

Dear Governor's Transportation Vision Panel,

The Central Lane Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), acting through the Metropolitan Policy Committee, would like to submit the following comments in response to the draft findings. The comments are structured in a similar format to the Vision Panel's Regional Forum held in Eugene, first addressing whether the preliminary draft findings are the right findings or not, then adding elements we believe are missing and should be included, and wrapping up with our metropolitan region's top priorities.

In addition to the specific comments below, the MPO calls for the Vision Panel's Report to be truly visionary – plan for the future. It is important that the findings that are included in the final Governor's Transportation Vision Panel report are focusing on the transportation system for the next 30 years and truly being visionary. Many of the elements in the current findings seem to be filling current day needs and past challenges. The final package of findings should reflect that this is an opportunity to envision the future transportation system and move beyond previous and current situations. This Report can be a springboard for leadership in the area of transportation in Oregon.

The MPO also feels that there should be a greater overall emphasis on informed least cost approaches to implementing both short term measures and the long term vision. Consideration needs to be given to a full spectrum of measures, not just traditional highway or gas tax approaches, for example. Thoughtful least cost planning and implementation can lead to a more efficient and effective implementation of a long term vision.

Are these the right findings?

Support/Strengthen:

1. **Finance.** Funding is key to enabling any of the other findings to be implemented. The overall emphasis is correct, although we provide feedback on more specifics in the following comments.
2. **Transit funding.** We support this finding and recognize that transit is valuable in its own right, as well as in its contributions to roadway congestion reduction. We would like to see the finding strengthened to increase support for transit operation funding as well as providing funds for new system build out. It should also include funding for expanding accessible services, especially with the aging population in Oregon.
3. **Support increasing investment in Safe Routes to School Programs.** In addition to supporting this finding, we would like to suggest expanding to include middle school and high school students to reflect the needs of our local community's programs.
4. **Freight Rail Findings.** While the Preliminary Findings of the Aviation, Marine and Freight Rail Subcommittee speak to the need to support improvements related to freight rail, the MPO believes that there should be more emphasis in this area. Freight rail presents significant opportunities for improving the movement of freight in Oregon, which is vital to Oregon's economy, while at the same time providing congestion relief on the state's highways.

Amend:

1. **Support investments in community bike-ped.** It would greatly benefit Eugene, Springfield, Coburg, and Lane County if the funding eligibility for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure could be expanded beyond existing “in the right of way” constraints to also include projects that are adjacent to and beyond the right of way. Overall, increased investments in this area are critical. Lane County jurisdictions have a desire, and great need, to connect communities and other destinations via bicycle and multi-use paths and trails that are not always in the right-of-way. These investments are also significant when it comes to attracting and leveraging tourism dollars.
2. **Title fee for motor vehicles.** This is worth pursuing as a potential funding source, but should be linked to the cost of the vehicle so as not to put an undue burden on low-income residents.
3. **Jurisdictional transfers.** This topic needs to be explored by local jurisdictions along with the state to ensure that the level of funding would be adequate to make the arrangements work from the local perspective. Adequate funding is critical; funding needs to cover costs to modernize and maintain the facilities in question.

Oppose:

1. **Transportation Utility Commission.** A utility commission is an inappropriate model for transportation funding since transportation is not a simple input/output model like other utilities. People define “effectively delivering service” for transportation in many different ways and it will vary in urban and rural contexts.
2. **Eliminate roadway bottlenecks.** The way this finding is currently written does not represent the values and needs of our communities. Prioritizing adding capacity to attempt to eliminate roadway bottlenecks by expediting modifications to the land use planning process to prioritize roadway system throughput is not in the best interest of local communities. We want to prioritize safety, promote local economic development and commerce, and enhance the hometown feel along our roadways instead of focusing primarily on widening roads for motor vehicle throughput. It is unclear how this finding would ensure that the added capacity would serve the intended freight beneficiaries and not just prioritize latent demand of single occupancy vehicle trips, resulting in little if any relief. Overall, it is not cost beneficial. In light of this, we suggest reworking the finding to emphasize investing in cost-effective measures to increase and maintain the reliability of freight movement across Oregon. Reliability is a critical factor for freight movement, and is easier to address than congestion or the elimination of bottlenecks.
3. **Bicycle Excise Tax.** While the MPO supports “increasing bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure funding by dedicating additional federal funds, [and] increasing the share of the State Highway Fund dedicated to active transportation,” the MPO opposes the creation of a “bicycle excise tax.” We need to encourage more active (bicycle and pedestrian) transportation, not create an explicit financial disincentive.

What findings are missing or should be added?

