



March 24, 2016

Tammy Baney, Co-Chair, Deschutes County Commissioner, OTC Chair
Gregg Kantor, Co-Chair, NW Natural Gas, President & CEO
Governor's Transportation Vision Panel

Dear Co-Chairs Kantor and Baney,

On behalf of the Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation (JPACT), I would like to commend the Governor's Transportation Vision Panel on its excellent work and ambitious goals for Oregon's transportation future. Overall, JPACT agrees strongly with the priorities of the Vision Panel, and appreciates the recognition of the distinct challenges faced by both urban and rural parts of Oregon. In the Portland metro region, we recognize that significant challenges remain in communicating the importance of these transportation investments to our partners and constituents. JPACT extends its support to these efforts and will serve as a regional partner to advance the Vision Panel's recommendations.

We encourage the Vision Panel to keep in mind that funding programs should be explicit about which entity is best positioned to implement the desired policy objectives with additional revenue. For example, funding for multi-modal metropolitan transportation improvements should be targeted to the Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). Similarly, increased funding for elderly and disabled transit should go to the transit agencies. JPACT recognizes the report's emphasis on metro area congestion. If funding is raised for that purpose, it should be targeted for that purpose.

In addition, JPACT offers additional input to the Vision Panel on the following issues:

Funding & Finance

The metro region is positioning itself to be competitive on new federal grants, future state investments, and additional regional investments. The more that the state can partner with Region 1 and the MPO, the more we can accomplish. We urge the state to support a gas tax that fills the gap created by declining purchasing power and increased fuel efficiency, as well as the possibility of indexing to inflation in the future. We would also encourage the Governor to consider an additional funding option for the Portland metro area, whether from a regional increment to the gas tax or another source, significant enough in size to address the specific challenges of the metro region.

The Portland Metro area is the economic engine of the state and a gateway to international markets. Allowing the region to invest an additional increment in its urgent transportation needs pays dividends to the entire Oregon economy. JPACT supports the Vision Panel's recommendations on congestion pricing, resilience and carbon reduction, with a focus on policies that move our system towards a user fee model.

With regard to modifications to the State Highway Fund distribution formula, in light of the new FAST Act funding, we recommend that the policy return to the traditional distribution of 75 percent to fix-it and 25 percent to enhance. We commend ODOT on prioritizing the state-of-good-repair of our state facilities, but now is the time for us to return to a more balanced approach. JPACT urges the state to reconsider this important policy so that we can make the necessary investments for our growing population and expanding economy.

Freight

The metro region supports the Vision Panel's focus on reducing roadway bottlenecks on corridors of statewide significance. These issues are most prevalent in the Portland Metro region. The region is stepping up to address the growing demands on our system with a full multi-modal strategy—new high capacity transit, road improvements to the freeways and connecting arterials, and active transportation improvements. Major project priorities include the Rose Quarter, Highway 217, Interstate 205, as well as major arterials and "orphan highways" targeted for improvement or jurisdictional transfer. The region must continue investment in inter-modal freight facilities to remain globally competitive. A multi-modal freight strategy also reduces congestion on roads.

Transit

It is critical to elevate state commitment for both transit capital and operations to address congestion and provide service to the entire region. In order to meet the climate action requirements of the state legislature, the region aims to implement a comprehensive Climate Smart strategy. This will require \$12.4 billion in transit investment. As in the past, the region's major transit projects will require significant support from Salem. We encourage the Vision Panel to recommend a significant state investment in the metro region to serve the growing population while meeting our climate goals.

Bike/Ped

JPACT agrees with the Vision Panel that active transportation is a critical part of the transportation system, and that funding levels should reflect this. We need to make sure that it's safe and connected, especially around schools. Our region has a full active transportation plan that we would encourage the state to adopt as the implementation blueprint for the metro region.

JPACT and the Metro Council would like to express their appreciation to the Vision Panel for its hard work on this most critical issue.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Dirksen".

Craig Dirksen
Metro Councilor, District 3
Chair of JPACT