral	Angel Pairan, Oregon Criminal Justice Commission Amanda Salyer, ODOT Region 2 Jamie Schmidt, ODOT Region 2	Brian Chandler, DKS Troy Costales Walt McAllister, ODOT Mary McGowan, ODOT
7/14/25	Tribal Safety	Holly Anderson, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) Kristen Anderson, ODOT Tribal Affairs Dani Schulte, CTUIR	Brian Chandler, DKS Walt McAllister, ODOT
7/14/25	Young Drivers, Aging Drivers	Karen O’Fearn, ODOT Department of Motor Vehicles Jody Raska, ODOT Transportation Safety Office	Brian Chandler, DKS Troy Costales Walt McAllister, ODOT
7/25/25	Modal Safety (Large Trucks, Rail)	Jana Jarvis, Oregon Trucking Association Karla Tackett, ODOT Commerce Compliance Division Abe Zumwalt, David Evans Associates	Brian Chandler, DKS Anthony Gamallo, DKS Mary McGowan, ODOT
7/31/25	Vulnerable User Groups	Zachary Lauritzen, Oregon Walks	Brian Chandler, DKS Walt McAllister, ODOT

**INTERVIEWEE AGENDAS AND QUESTIONS**

Each interview was conducted virtually using Microsoft Teams and lasted approximately one hour. The following agenda was used as a starting point for each interview.

- 1) Staff and Participation Introductions + Purpose and Goals of Conversation (5 min)
- 2) Project Overview + Timeline (5 min)
- 3) Interview Questions (40 min)
- 4) Wrap Up + How to Provide Additional Input (10 min)

## **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AS PROMPTS**

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The interviewers used the following questions as initial prompts to an open conversation with each set of interviewees.

- 1) What areas of roadway safety do you feel are most worrisome in your area of interest and influence?
- 2) Do you believe we have been successful, or not, in addressing these issues/areas of interest statewide, in the region, or at the local level?
  - a. What are the opportunities and challenges to addressing this issue?
- 3) Are these issues something that should be addressed in the 2026 TSAP update?
  - a. How will these additions help us meet Oregon's safety goals?
  - b. How will these additions better support your community or the community you serve?
- 4) As we begin engaging partners, what information should the 2026 TSAP project team share and with whom? Why?
- 5) Is there anything we haven't cover so far that you think would be helpful to consider during this update process?
- 6) What questions might you recommend we ask other safety partners?

## **SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW FINDINGS**

Following is a summary of the key themes and ideas the project team gleaned in each conversation, including findings and anticipated next steps in response to what the interview team learned.

### **1. LOCAL AGENCIES / MOTORCYCLIST SAFETY**

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This group consisted of transportation professionals from city, county, and regional agencies.

#### **PRIMARY TAKEAWAYS AND APPLICATIONS**

Participants noted significant challenges that should be addressed in the update:

- constrained budgets that prioritize capacity over safety
- lagging crash data
- rising impairment and distraction behaviors
- vulnerable road user risks
- speed management
- roadway maintenance challenges
- lack of enforcement
- motorcyclist behavior

Interviewees urged ODOT to improve collaboration with cities and counties, reform the speed zoning process, take stronger positions on impairment and motorcyclist safety, and confront the trade-offs between safety goals and funding priorities. For the updated TSAP, they requested clear

summary materials, stronger calls to action, and communication tools to help local agencies build public and political support for greater investment in transportation safety.

Interviewees shared a range of recent successful implementations they have participated in or are aware of, primarily on local roadways:

- automated speed enforcement
- VRU-focused treatments
- consistent traffic control
- lane reallocation
- transit priority measures
- roundabouts
- county corridor pilots
- near-miss reporting

## **SUMMARIZED NOTES**

Overall value of the TSAP to local agencies:

- There is hope that the TSAP matters, but also a concern that the transportation safety efforts conducted in Oregon over the past several years has not resulted in a reduction in fatalities or serious injuries.
- TSAP (and thus ODOT) having a stated goal of zero fatalities and serious injuries is important.
- Making the Safe System Approach a foundation for this update is great, as it helps us lean into prevention and redundancy in our efforts.