1. **Climate Change.** Climate change should be a leading element in the Vision Panel’s various findings to direct transportation investments and priorities across Oregon. Given that the transportation sector is responsible for more than one-third of the greenhouse gas emissions in Oregon, it is not emphasized enough throughout the various findings. While leaving flexibility for jurisdictions and regions to address greenhouse gas emissions and climate change in both the transportation arena and other areas in ways best suited to those local areas, this Report can provide leadership and a clearer call for the importance of considering this issue. At a minimum, the Report should identify how the findings address greenhouse gas emissions and goals already established by the State, as well as how the findings dovetail with the Scenario Planning work already completed within many of the state’s metropolitan areas.
2. **Intra-city Transit.** Intercity transit was focused on by the Bike, Ped, Transit, and Passenger Rail Subcommittee, but intra-city transit improvements and findings are missing. Please add a finding that emphasizes the needs of metropolitan areas across the state to expand, operate, and maintain robust intra-city and intra-metro transit services. Intra-city transit investments will be cost effective and help achieve the state’s greenhouse gas reduction goals.
3. **Roundabouts.** The innovation findings currently do not include roundabouts, which are cost-effective and innovative tools that help add capacity to roadways and smooth the flow of automobiles, thus reducing CO2 emissions. If designed correctly, roundabouts can also enhance the safety of our transportation system and do not require as much ongoing maintenance as higher tech, electronic devices. Roundabouts continue to operate as intended during power outages and during other times to disaster, which aligns with the resiliency goals.
4. **Transit Student Youth Pass.** Funding for a comprehensive transit student youth pass is a proven and cost effective approach to serving the transportation needs of this demographic, reducing reliance on the automobile, creating a safer and more secure transportation option for students, and creating the potential for life-long transit users.
5. **Improve Efficiency and Coordination in the Provision of Special Transportation Services.** The state estimates that between the Oregon Department of Transportation, the Department of Human Services, and the Oregon Health Authority, hundreds of millions of dollars are spent annually providing special transportation services, with significant opportunities for improving coordination and efficiency among providers. The opportunities for improving the efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and service to the end users in this area should be emphasized in the Vision.

What are Central Lane MPO’s top priorities?

In addition to calling at the outset for the Vision Panel’s Report to be truly visionary – to plan for the future – the MPO would like the Vision Panel’s findings to reflect the following priorities of the state’s second-largest metropolitan area.

1. **Prioritize Safety and Universal Access.** It is important to prioritize safety and universal access to the transportation system above and beyond reducing congestion. We would like to see cost effective investments that focus on increasing mobility of people in an equitable manner. There should be more of an emphasis on the Mayor’s Challenge, Vision Zero, complete streets, mobility hubs, and ADA improvements. Multimodal and mixed-use design focused on safety for *all* users can save lives, enhances economic development in communities, and increases healthy transportation options for

residents and visitors, which saves the state and local jurisdictions more money than congestion reduction investments.

2. **New Transportation Revenue.** New revenue is essential. There are established funding sources that *need to be increased*, such as the gas tax. Be bold – do as many other states in the nation have already done in recent years, front-load a significant increase in the gas tax to address the tremendous backlog in need just in the area of maintaining and preserving our existing transportation assets alone. A slow incremental increase in the gas tax may only end up finding the state falling further behind. And this should be coupled with true and rapid innovations in transportation revenue generation such as implementing Pay-As-You-Drive concepts. One of the Transportation Finance Subcommittee Concepts calls for “a supplemental registration fee on high efficiency vehicles that pay little or no gas tax . . . as a precursor to shifting high efficiency vehicles to a per-mile road usage charge.” The MPO not only believes that the supplemental fee is a disincentive to achieving the goal of shifting to high efficiency vehicles, but that the state should instead prioritize and accelerate a program for full implementation of pay by the mile for high efficiency vehicles. Indeed, new federal legislation (the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation, or FAST, Act) provides incentives for states to do so.
3. **Direct more Funding and Authority to Local Communities.** There are diverse needs and priorities. Let local communities choose more often where to invest as long as there is proven efficiency, such as prioritizing projects that accomplish multiple goals. ODOT should provide more flexibility in design standards and more local authority in the process for establishing speed limits to be able to accomplish local safety and mobility goals.
4. **Support Transportation Options and Active Transportation.** Funding should be restructured to emphasize and prioritize cost effective investments, including walking, biking, and other transportation options infrastructure and programming. For instance, the state could more strongly emphasize transportation options by requiring all large employers to have transportation options programs, providing flexibility for employers to develop their own programs. It is important to connect utilitarian active transportation system needs with recreational trail systems, which can also serve as resiliency resources in the case of earthquakes or other catastrophic disasters.
5. **Integrate Planning.** There should be more leadership from the Governor’s Office on integrating planning (transportation, health, enforcement, education, climate change, disaster preparedness, etc.) The various planning efforts need to align so that transportation can move forward as one piece of the larger puzzle in making Oregon a safe place to live and travel. The Greenhouse Gas Target Rule Review’s scenario planning results that identified the need to expand public transit funding, make walking and biking more convenient, and promote compact and mixed use development should be integrated with the Vision Panel’s work and recommendations.
6. **Resiliency.** Seismic issues are of particular interest and concern.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Central Lane MPO