

# 5. Policy Framework



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Oregon needs a plan that meets the challenges we face not only today but also during the coming decades. Oregonians want a transportation system that connects people and delivers goods to places in the most climate-friendly, equitable and safe way. The policies in the OTP touch on the many goals, objectives, and ways in which that is done. Collectively, they are designed to realize the OTP vision, recognizing the many and diverse needs of people and businesses today and in the future. In an ideal world all needs would be met. However, some goals are conflicting and must therefore be balanced, and, with limited resources, tough choices involving tradeoffs must be made about allocating finite resources. In support of these challenges, this section outlines the direction and focus areas across policies in the OTP update.

### Save Lives

The transportation system must support the ability of people to travel safely from origin to destination. The priority is to stop people from being killed or severely injured on Oregon's roads and across the transportation system. Recent trends show fatalities and serious injuries are on the rise, and people who walk, bike, or roll are most at risk. Research is also showing that Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) communities have a higher likelihood of being killed or severely injured than do other populations. Working to eliminate fatalities and serious injuries requires special attention to these areas. The OTP calls for a safe systems approach, like designing the transportation system to safely accommodate all users and uses of the system, reducing potential safety conflicts between modes, embracing vehicle and infrastructure technology to help correct driver error or distraction, and conducting education and outreach. When solutions are identified that can save lives but may conflict with other goals, such as freight mobility or decreasing emissions, safety takes precedence.

### Center Equity

Transportation decisions have disproportionately impacted communities and populations, leading to disparities in access to and the safety of the transportation system. These decisions have also affected neighborhoods, economic development, and air quality for generations. The OTP identifies these issues and sheds light on the need to close equity gaps. It also calls for the removal of barriers to access and participation in making decisions, ensuring that diverse voices and broad perspectives are engaged in each phase of decision-making. This plan also recognizes the need to have a diverse transportation workforce with direct decision-making ability. In

addition, policies focus on creating a more equitable transportation system and outcomes, such as increasing access to travel options and reducing travel costs.

## **Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

Transportation is the largest polluting sector. Climate change and extreme weather are impacting the state's economy and people's lives. The transportation system must rapidly decarbonize to achieve GHG reduction goals. The OTP focuses on transitioning to cleaner vehicles and fuels, especially electric, to make every mile driven clean. Policies for transportation electrification go beyond just cars and trucks but also electrification of bikes, scooters, transit buses and freight trucks. This plan also calls for getting more people biking, walking or taking transit, land use patterns that support use of those modes, and pricing the transportation system. These and other actions support the goal in this plan to reduce per capita passenger vehicle miles VMT – which will help with emission reductions in the short term but also enable more efficient use of existing capacity across modes and promote healthy lifestyles. Along those lines, this plan also limits roadway expansion to occur only after pricing, options for shifting modes, use of demand management strategies, and operational improvements are explored and projected to be insufficient at reducing congestion.

## **Secure Sustainable and Reliable Transportation Funding**

Today's transportation funding is sufficient to finance less than a quarter of total investment needs. Current funding is also largely dependent on a carbon-based revenue form, the gas tax. As the transportation system decarbonizes, such funding becomes less reliable and produces less revenue. The OTP recognizes the need to diversify Oregon's transportation revenue sources and ultimately shift to a VMT fee, such as OReGO. It also calls out pricing programs such as tolling, congestion pricing, parking pricing, and carbon charges to not only raise revenue but to support overall OTP objectives. This plan also identifies the need to sustain and enhance alternative funding sources, such as the employee payroll tax for public transportation. Overall our policies must ultimately rely on true cost pricing, which more fully recovers the cost to build, operate, maintain and manage the multimodal transportation system. There is also direction in the OTP to index revenue sources for inflation to help make those funding sources more sustainable.

## **Maintain the Existing System and Complete Critical Connections**

Although the OTP calls for increasing transportation funding, the money available today is woefully insufficient. A system reliant on limited and insufficient funds does and will continue to fail to address deteriorated roads and bridges, disconnected walkways and bikeways,

inadequate transit service and overall hardships for people trying to connect to critical destinations.

With limited resources, Oregon must be strategic with investing in the transportation system. Primarily, this plan identifies the need to focus dollars on eliminating fatalities and serious injuries, maintaining lifeline routes and key corridors, sustaining transit service, and adding critical connections for biking, walking, and rolling. As additional funds become available, focus can expand to broader maintenance of the transportation system and ensuring resiliency in Oregon’s transportation system, increasing transit, biking, and walking connections, and improving overall safety.



## **Enable the Efficient Movement of Goods and Services**

Efficient shipping of freight helps promote the Oregon economy. Freight travel times must be reliable to keep Oregon competitive. The ability to move goods by truck, on rail, by water, or in the air depends on the commodity that is being shipped and the efficiency of those modes. Bottlenecks and congestion disrupt and impede the free flow of commerce. Many policies in the OTP are designed to address these issues and enable multi-modal freight connections and deliveries. On-road freight efficiency, for example, should benefit from passenger VMT reduction, with more people biking, walking, or taking transit. However, there are still likely be areas of severe congestion where strategic roadway enhancements will be needed to improve timeliness and reliability for freight. Overall, the OTP envisions a system to keep freight moving from origin to destination, with easy transfers between modes, services and systems.