## **Safety Concerns**

Interviewees discussed several focus areas on local roadways.

- In a constrained budget environment, we are making choices to invest in motor vehicle capacity at the expense of safety. We must wrestle with hard trade-offs.
- Lagging Crash Data
  - It's difficult to attack emerging locations; we'd like to apply more low-cost treatments at other potentially-trending locations.
- Impairment
  - Alcohol impairment is challenging because it requires more person-to-person contact to address.
    - Need to learn more about the people who choose to drink and drive.
    - Need in-person law enforcement to identify impaired road users.
  - Multi-substance abuse and impairment are increasing as well
- Vulnerable Road Users
  - How do we provide a safer experience for VRUs while still letting motor vehicles do their job (e.g., Amazon delivery vehicles)?
  - People experiencing homelessness wander into traffic
  - People living outside have additional risk

- People in many communities “just go” assuming motor vehicles will just get out of their way
- Speeds
  - How do we set the most appropriate posted speed limits?
  - How might lower speeds affect congestion?
- Roadway Maintenance
  - Keeping the system in a state of good repair will be an increasing challenge
  - Recent Road Safety Audits (RSAs) identified simple items like signing, striping, delineation, and vegetation clearing needs.
- Lack of Enforcement
  - Relying on engineering and education alone are like balancing on a 2-legged stool
  - Highway patrolling is much reduced. Compliance is challenging when no one is held accountable
  - Regulating and enforcing e-bikes is an issue (riding in bike lanes, off-network paths)
- Distraction
  - Smart phone use
  - Newer vehicles that require touch screens for basic features
- Motorcyclist Safety
  - Motorcyclists desire being in control. They don’t like being passengers or being told what to do. They are risk seekers who often feel invincible.

## Potential Solutions and Success Stories

- Speeding
  - Reduced motor vehicle operating speeds
  - Slower speeds help drivers to stop if there is “bad behavior” by pedestrians
  - Reduce super-speeders with intelligent speed control (disallows speeding)
  - Context sensitivity in transitions
    - Interstate ramps meeting surface streets: help drivers recognize they are transitioning into a complex urban environment
  - Automated speed safety cameras
    - Seeking ability to pilot automated enforcement in rural areas
- VRU Safety
  - RRFBs at protected pedestrian crossings
  - Green paint in bike lanes
  - Reduce travel lanes to 11 ft to add a bike buffer
  - Buffered bike facilities
- Traffic Control Consistency
  - Crosswalk marking and signing; parking signs; directional signs; City branding
- Reallocation of Travel Lanes
  - Bus lanes, parking, bicycle facilities, median pedestrian refuge islands
  - Seeing speed reductions (up to 70% lower top-end speeders) and crash reduction
  - Taking advantage of pavement projects to layer low-cost improvements over time
- Transit Priority (dedicated lanes, transit signal priority)
  - Sharing benefits of transit use

- Development
  - Requiring improvements like sidewalks, bike lanes
- Intersections
  - All-red signal phasing to reduce angle crashes
  - Retroreflective backplates: systemic installation
- Roadway Departure
  - Warning systems: Overheight warning to prevent roll-overs at curves
  - Median barrier (US 97, Bend to Redmond)
  - Mumble strips (lower volume)
  - Centerline rumble strips
- Roundabouts
  - 6 added on US 20; 50 now in Bend area
- County Safety Corridor Pilot
  - Combines engineering, enforcement, and education strategies
  - Double fines for infractions
- Crowdsourced Near-miss Reporting
  - Web application allows road users to report near-miss events, and the system filters inputs to traffic operations staff.
  - This often reveals obstructions or other sight distance issues

### **Ideas and Additional Requests for TSAP Update**

- For State routes that go through cities, some are low-speed (e.g., 25 mph). We would like the ability to install a crosswalk on these roadways without requiring approval of the ODOT Region and State Traffic Engineer.
  - The City funded 100% of this treatment, but it's like pulling teeth to get anything done on State routes.
  - Request: Modify ODOT's approach to their relationships with cities and counties as collaborative. They could serve as a partner and problem-solver with the locals, rather than being seen as an obstacle, as is the current experience with ODOT.
- Speed Zone Requests
  - ODOT Region 2 has one person who handles all investigations.
  - Locals can sign up to conduct their own, but it is a one-time decision (all or nothing) and thus a big commitment.
- Impairment
  - Lower the legal blood alcohol concentration (BAC) from 0.08% to 0.05%
- Motorcyclist Safety
  - Oregon should take a stand that is not neutral but identifies the risks of allowing this activity.
- Trade-off Conversation in the TSAP
  - We say that safety is our top priority, but the transportation budget does not reflect this.
- Use TSAP as a call to action
  - Summary materials that local agencies can use to share with elected officials and the public

- Basic information about fatalities and serious injuries over the past few years, like numbers and leading causes
- Funds spent on infrastructure safety projects, and commitments to future safety projects

## 2. BEHAVIORAL SAFETY

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While the stated objective of this interview was a focus on behavioral safety, two of the three interviewees were engineering staff at ODOT Region 2. That was balanced by an interviewer panel that included Walt (ODOT Traffic Safety Office) and Troy (former director of that office and consultant team member) to provide additional background.

### PRIMARY TAKEAWAYS AND APPLICATIONS

Oregon has consistently failed to meet safety performance targets over the past several years, underscoring the need for the TSAP to acknowledge this reality and frame goals differently than in the past. A major theme is the lack of leadership support: roadway safety is not adequately represented at ODOT’s executive level or to the legislature, safety engineering expertise is undervalued compared to other disciplines, and safety is understaffed in general (especially at ODOT). Law enforcement shortages were also identified as a weakness, alongside systemic concerns like the combination of a strained EMS system and an aging population. During this interview, education focused less on road user behavior and more on teaching maintenance staff, local agencies, and statewide leadership about safety. Successful practices highlighted included sharing data with law enforcement to target roadway departure crashes, and ODOT Region 2’s shift toward performance measures beyond vehicle throughput.

The group recommended the 2026 TSAP include a stronger focus on safer speeds through strategies like lane narrowing and automated enforcement, while also noting and addressing the current resistance to some safety features. They supported a TSAP with a narrower scope to focus on fewer but more impactful actions directly connected to the OTP. They also pushed for an implementation plan with clear responsibilities, Safe System Approach alignment and expansion of ODOT’s staffing capacity to deliver safety engineering and education statewide.

### SUMMARIZED NOTES

*Note: The summary below combines the 1-hour interview and follow-up written responses provided by ODOT Region 2 after the meeting.*

#### Performance Measurement and Leadership

- We have failed to meet our safety performance targets for the past 6-7 years. We should write the TSAP differently when we are not meeting safety performance measures.
  - There is no single reason for this failure
  - The Transportation Research Board (TRB) has a national research project focused on addressing the issue nationally
- ODOT executive leadership has not effectively communicated safety to legislature

- How can we expect roadway safety to get the best or prioritized representation if an expert in that field is not at the executive leadership table or presenting the full and accurate safety story to the Legislature/OTC?
- Safety engineering is an engineering discipline requiring a certain expertise, just like bridge engineering. Decision-makers misunderstand this.
- Worker safety and roadway safety are interchanged incorrectly all the time - they are two different things with different performance/PMS/goals
- Staffing Challenges
  - ODOT Regions: Not all regions have safety engineers (only Regions 1 and 2)
  - ODOT HQ Safety: With only Angela and Jiguang, the office has reduced from 4 to 2 staff, limiting their ability to support.

### **Law Enforcement**

- Oregon's lack of law enforcement, compared to other states, is likely a contributing factor
- How can we support this with data and share it with decision-makers and state legislature? Will they care?

### **System of Systems**

- If Medicaid and Medicare were cut nationally, rural emergency management systems (EMS) could become a huge challenge. Coupled with increasing rate of aging of Oregon's population and current older driver involvement in crashes, these are a potential problematic combination.

### **Education for Public Works Staff, Maintenance**

- Educate local agency partners in best practices for safety
- The influence ODOT has on traffic features is not supported by Maintenance (not having funding to maintain extra) and the MAC (not wanting traffic calming features)
- Incorporate safety engineering practices into all STIP programs.
- Agencies often think they are making safety improvements whether they are or not. Example: 1R preservation projects do not inherently improve our safety performance measures even though this message is repeated that they do.
- Michigan conducts road shows to maintenance groups (state and local) to help them see where safety fits in
- Adding more "Es" to Road Safety Audits
- Oregon's Local Transportation Assistance Program (LTAP) is not focused on roadway safety; this is a prime source of safety education in other states
- The TSAP can help people know more about what options are out there to improve safety. In general, the TSAP could be a building block to education for safety professionals statewide

### **Safer Speeds**

- ODOT Region 2 has reduced lane width to 11 ft to address speeding, but people see lane narrowing and road diets as capacity reduction only

- Automated enforcement is more available now as a tool for agencies, and it should be implemented widely
- Salem PD hires retired officers to review speed safety camera citations

## **Funding**

- The STOP program<sup>1</sup> currently does not include Tribes. In most locations the local law enforcement and Tribal representatives are not connected.
  - Tribes don't have funding to purchase new equipment to be in the same system, leading to inconsistent data.

## **Successful Practices**

- Safety screening every 3 years to identify target locations experiencing roadway departure crashes. Sharing this information with law enforcement and targeting speed enforcement at those locations. After investing for several years, some roads (e.g., OR 18 toward Lincoln City) have dropped off the list.
- ODOT Region 2 has shifted some of their key performance indicators away from vehicle throughput to other metrics.
  - They sometimes reduce traffic capacity for pedestrian safety. For example, when using a permissive left turn Flashing Yellow Arrow, ODOT Region 1 and Region 2 policies disallow an adjacent WALK signal for pedestrians.
  - Lead Pedestrian Interval signal timing is common
  - Congestion can help regulate speed, so it's not always a bad thing, especially for safety

## **2026 TSAP Recommendations**

- Previous TSAPs had a lot of actions identified, including 74 actions/strategies in the 2021 update.
  - 2026 could focus on a few priority/key areas. If so, might that have a more significant impact?
- OTP Connections
  - The Safe System Approach is mentioned in the OTP, but without an implementation plan. ODOT does not have staffing resources to implement SSA within the STIP. Currently, ODOT has limited staff capacity for reactive safety.
- TSAP Implementation Plan and/or TSAP Roadshow could help - roles, responsibilities and deadlines provided
- Safe System Approach Implementation Plan
- Promote additional safety engineering and transportation safety positions at ODOT to support educating local agencies and implementing the safe systems approach

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<sup>1</sup> Statistical Transparency of Policing (STOP) program, Oregon Criminal Justice Commission (CJC). CJC worked with OSP and DPS to standardize data collection, analyzing data for patterns, and report on results.

### 3. TRIBAL SAFETY

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The group included Tribal representatives from the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) and ODOT Tribal Affairs.

#### PRIMARY TAKEAWAYS AND APPLICATIONS

“Tribes are spread out due to colonization, not because it’s a natural land use.”CTUIR provided a case study that we can apply more broadly to consider Tribal needs in Oregon. Interviewees emphasized historic inequities and current opportunities for improving transportation safety. Key priorities now include restoring regional transit connections, addressing rural road safety where pedestrians walk without shoulders, and overcoming challenges in federal grant access due to CTUIR’s lack of eminent domain authority. Recent successes — such as the 2023 Transportation System Plan overhaul, the just-completed 2025 Transportation Safety Plan - expanded paths and Safe Routes to School projects, and cross-deputized Tribal police in Umatilla County (crash data sharing with ODOT is another success). For the 2026 TSAP, lessons include:

- importance of respecting Tribal sovereignty
- ensuring equitable access to grant resources
- supporting culturally significant signage
- pursuing collaborative approaches (among ODOT, CTUIR, the county, and cities) to deliver safety improvements that serve both Tribal and non-Tribal communities.

#### SUMMARIZED NOTES

*The 2023 TSP and 2025 Safety Plan referenced below are available in the 2026 TSAP Update project’s SharePoint site here: [Group 3 Tribal 2025-07-14](#)*

#### Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR)

- Tribal community of 3-4k residents in 271 square miles.
  - Grand Ronde is a “checkerboarded” jurisdiction, meaning Tribal and non-Tribal people live on the reservation.
  - Warm Springs has their land intact.
- There are three CTUIR Tribes, and the CTUIR is in Oregon and Washington
  - CTUIR interacts with OR more than WA
- ODOT and Umatilla County constructed roadways without the consent of CTUIR, including building on top of traditional Tribal travel routes
  - This has erased the previous transportation network.
  - This has resulted in fatalities and serious injuries.

#### Transit

- Fare-free transit service is provided within the Tribal area
  - Changed from dial-a-ride to fixed routes
- Restoring transit to the Tri-cities area is important, as it is a major employment link
  - Some CTUIR community members commute to the Tri-cities daily
- Coordination with Benton-Franklin Council of Governments

- Grant Funding Challenges
  - Grant delays are a huge concern

### **Safety Concerns**

- Rural roads in the County with no shoulders. Actively used by pedestrians, who often walk along the roadway or in the ditch.
- Indigenous Language Signage
  - Tribes must pay for these on their own
  - MUTCD disallows multiple languages on Interstates
  - Residential Neighborhood – CTUIR supported signs ONLY in the Tribal language
    - There can be some internal politics due to different Tribal languages

### **Successes**

- 2023 Transportation System Plan overhaul made major changes to the 2001 plan, which was largely focused on roadway improvement (widening shoulders, paving gravel roads). This was not serving the community.
  - Included 9 months of community outreach. Priority requests included trails, sidewalks, lighting, horseback riding facilities
- 2025 CTUIR Transportation Safety Plan
  - Updated 2016 plan and leveraged community engagement from the 2023 effort
  - Focused on driver behavior
- Umatilla County and Local City Coordination
  - Tribe has been involved in development of the County’s safety plan
  - CTUIR is first or second largest employer in the county. CTUIR has friendly relationships with local jurisdictions
- Grant Funding Success: Paths, Safe Routes to School
  - Developed a partially-separated, extra wide sidewalk and multi-use path
  - Received SRTS grant for sidewalk and bike lane extensions
  - Received Oregon Community Paths funding for a trail
- Data Sharing
  - Umatilla Tribal Police Dept uses ODOT system to report crash data directly to ODOT
    - Cross-deputized with Umatilla County. Tribal Police can stop anyone
    - Interesting trade-offs: Tribal police represent 2 sovereigns. Sharing data with the State was approved by Tribal leadership because the benefits support Tribal sovereignty.
    - Tribal Police adopted Oregon State traffic laws. This allows them to stop and cite anyone violating the law.

### **Implementation Challenges – Federal Grant Funding**

- CTUIR has been applying for federal grants for many years with no success: TIGER, BUILD, RAISE
- CTUIR does not have eminent domain powers like ODOT does

- OR-331 needs improvements in pedestrian access. It's near a casino, large businesses, and housing. Kids bike to school, and people use wheelchairs along the roadway. It's also a major freight route.
- Grants require CTUIR to already have property under their control to apply.
- If ODOT could acquire the property using eminent domain, then the Tribes could build a stronger grant application
- Or even more appropriately, ODOT should fund and implement the improvements themselves on this state roadway.

#### 4. YOUNG AND AGING DRIVERS

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The group included experts in novice/teen drivers and at-risk/aging drivers.

##### PRIMARY TAKEAWAYS AND APPLICATIONS

It's important to address novice (including teen) drivers and at-risk (including aging) drivers in the 2026 TSAP, noting that while age ranges are used for funding and reporting, risk stems more from inexperience or health conditions than age alone. Novice drivers face heightened crash risk in their first two years of driving, yet Oregon lacks universal driver education requirements. This is leading to fewer providers, high costs, and many novice drivers starting with limited or no training. At-risk (including aging) drivers face challenges related to medical conditions or prescription drug effects, but crash data on medical events are incomplete. Successes include Oregon's high-quality driver training curriculum, potential for strong parental involvement, evidence showing trained teens are safer drivers, improved at-risk driver reporting due to law enforcement outreach, and self-regulation by many older drivers. For the 2026 update, participants stressed the desire to see young drivers remain an emphasis area.

##### SUMMARIZED NOTES

###### Definitions

We use age ranges for these two categories primarily due to federal funding requirements and the ease of categorization (e.g., age of crash-involved parties is relatively available), but this is only a proxy for the real issues to address.

- **Novice Drivers.** While this does include teenagers, novice drivers can be of any age. Some elements of Young Driver safety are connected to their age, but others are not.
- **At-Risk Drivers.** Older Drivers do exhibit higher risk, but people of any age can have health conditions that affect the driving task, including diabetes, traumatic brain injury, seizures, mental health conditions, cardiac events, loss of consciousness.

###### Aging Driver Common Behaviors

- Slow, out-of-control driving
  - Symptoms can come on, often resulting in decreased pressure on gas pedal
  - Crashes are often single-vehicle, low-speed, no/minor injury

- Wrong Way Driving
  - Not seen as often with other health conditions
  - Often combined with DUI, including prescription medication for medically at-risk drivers (including aging drivers)

### **Safety Concerns: Novice Driver Training**

- Lack of required new/teen driver education, resulting in a lack of providers and high cost for training
- Many instructors are older/retired adults using the work as supplemental income. After trying it for 1-2 years, they stop
- At 16yo, 100 hours of supervised driving is required (reduced to 50 hours if they take an approved driving course)
- At 18yo, no requirements
- As a result, Oregon is seeing novice driver experience extending older than in previous years. The first 2 years of driving (regardless of age) is the highest risk.

### **Safety Concerns: At-Risk Driving**

- There is a lack of data for crashes that involve a medical event (non-BAC). This could be captured as its own data set.

### **Successes**

- Driver Training
  - State-developed curriculum considers various learning styles and methods.
  - Provider approval process is rigorous, ensuring high quality
  - Parental involvement in training – approved programs in OR require a parent meeting at the beginning of the course. It describes to parents/guardians what they will be teaching.
  - Data indicates that most of the age 16-20 crash events and traffic convictions are by those who did not have driver training.
- At-risk reporting (medical, etc.) has much improved, from <50% to 90% acceptance rate now
  - Outreach to law enforcement led to these improvements
- Many older drivers are aware of their limitations and self-limit their driving (e.g., on specific roadways, nighttime/dark conditions, etc.)
- Public Engagement
  - [Video content: Oregon's At Risk Driver Program](#)

### **What should 2026 TSAP include to support your area?**

- DMV had heard that teen drivers could be left out of the TSAP emphasis areas, and this is a major concern
  - Teens are overrepresented in crash data
- Include a "What's in it for me"
  - Example: For families where a 16yo is taking other kids to school, they need to experience the value of driver training.

- Lower insurance rates could be a specific benefit
  - Challenge: Insurance already provides a discount for good grades, so driver training does not offer an additive reduction

## **5. MODAL SAFETY: RAILWAY-HIGHWAY CROSSINGS AND LARGE TRUCKS**

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The group included experts in rail safety and commercial motor vehicle safety.

### **PRIMARY TAKEAWAYS AND APPLICATIONS**

Rail safety concerns include highway grade crossings, pedestrians (including unhoused individuals) using tracks as informal trails, and a public misconception of trains as slow when they are fast and massive. Successful efforts like Operation Lifesaver (OLI), crossing closures, and State Safety Oversight collaborations have demonstrated value, though OLI's reduced funding has coincided with increased incidents. Looking ahead, the 2026 TSAP could strengthen alignment with the State Rail Plan and federal programs, position Oregon for competitive safety grants, and expand passenger rail service to improve overall safety.

Safety issues related to large trucks are shaped by public misunderstanding of how to interact with them (e.g., blind spots and braking distances). Other key risks include truck driver fatigue, worsened by a lack of rest area or commercial parking, challenges from narrow lanes, and poorly located urban delivery zones. Strategies for the 2026 TSAP should include adding truck interaction guidance into driver training materials, investing in more truck parking at rest areas, and supporting roadway designs that separate trucks from vulnerable road users.

### **SUMMARIZED NOTES: RAIL SAFETY**

#### **Rail Safety Concerns**

- Many rail safety concerns occur away from roadway crossings, so it can be easy for highway transportation professionals to see these as "outside their scope," ignoring some major issues
  - Accessing rails (or created/unofficial "trails" that cross rails) that should not be used as pedestrian trails
  - Railroads are attempting to build physical barriers to reduce pedestrians along and across the tracks. But they cannot fence 150,000 miles of track in the US.
- Summertime increases the train-involved fatalities
- Demographics
  - Young people accessing areas they should not access
    - Walk along tracks with headphones/earbuds, do not hear the approaching train
  - Unhoused people, especially in urban areas
- Misunderstanding
  - There is a cultural notion of a slow, lumbering, antique train using the tracks
  - Reality is a large train (size of a container ship) moving fast

## **Rail Safety Successes**

- Operation Lifesaver (OLI) is a long-running program nationally
  - National/state partnerships have lessened in recent years as funding has become unreliable
  - Interviewees identified a correlation between reduced emphasis at the state level and increase in train-involved events
  - Dedicated volunteers in Oregon OLI that could be a strong partner to ODOT and other safety partners
- Crossing Closures
- State Safety Oversight (SSO)
  - Important collaboration that includes TriMet, Portland Streetcar, others
  - Corrective Action Plan (CAP)

## **TSAP Alignment and Strategies: Rail Safety**

- Policies, Regulations: Oregon State Rail Plan and USDOT Section 130 Reporting
- Encourage more rail travel: An increase in train travel reduces motor vehicle VMT
  - Passenger rail ridership is booming
  - Train travel is 18 times safer than highway travel
    - It is feasible to expand Portland-Eugene from 2 trips per day to 6. The current use of this trip is 10 years ahead of projections
  - Understanding ridership
    - It's a misconception that trains replace bus trips: only 10% of train ridership would've otherwise taken a bus
    - 25% would've taken a plane if not the train
    - Half of all passenger train users arrived by motor vehicle
- Education: Emergency Notification System (ENS) provides a number for each grade crossing. Provide information to help the public and local emergency services know the value of these numbers for reporting.
- Position Oregon for the Rail Crossing Elimination Program competitive grants

## **SUMMARIZED NOTES: LARGE TRUCK SAFETY**

### **Large Truck Safety Concerns**

- Public misconceptions. People do not know how to safely interact with large trucks.
  - Passing on the right side ("If you can't see my mirrors, I can't see you.")
  - Not understanding how far a truck needs to slow and stop
  - Most truck-involved crashes with passenger cars – the passenger car driver is at fault. Public education is needed to help.
- Driver Fatigue
  - There is only one parking space (public and private) for every 11 large trucks on the road, and regulations require rest every 11 hours.
    - Drivers will often spend 30-60 minutes seeking a parking spot

- Due to the general recession in the trucking industry for the past 2-3 years, truck stops are not making big capital investments in their facilities. Their business is fuel and food, not parking.
- Criminal Activity – Staged Crashes
  - Most common in the South right now, It’s becoming more common for people to stage a crash (e.g., “brake-checking”), then file a lawsuit against large trucking companies
  - Some of these events have resulted in fatal and serious injury crashes
- Narrow Lanes
  - Increased pressure to narrow lanes for traffic calming from 12 ft to 11 ft
    - “Large trucks are 10.5 ft wide.”<sup>2</sup>
- Delivery Zones (DZ)
  - This is becoming more of a problem in urban areas, especially in Portland
  - Identified DZ if not always in a convenient location for truck delivery, or it is actively used by ride share and food delivery services
    - When this occurs, a driver cannot park 6 blocks away to deliver pallets to a business, so they park in the lane.

### **Large Truck Safety Strategies**

- Include information about interacting with trucks safety in the drivers manual to support young/novice drivers
- Investment in rest areas to add truck parking
  - Some have ODOT-owned land around the current rest area that could be expanded for more parking
  - Other rest areas are underutilized, so balancing needs with locations could also help
- Outward-facing cameras have helped reduce trucking company liability
- Supportive of projects that separate trucks from active transportation users as much as possible (e.g., buffers, separate paths)

## **6. VULNERABLE ROAD USERS**

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After several attempts at engaging a larger group of pedestrian and bicyclist advocates, this interview ended up being with just one person – Zacharay Laurizen from Oregon Walks.

### **PRIMARY TAKEAWAYS AND APPLICATIONS**

The conversation about safety for pedestrians and bicyclists highlighted Oregon’s stated commitment to safety, but the reality is that funding decisions reveal other priorities, leaving the car-oriented culture intact. Motor vehicle drivers expect to travel quickly and directly, and they seek inexpensive, quickly-delivered products and services; this reflects broader societal choices

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<sup>2</sup> This did not sound right during the interview, so consultant team did a little more digging, and it appears that a typical large truck is approximately 8.5 ft wide. With mirrors included (typically 6-12 in beyond the vehicle), the total width with mirrors can approach 10.0-10.5 ft. <https://schneiderjobs.com/blog/semi-truck-trailer-dimensions>

that affect safety outcomes. Oregon Walks emphasized that while pedestrians sometimes make mistakes, urban environments must be designed to prevent those mistakes from being fatal, with slower speeds as a core principle. Successes like the 82nd Avenue redevelopment show potential, but overall progress has been limited due to decision-makers deprioritizing pedestrian safety. For the 2026 TSAP, strategies could include adopting technology-driven solutions such as speed limiters and geofenced vehicle speed controls - along with traditional sidewalk and bike lane projects - while also preparing for the impacts of connected and automated vehicles on vulnerable road users.

## **SUMMARIZED NOTES**

### **Current Conditions and Culture**

- Leadership and Planning Culture
  - Due to the extreme complexity of the transportation system, the status quo often remains in place.
  - In talking with leaders, one of the primary problems is that they say Safety is a priority, but it is not. Funding is the real proof behind priorities.
- Road User Culture
  - Car-oriented city planning and building has resulted in people expecting to drive far and fast to reach their destinations.
  - Parents would drive their kids through the inside hallway, right up to the classroom door. They don't even consider parking 4 blocks away and walking their kids a few minutes to school.
  - We have decided as a society that we want cheap stuff delivered immediately. This disallows regulations like in Europe to only deliver overnight

### **Oregon Walks Mission and Messages**

- "Oregon Walks promotes walking and advocates for safe, convenient, and attractive walking conditions as an essential part of thriving, sustainable, and connected communities."
- OR Walks concedes that some pedestrians make mistakes, including "jumping in front of cars."
  - OR Walks agrees that they should not do that. And they should not die.
  - Urban environments should have much slower vehicle speeds to address the mixed modes on these areas

### **Successful Implementations**

- Portland 82<sup>nd</sup> Ave Redevelopment. BRT to increase modal options
- It's a struggle to identify much success in this area of safety, as it's simply not a priority for decision-makers

### **TSAP Update: Potential Strategies**

- Railroad crossing arm model to close streets by time of day, reducing vehicle traffic
- Speed limiter for speeding offenses

- It's reasonable that a driver who cannot drive below the speed limit should receive the consequence of having that choice taken away from them.
- Stop allowing the sale of motor vehicles that can drive 130 mph
- Geolocate vehicles: In a 30 mph zone, there should be no way any vehicle can go 80 mph.
- Prepare for connected and automated vehicles and their impact on VRUs